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Perceived Value Congruence and Attitudes Toward International Relations and Foreign Policies

Geoffrey Wetherell, Or'Shaundra Benson, and Christine Reyna

DePaul University

Mark J. Brandt

Tilburg University

Much of the justification for granting foreign aid is to support nations and international policies promoting one's national values. However, little to no research has examined how perceptions of similarity between nations, especially value similarity, drive feelings toward other nations and policy preference. In 3 studies using United States samples, we examine relationships between dimensions of country-level similarity, perceptions of value similarity and threat, and policy support. Correlational data and manipulations of value similarity suggest that perceptions of value similarity are the most consistent predictor of support for foreign aid and are consistently driven by ally status and cultural similarity.

In the past 40 years the United States has given more than \$767.7 billion in international aid including support for developmental, military, economic, and humanitarian assistance (Greenbook, 2011). Most of these contributions were made to political, strategic, and/or economic allies (United States Census Bureau, 2012), particularly to countries with emerging or fragile democracies that are under threat due to war, internal conflict, or natural disasters.

There are many factors that determine a person's attitudes toward people in other nations, as well as when and why aid is sent to other countries. Although there is research suggesting that the decision to grant aid is largely influenced by political goals (Drury, Olson, & Van Belle, 2005), another possible motivation for distributing foreign aid in the form of economic, political, and military assistance is to promote the values of one's own country abroad. For example, in the case of the United States, promoting democratic values abroad has been used as a justification for U.S. military intervention in places like Iraq (e.g., the Bush Doctrine;

McDonald, 2009) and support for political and economic transitions in the Middle East and Asia (The White House, 2013).

Despite outward expression of the desire to promote one's national values, little is known about the role that perceived value similarity plays in the *public's* perceptions of foreign nations and attitudes toward policies that affect these countries. Specifically, what is the role that value congruence plays in public support for the allocation of international aid? To the extent that one views the populace of foreign nations as supporting their cherished values (e.g., freedom and democracy in the United States), they may have more positive attitudes toward, and be more inclined to support aid to, these nations regardless of the racial/ethnic characteristics of its populace. In this article, we explore whether perceiving foreign nations as supporting or violating values affects attitudes toward aiding these nations. We tested this in the context of U.S. samples evaluating a variety of countries around the world. Because perceptions of value violations exert a powerful effect on domestic political and intergroup opinions (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Henry & Reyna, 2007; Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004; Wetherell, Brandt, & Reyna, 2013; Wetherell, Reyna, & Sadler,

Correspondence should be sent to Geoffrey Wetherell, Department of Psychology, DePaul University, 2219 North Kenmore Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614. E-mail: gwethere@depaul.edu

2013), it stands to reason that international policies are similarly influenced. This question is important, because there has been increasing need for foreign aid due to political upheaval around the globe and increased incidences of natural disasters (Kovács & Spens, 2007).

VALUES AND INTERGROUP PERCEPTIONS

The notion that values, and perceptions of value violation in particular, play a prominent role in intergroup attitudes has a long history in social psychology (Allport, 1954; Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996; Callahan & Vescio, 2011; Katz & Hass, 1988; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993; Vescio & Biernat, 2003; for review, see Biernat, Vescio, Theno, & Crandall, 1996). Values represent enduring preferences for particular states of existence or behavior and provide important standards for judging the self and others (Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973, 1979; Schwartz, 1994). More important, values guide attitudes, including attitudes toward other groups. Individuals or groups seen as living up to, or upholding, one's core values are treated positively; however, individuals or groups whose behavior, culture, or life outcomes are seen as antithetical to one's values are treated with prejudice and discrimination (Brandt & Reyna, 2011; Brandt et al., 2014; Callahan & Vescio, 2011; Henry & Reyna, 2007; Henry et al., 2004; Katz & Hass, 1988; Vescio & Biernat, 2003; Wetherell, Reyna, et al., 2013). We refer to this pattern as the *value congruence hypothesis* (see also Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996).

Despite this long history of examining the effect of perceived value congruence on prejudice and discrimination, research on the influence of value judgments on attitudes about international relations is scarce. This is surprising given that value judgments are often integral to social and group evaluations, especially in the political domain (Brandt et al., 2014; Henry & Reyna, 2007; Wetherell, Brandt, et al., 2013). Value judgments influence support for such policies as affirmative action (Reyna, Tucker, Korfmacher, & Henry, 2005; Sears & Henry, 2003), welfare reform (Henry & Reyna, 2007; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993), policies targeting the inner city (Reyna, Brandt, & Viki, 2009), same-sex marriage (Henry & Reyna, 2007; Krulewitz & Nash, 1980; Reyna, Wetherell, Yantis, & Brandt, 2014), and health care reform (Wetherell, Reyna, et al., 2013). Value judgments also influence attitudes toward groups. For example, evaluative judgments of African Americans stem from beliefs that they violate values of hard work and self-reliance (McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears & Henry, 2003). Judgments of gays and lesbians stem from beliefs that they violate "traditional family values" (Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Henry & Reyna, 2007).

Just as individuals or groups within a society can be seen as violating or upholding values, so too might other nations and the people who live within them. Given these value-oriented perceptions, people in a given country should be much more supportive of policies that benefit other nations seen as promoting, or at least striving for, values that are aligned with the country providing the benefit. For example, people in the United States will be more supportive of other nations seen as supporting democracy, individual freedom, self-reliance, and individualism in the form of free-market systems. Conversely, they will oppose policies that benefit countries that undermine or threaten American values, such as countries that suppress individual freedom or undermine the free market with exploitive labor laws, fixed currencies, or rampant copyright violations (e.g., as is the case with China). These patterns are born out in national surveys demonstrating that U.S. citizens desire tougher trade policies with countries that are viewed as untrustworthy (Pew Global, China, 2012). We explore the possibility that perceptions of value congruence consistently and proximally predict feelings toward the citizens of other nations and the desire to give them aid. We also examine which qualities of a nation or its populace predict perceived value similarity or threat—such as racial, cultural, or religious similarity, and whether we perceive the country as an ally.

THE PRESENT STUDIES

In the present studies, we use multiple methodologies to examine the role of perceived value congruence in predicting attitudes toward nations other than one's own, and the policies that may benefit them. Studies 1 and 2 examine aspects of various countries and their populace that might be related to perceptions of value congruence with the United States. For example, perceiving a foreign nation as an ally or perceiving its populace as embracing similar cultural norms may signal or imply value similarity. In Study 1, we explore how the belief that a country is a friend or foe of the United States (ally status) and is racially similar drive perceptions of value similarity or threat toward those countries and subsequent feelings of social closeness or prejudice respectively. We expand on these tests in Study 2 by examining whether perceived cultural and religious similarity, in addition to racial similarity and ally status, affect perceived value congruence, prejudice, feelings of social closeness, and support for foreign aid.

We conclude our article with an experimental test of our value congruence hypothesis (Study 3) to isolate perceived value congruence as a preemptive factor in international attitudes. To do this, we experimentally manipulated the goals of a country that is commonly

perceived as an enemy to the United States (Iran) and measure perceived value similarity and threat, and subsequent support for the people of Iran and policies that promote positive or antagonistic international relations.

STUDIES 1 AND 2: VALUE CONGRUENCE, INTERNATIONAL ATTITUDES, AND AID

Studies 1 and 2 investigate the attributes of a country that may be associated with perceived value congruence and the role that perceived value congruence plays in driving the link between these attributes and attitudes toward that country. There are a number of things that can signal or suggest value congruence. For example, similar political, demographic, or cultural characteristics as the United States might imply greater value similarity. A country being an economic or political ally with the United States also implies value congruence. Conversely, countries that deviate too much from the United States in their economic or political goals and their cultural mores might be seen as deviating from or even undermining U.S. values.

We are also interested in the potency of perceived value congruence in predicting attitudes and policy support toward nations (the value congruence hypothesis) and the degree to which the value congruence hypothesis functions similarly across diverse countries. To test this, we examine beliefs and attitudes about countries representing a variety of economic, political, and demographic orientations.

In addition to predicting attitudes, we also expect that value congruence will account for some of the variance in the relationship between these attributes (ally status and similarity) and international attitudes.

Study 1 Methods

Participants. One hundred sixty U.S.-born undergraduate participants (45 men, 112 women, three failed to report; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.26$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.63$) at a large midwestern university completed a survey for partial course credit. The sample was 73% White, 4% African American, 16% Latino, 1% Asian, 3% multiracial, 2% Middle Eastern, and 1% identifying as “Other.”¹

Materials and procedure. Participants completed an online survey examining “how people perceive different groups in various societies of the world.” Participants were instructed to evaluate the countries and the people

residing in the countries of France, Germany, China, Israel, Russia, South Africa, Japan, Pakistan, and Mexico in terms of the perceptions of value similarity, value threat, ally status, racial similarity, prejudice, and social closeness between these countries and the United States. We did not include extremely close allies of the United States (e.g., Great Britain, Canada) because we wanted to make sure there was adequate variation across measures for each country. Participants may have evaluated countries closely related to the United States (historically, culturally, and politically) in overwhelmingly positive ways.

Value similarity and value threat. Overall value similarity was assessed with two items: “Typically the people of (target country) share the same values as Americans.” and “Typically, the values of the people of (target country) support American values.” These two items were averaged together for each country (item correlations ranged from .37 to .58; all $p < .01$). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more perceived value similarity.

Overall value threat was assessed with two items: “Typically the values of the people of (target country) threaten American values.” and “Typically, the values of the people of (target country) are not compatible with American values.” These two items were averaged together for each country (item correlations ranged from .56 to .80; all $p < .01$). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more value threat.

For both conceptual and psychometric reasons, we kept our measures of value similarity and threat separate. First, we were interested in testing the unique effects of perceived similarity and threat on prejudice and social closeness. Lack of value similarity is not the same thing as threat, and therefore these measures may affect attitudes and policy support differently. Second, the two measures were inconsistently interrelated. They were primarily only weakly (and negatively) correlated, though some correlations were stronger and some were nonsignificantly positive (correlations ranged from $|-0.01|$ to $|-0.57|$; ps ranged from .94 to $< .001$). Therefore, we treated the two constructs separately in this study and the studies that follow.

Ally status and ethnic/race similarity. Ally status was measured with two items that assessed economic and political ally status with the United States: “(target country) is an economic ally to America” and “(target country) is a political ally to America.” These two items were averaged together for each country (item correlations ranged from .21 to .88; all $p < .01$). One

¹The data were collected in 2008–2009, so some of the dynamics between the United States and these countries may have changed since then.

item assessed perception of ethnic/racial similarity between the comparison countries and the United States: “The people of (target country) are ethnically/racially similar to Americans.” All items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more alliance or similarity.

Social closeness and prejudice. Social closeness to the people residing in comparison countries was measured with five social distance items similar to those used by Skitka, Bauman, and Sargis (2005), for example, “I would be happy to have someone from (target country) as a roommate.” These five items were averaged together to create a reliable scale (scale reliabilities ranged from .95 to .98). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more social closeness.

Prejudice was measured with a feeling thermometer scale in which participants were asked to indicate the “coolness or negativity” versus the “warmth or positivity” of their feelings associated with Americans and citizens from each target country. Scale ratings ranged from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating *very cold*, 50 as *neither warm nor cold*, and 100 as *extremely warm*. A difference score was calculated by subtracting the thermometer scores for the citizens of each target country from the thermometer scores for Americans. In each case, high scores indicated more of a discrepancy between positive attitudes toward Americans compared to other groups (a measure of prejudice).

Study 1 Results

Analytic strategy. We expect that the more participants perceived another nation as an ally and as being ethnically/racially similar, the more they will perceive that nation’s values as more similar (and less threatening) to American values. Perceptions of value similarity should lead to less prejudice and stronger feelings of social closeness, even above and beyond ally status and ethnic/racial similarity. In addition, we expect that any relationships between perceived ally status and racial similarity on prejudice and social closeness will be driven in part by the value congruence implied by being a political ally and/or being racially similar.

To test how these perceptions are interrelated within participants, participants’ responses to each of the countries were nested within each participant to construct two-level multilevel models. In such models, each participant is considered the unit of analysis, and all participants’ ratings for each variable (e.g., value similarity) are considered for each country that a participant rates and is correlated with the specified

dependent variable or variables (e.g., prejudice) within that country. We are able to then aggregate these within-person correlations in the context of a multilevel model to present these aggregated interrelationships, thereby examining overall effects across countries.

This analytic strategy is optimal for several reasons. First, multilevel models allow us to examine the interrelationships of our key variables across countries for each participant, which provides a big-picture perspective on how these variables interrelate across diverse countries. We are more concerned with the underlying psychological processes related to perceived value congruence across countries rather than an analysis of individual countries. Thus, this analytic strategy is more appropriate than using individual regression models for each country. Second, this analysis controls for any participant-specific differences in scale use (e.g., response bias). Finally, this approach is essentially ideographic because for a given set of countries (nine in Study 1; seven in Study 2) participants’ own “(rank-)ordering” of countries on one variable (e.g., degree of value similarity) is correlated with their “(rank-)ordering” of countries on another variable (e.g., desired social closeness) (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The coefficients we report represent the relationship between the variables within participants, and these coefficients are the main focus of our analysis. These models were estimated with MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2007) using full information maximum likelihood estimation. This analytic strategy was also used in Study 2.

We first report the analyses from two multilevel regression models that use ethnic/racial similarity and ally status to predict value threat and value similarity. This first stage of the analysis examined the underpinnings of value similarity and value threat. We also conducted two additional models whereby we predicted prejudice and social closeness using ethnic/racial similarity, ally status, value threat, and value similarity. This second stage of the analysis examined the underpinnings of international prejudice and social closeness. Finally, we tested the indirect effects of ethnic/racial similarity and ally status on prejudice and social closeness through value similarity and value threat to test the degree to which the influence of perceived ally status and racial similarity on international attitudes is at least partially driven by their association with perceived value congruence.

Multilevel regression models testing the value congruence hypothesis. The results from the models can be found in Table 1. We predicted that increased ally status and ethnic/racial similarity would positively relate to perceptions of value similarity, decreased perceptions of value threat, and subsequent desired social closeness and reduced prejudice.

TABLE 1
Results of the Multilevel Regression Models (Within-Participant Effects) for Study 1

	DV: Value Similarity b (SE)	DV: Value Threat b (SE)	DV: Prejudice b (SE)	DV: Social Closeness b (SE)
Ally	.45 (.05)***	-.40 (.07)***	-2.44 (1.33) [†]	.18 (.05)***
Racial similarity	.33 (.04)***	-.06 (.04)	-2.66 (.49)***	.11 (.02)***
Value similarity	—	—	-2.85 (.71)***	.19 (.04)***
Value threat	—	—	1.02 (.70)	-.04 (.04)

Note. DV = dependent variable.

[†] $p < .10$. *** $p < .001$.

In the models (see Table 1), the perceived ally status and ethnic/racial similarity of the countries significantly predicted value similarity, such that allies and ethnically/racially similar countries were more likely to be perceived as having values similar to American values. Perceived ally status, but not ethnic/racial similarity, also predicted the perception of the countries as threatening American values, such that the more a country was perceived as an ally, the less threatening it appeared.

As expected, perceived ally status was negatively associated with prejudice and positively associated with social closeness, suggesting that allies are perceived and treated more positively² than nonallies. Likewise, ethnic/racial similarity was negatively associated with prejudice and positively related to social closeness, suggesting that countries that participants perceived as having populations more ethnically/racially similar to the United States are perceived and treated more positively.

We found qualified support for the value congruence hypothesis. Value threat did not significantly predict prejudice or social closeness, but value similarity was associated with less prejudice and more closeness, independent of perceived ally status or racial/ethnic similarity. We also tested for indirect effects of within-participant ally status and ethnic/racial similarity through value similarity on prejudice and closeness (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010). This is conceptually similar to Baron and Kenny (1986) but applied to multilevel models. We use this method to compute all indirect effects from the multilevel models in this article. This same strategy was used to compute the indirect effects in Study 2. There were significant indirect effects through value similarity between both ally status (prejudice: $ab = -1.23$, $SE = .37$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .09$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$) and ethnic/racial similarity (prejudice: $ab = -.90$, $SE = .26$, $p < .001$; closeness: indirect effect = $.06$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$) on prejudice

and closeness. These results suggest that these diplomatic and demographic markers are associated with a desire for positive international relations in part because they imply that a foreign nation shares our values.

Alternative analyses. To see if there were any unique patterns across the countries, we also ran separate regression analyses split by country with prejudice, social closeness, value threat, and value similarity as separate dependent variables. These analyses were largely consistent with the multilevel approach. Prejudice, social closeness, and value similarity consistently related to ally status; racial similarity; and, in the case of social closeness, value similarity (positively) and value threat (negatively). In China, Israel, Japan, Mexico, and Russia, either racial similarity or ally status predicted value threat. The individual regression analyses generally reinforce the results of the more statistically sophisticated and intuitive multilevel analyses.

In addition, the aforementioned mediation models test only one possible hypothesized sequence of causation, and we wanted to see if other models exhibited significant indirect effects. We ran two reverse models (with racial similarity and ally status as dependent variables) with prejudice and social closeness as the first variables in the sequence, followed by value threat and value support as intermediaries. In the racial similarity model, there were significant indirect effects through value similarity (prejudice: $ab = -.004$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .20$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$) and ally status (prejudice: $ab = -.001$, $SE \leq .001$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .04$, $SE = .01$, $p < .001$). These results suggest the alternate possibility that negative feelings toward the people of other countries may drive perceptions of value similarity and threat and subsequent perceptions of ally status and racial similarity. To better ascertain what drives perceptions of value similarity or threat requires an experimental manipulation (see Study 3).

Study 1 Discussion

Overall, perceived ally status and ethnic/racial similarity predicted perceived value congruence (particularly value

²A variety of additional models were tested to see if any of the paths in the model were moderated by the perceived ally status of the target countries; however, no significant moderation effects emerged, suggesting that the pattern of results is similar across the range of countries tested in this study.

similarity), which predicted social closeness and diminished prejudice. Value threat appeared to play little role in attitudes toward these countries for this sample of participants when examined in aggregate (however, threat did play a role for certain countries). These findings provide initial support for the value congruence hypothesis and suggest that perceived value similarity is a more important predictor of attitudes overall than are perceived value threats. In Study 2, we explore how perceived value congruence predicts attitudes not only toward people, but policy (foreign aid).

There are some limitations to Study 1. In addition to not explicitly measuring support for policies designed to benefit the countries in question, we recognize that ethnic/racial similarity may be confounded with other, more symbolic markers of a nation's values like cultural or religious orientations. Thus, in Study 2, we expand our measures of the underpinnings of perceived value congruence by adding cultural and religious similarity along with ethnic/racial similarity and ally status.

Study 2 Methods

Participants. Eighty-eight U.S.-born undergraduate participants (15 men, 73 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.55$) at a large midwestern university completed a survey for partial course credit. The sample was 72% White, 7% African American, 9% Latino, 5% Asian, and 7% identifying as "Other."

Materials and procedure. Similar to Study 1, participants were instructed to fill out an online survey examining "how people perceive different groups in various societies of the world." However, in Study 2 participants were instructed to evaluate "the countries and the people residing in the countries" of France, Canada, Israel, Iran, North Korea, South Korea, and Kenya. Countries were evaluated in terms of perceptions of value similarity and value threat, ally status, prejudice toward and desired social closeness with members of these countries, and ethnic/racial, cultural, and religious similarity between these countries and the United States. In addition, we measured support for U.S. aid to these countries.

Value similarity and value threat. Overall value similarity was assessed with the same two items from Study 1, which were averaged together (item correlations ranged from .39 to .78; all $p < .01$). Overall value threat was assessed with the same two items from Study 1, which were averaged together (item correlations ranged from .40 to .67; $p < .01$). The two measures were once again only weakly to moderately negatively correlated (correlations ranged from $-.05$ to $-.40$; ps ranged from .50 to $< .001$) and were kept separate.

Ally status and ethnic/racial, cultural, and religious similarity. Ally status was measured with two items from Study 1, which were averaged together to make a reliable scale (item correlations ranged from .70 to .95; $p < .01$). Perceptions of similarity between the comparison countries and the United States were measured with three independent items: one assessed ethnic/racial similarity ("The people of [target country] are ethnically/racially similar to Americans."), one assessed cultural similarity (The people of [target country] are culturally similar to Americans."), and one that assessed religious similarity ("The people of [target country] are religiously similar to Americans."). All items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more alliance or similarity.

Social closeness and prejudice. Social closeness was measured the same way as in Study 1 using three social distance items similar to those used by Skitka et al. (2005).³ These three items were averaged together to create a reliable scale (scale reliabilities ranged from .94 to .98). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher numbers indicating more social closeness.

Prejudice was measured in the same way as in Study 1 using difference scores between feelings toward members of the United States subtracting feelings toward members of the target country. In each case, high scores indicated more prejudice toward the target countries.

Support for aid. Support for aid to the people of the target countries by the United States was measured with three items: One assessed humanitarian aid ("To what extent do you support or oppose the U.S. providing humanitarian aid to the people of [target country]?"), one item assessed economic aid ("To what extent do you support or oppose the U.S. providing economic aid to the people of [target country]?"), and another assessed military aid ("To what extent do you support or oppose the U.S. providing military aid to the people of [target country]?"). These three items were averaged together to make a reliable scale (scale reliabilities ranged from .80 to .89). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 7 (*strongly support*), with higher numbers indicating more support for aid.

Study 2 Results

The same analytic strategy used in Study 1 was used in Study 2. In two multilevel models, perceived ally status,

³To help reduce participant fatigue, social distance was assessed with three of the five social distance items that were presented in Study 1.

ethnic/racial similarity, cultural similarity, and religious similarity were used to predict value similarity and value threat. Three additional models also included value similarity and value threat predicting prejudice, social closeness, and support for aid. We predicted that perceiving people in the target countries as allies and as ethnically/racially, culturally and religiously similar would predict increased perceptions of value similarity and decreased perceptions of value threat. Value similarity, in turn, would predict decreased prejudice and increased social closeness and support for aid. We expected the reverse pattern for value threat. The results of these models can be found in Table 2.

Perceived ally status, cultural similarity, and religious similarity all contributed to perceptions of value similarity (see Table 2). The more the people of a country were perceived as allies, and as culturally and religiously similar to the United States, the more they were perceived as having similar values as the United States. Perceived ally status and cultural similarity were both negatively associated with value threat such that countries with people that were not perceived as allies or as sharing similar cultural orientations were seen as more threatening to American values. Unlike in Study 1, racial/ethnic similarity was not associated with perceptions of value similarity or threat.

One of the possible limitations of Study 1 was that ethnic/racial similarity might have been emblematic of other perceived national differences. To test whether the inconsistency between the results of Studies 1 and 2 (racial similarity predicted value similarity and threat only in Study 1) was because of the addition of cultural and religious similarity into the models, we ran additional analyses without cultural and religious similarity. Without the inclusion of cultural and religious similarity, racial similarity was a significant predictor of value similarity ($b = .24, SE = .03, p < .001$) and value threat ($b = -.09, SE = .04, p = .01$). These results suggest that racial status in its own right may not be very relevant to perceived value congruence and may instead act

as a proxy for cultural and religious similarity, which are more relevant to value congruence.

Similar to Study 1, and consistent with the value congruence hypothesis, value similarity directly related to increased social closeness and support for aid, and was negatively associated with prejudice. There were significant indirect effects through value similarity for ally status (prejudice: $ab = -1.28, SE = .30, p < .001$; social closeness: $ab = .07, SE = .02, p < .001$; aid: $ab = .12, SE = .02, p < .001$), cultural similarity (prejudice: $ab = -.90, SE = .26, p < .001$; social closeness: $ab = .05, SE = .01, p < .001$; aid: $ab = .08, SE = .02, p < .001$), and religious similarity (prejudice: $ab = .76, SE = .24, p < .001$; social closeness: $ab = .04, SE = .01, p = .002$; aid: $ab = .07, SE = .02, p < .001$).

Also consistent with the value congruence hypothesis, value threat was directly related to increased prejudice and decreased desire for social closeness and support for aid. There were significant indirect effects through value threat between ally status (prejudice: $ab = -.76, SE = .22, p < .001$; social closeness: $ab = .03, SE = .01, p = .01$; aid: $ab = .05, SE = .01, p < .001$) and cultural similarity (prejudice: $ab = -.47, SE = .18, p < .01$; social closeness: $ab = .02, SE = .01, p = .03$; aid: $ab = .03, SE = .01, p = .01$). There were several additional significant paths. Ethnic/racial similarity was negatively associated with prejudice and positively associated with social closeness. Perceived ally status was negatively associated with prejudice. Cultural similarity was positively associated with support for aid.

Alternative analyses. We used the same alternative regression strategy as in Study 1, with prejudice, social closeness, aid, value threat, and value similarity as separate dependent variables. The results were largely consistent with the multilevel analysis. Desire to give aid, social closeness, and value similarity were positively related to ally status, and racial similarity and prejudice was negatively related to ally status and racial similarity. Desire to give aid and closeness were generally positively related to value similarity and

TABLE 2
Results of Multilevel Regression Models (Within-Participant Effects) for Study 2

	DV: Value Similarity b (SE)	DV: Value Threat b (SE)	DV: Prejudice b (SE)	DV: Social Closeness b (SE)	DV: Aid b (SE)
Ally	.34 (.03)***	-.25 (.04)***	-2.36 (.76)**	.05 (.03)	.10 (.04)*
Racial similarity	-.02 (.03)	.004 (.04)	-2.71 (.61)***	.10 (.03)***	.06 (.03) [†]
Cultural similarity	.24 (.04)***	-.15 (.05)***	-.04 (.80)	-.006 (.03)	-.14 (.04)***
Religious similarity	.20 (.04)***	.02 (.05)	.82 (.76)	.02 (.03)	.02 (.04)
Value similarity	—	—	-3.84 (.84)***	.20 (.05)***	.35 (.05)***
Value threat	—	—	3.15 (.70)***	-.13 (.04)**	-.19 (.03)***

Note. DV = dependent variable.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

negatively to value threat, whereas prejudice was negatively related to value similarity and positively related to value threat. A few unexpected effects occurred (e.g., desire to give aid was negatively related to cultural similarity in Iran and religious similarity in South Korea, value similarity was negatively related to racial similarity in France, and racial similarity was related to value threat in South Korea).

As in Study 1, we ran models testing a reversed sequence with prejudice, social closeness, and support for aid predicting value similarity and threat and each subsequent dependent variable separately (i.e., ally status, cultural, racial, and religious similarity). With perceptions of countries as allies as the dependent variable, there were indirect effects of prejudice, social closeness, and aid through value support (prejudice: $ab = -.007$, $SE = .002$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .22$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$; aid: $ab = .27$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$) and value threat (prejudice: $ab = -.001$, $SE < .001$, $p = .03$; closeness: $ab = .03$, $SE = .01$, $p = .05$; aid: $ab = .03$, $SE = .01$, $p = .02$). With cultural similarity as the dependent variable, there were indirect effects of prejudice, social closeness, and aid through value support (prejudice: $ab = -.009$, $SE = .002$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .26$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$; aid: $ab = .32$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$) and value threat (prejudice: $ab = -.001$, $SE < .001$, $p = .04$; closeness: $ab = .02$, $SE = .01$, $p = .07$; aid: $ab = .02$, $SE = .01$, $p = .03$). With religious similarity as the dependent variable, there were indirect effects of prejudice, social closeness, and aid through value support (prejudice: $ab = -.009$, $SE = .002$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .26$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$; aid: $ab = .32$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$) but not value threat (all $ps > .90$). Finally, with racial similarity as the dependent variable there were indirect effects of prejudice, social closeness, and aid through value support (prejudice: $ab = -.007$, $SE = .001$, $p < .001$; closeness: $ab = .20$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$; aid: $ab = .25$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$) but not value threat (all $ps > .72$). Once again, the nature of correlational data makes it difficult to determine the causal sequence, which is why an experiment is needed (Study 3).

Study 2 Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicate the results of Study 1 and provide additional evidence that perceiving a nation as similar on important cultural markers (religious and cultural similarity) and perceiving them as an ally are associated with perceived value congruence. The belief that people in these nations support (vs. threaten) American values consistently predicted less prejudice, desired social closeness, and support for aid, confirming our value congruence hypothesis across a diverse array of countries from various continents across the globe. This study also showed that value congruence has

unique predictive power when it comes to attitudes about foreign nationals and U.S. foreign policy in the form of international aid. Value congruence may also account for some of the effects of ally status and cultural/religious similarity in predicting attitudes and policy support. As with research showing the potency of values in accounting for attitudes toward groups in the United States and the policies that benefit them (e.g., Henry & Reyna, 2007; Wetherell, Reyna, & Sadler, 2013), the present research extends this work to show that perceived alignment with U.S. values can also affect how U.S. citizens view and support policies affecting those in other countries.

In the final study we further test the value congruence hypothesis using an experimental paradigm. This paradigm is advantageous because it allows us to assess whether there is a causal link between manipulations of value-congruent or incongruent goals and perceptions of value similarity and threat, prejudice and support for international aid policy. Furthermore, given that alternative (reverse causality) models produced significant indirect effects (see Additional Analyses in Studies 1 & 2), it is important to establish the causal effects of value congruence on our key variables of interest.

STUDY 3: WHEN ENEMIES BECOME FRIENDS

The terrorist attacks of September 11 radically and irrevocably transformed foreign policy in the United States. One element of this change was a hardening of U.S. economic, political, and military positions against countries seen as hostile toward the United States, including Iran. Surveys by the Pew Research Center and Gallup show the American public's attitudes toward Iran have become more bellicose, such that a majority of U.S. citizens support military action, if necessary, to prevent Iran from developing nuclear arms (Pew Research Center, 2009) and harbor negative, distrustful, and aggressive attitudes toward Iran and the Iranian government (Gallup, 2011).

Despite the United States' largely negative attitudes toward Iran and its policies, these attitudes may not always extend to the Iranian people. During the so-called Green Revolution following the 2009 presidential elections in Iran, a majority of people in the United States were outraged at the Iranian government's treatment of the largely peaceful demonstrators who took to the streets to demand democratic reforms (The New York Times, CBS News Poll, 2014). The contrast between antipathy toward the government and supportive attitudes toward the people may shed light on the ambivalence that people in the United States feel toward autocratic regimes that threaten

U.S. values, on one hand, and the people living under such regimes, on the other.

In this study, we explore how portraying the people of Iran as seeking government reforms that either support or violate important U.S. values influences perceptions of value similarity and threat, and subsequently prejudice and support for diplomatic policies. To do this, we experimentally manipulated media depictions of the goals of the Iranian protests. We predicted that portraying the people of Iran as promoting democratic or capitalist reforms (i.e., issues that are congruent with core American values) would lead participants to see the Iranian people as sharing values similar to U.S. values. Conversely, portraying the Iranian people as promoting strict religious laws (i.e., Shari'a law) would lead participants to see the Iranian people as promoting values that are less similar and more threatening to core U.S. values. Based on these evaluations, we test our value congruence hypothesis that increased perceptions of value similarity would lead U.S. participants to express less prejudice and increased support for humanitarian aid and diplomacy toward Iranians. We also hypothesized that increased perceptions of value threat would lead to less positive attitudes and decreased support for aid and diplomatic relations with Iran.

Study 3 Methods

Participants. One hundred twenty-four adults from the community (57 men, 65 women, two failed to report; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.53$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.69$) were surveyed on the 2010 Rose Parade route in Pasadena, California. The Rose Parade is a 5.5-mile parade on New Year's Day viewed by hundreds of thousands of spectators and consisting of, among other things, elaborate floats covered entirely in plants and flowers. Participants were recruited from the many spectators camped out on the parade route the day before the parade (to get optimal seating) and filled out anonymous surveys while they waited. This allowed us to go beyond student samples and survey a broader array of people from the community. The sample was ethnically diverse, giving a wide cross-section of the population an opportunity to respond. Previous research (Wetherell, Reyna, et al., 2013) has used a sample from the Rose Parade. The sample was 49% White, 3% African American, 34% Latino, 3% Asian, 7% multi-racial, 2% Middle Eastern, and 2% Native American.⁴

Materials and procedure. Participants filled out a survey examining "how the portrayal of other countries

in the news affects perceptions of people internationally" where they were randomly assigned to read one of three fictitious "newspaper reports" about the Iranian people. The Iranian people were described as striving for democratic reform ($N=40$), free market capitalism ($N=43$), or religious law (Shari'a law; $N=41$). We chose these three frames because they allowed us to compare two motives associated with core U.S. values (democracy and capitalism) with a motive seen as violating core U.S. values (Shari'a law). See the appendix for the complete wording of the manipulations. The first block of text before the manipulation provided general instructions and was identical across conditions; what differed was the description of why the Iranian people were protesting the government (to push for democratic or capitalist reform or to promote Shari'a law). After the manipulation, participants responded to several measures in the order presented next. Unless otherwise mentioned, all items were measured on a scale from 1 (*less support or dissimilarity*) to 5 (*more support or similarity*).

Manipulation checks. Perceptions of Iranian goals were measured with five items: three assessed support for democratic ideals (e.g., "Do the Iranian people support or oppose freedom of speech?"; $\alpha = .84$), one assessed support for capitalism ("Do the Iranian people support or oppose a free market capitalist economy?"), and one assessed support for religious law ("Do the Iranian people support or oppose a government based on Muslim religious [Shari'a] law?").

Value similarity and value threat. Overall value similarity and value threat were measured with four items: two assessed overall support (e.g., "Typically the people of Iran share the same values as Americans"; $r = .66$, $p < .001$) and two assessed value threat (e.g., "Typically the values of the people of Iran threaten American values"; $r = .37$, $p < .001$). These two scales were only weakly correlated ($r = -.23$, $p = .01$). Like Studies 1 and 2, we kept these measures separate.

Prejudice and support for aid. Prejudice toward Iranians was assessed with the single item "After reading this article, do you feel favorably or unfavorably toward the Iranian people?" from 1 (*very unfavorably*) to 5 (*very favorably*). Support for aid to the Iranian people was measured with five items: two assessed humanitarian aid (e.g., "Would you support or oppose humanitarian aid designed to help the Iranian people?"; $r = .63$, $p < .001$), two assessed support for overthrowing the Iranian government (e.g., "Would you support or oppose the U.S. helping to overthrow the government

⁴There were 18 participants who were not born in the United States. We reran all of our analyses with these individuals removed, and the pattern of results and corresponding statistics were virtually identical.

in Iran?”), and another assessed military aid (“Would you support or oppose military aid designed to help the Iranian people?”; $r = .26$, $p = .004$).⁵ Finally, one item assessed support for diplomatic relations with Iran (“Would you support or oppose increasing diplomatic allegiances with the Government in Iran?”).⁶

Study 3 Results

Manipulation checks. To test if the manipulation influenced the extent to which Iranian people were viewed by the participants as promoting democratic reform, capitalism, or preference for religious law (Shari’a), we computed a 3 (experimental manipulations: democracy vs. capitalism vs. religious condition) \times 3 (Iranian goals: democratic reform vs. capitalism vs. religious law) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) where the Iranian goals were a within-participant factor and the experimental manipulations were a between-participant factor (see Figure 1).

A main effect of Iranian goals emerged, $F(2, 115) = 11.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$; however, this main effect was qualified by a two-way interaction between perceptions of Iranian goals and the manipulation, $F(4, 115) = 43.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .43$ (see Figure 1). Fisher’s Least Significant Difference post hoc tests revealed that, within each experimental condition, the manipulated goal had a stronger effect on perceptions that Iranians endorsed that goal (e.g., democratic reform in the democracy condition) compared to the other two goals (e.g., capitalism and religious law), indicating that each goal was successfully manipulated in each condition (all $ps < .01$, although the difference between capitalist and religious law preferences in the capitalism condition was marginal, $p = .09$). Similarly, each condition had the highest level of that condition’s manipulated goal (e.g., democratic reform was highest in the democracy condition compared to the capitalism and religious law conditions, all $ps < .02$). Thus, our manipulations were successful at changing people’s perceptions of the Iranian people and their motives.

Effects of manipulation on perceived value congruence and support for aid. We conducted one-way ANOVAs to assess whether the experimental

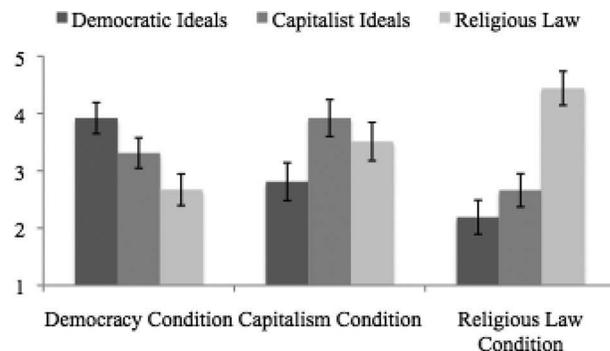


FIGURE 1 Mean and 95% confidence intervals for perceived Iranian values by condition.

manipulation affected perceptions of overall value similarity and threat (see Table 3). We tested the degree that these variables differed between the two pro-American goals conditions (i.e., democracy and capitalism) and the religious law condition. Hence, ANOVAs were computed by entering a contrast code such that 1 = democracy condition, 1 = capitalism condition, -2 = religious law condition. We also included a second code (1 = democracy; 0 = religious law; -1 = capitalism) to compare the democracy and capitalism conditions with one another and to meet conditions of orthogonality (Judd, McClelland, & Ryan, 2009).

Our first hypothesis was that manipulating the goals of the Iranian people (democracy, capitalism, or religious law) would directly impact perceived value similarity and threat. As predicted, participants who read depictions of Iranians as supporting democracy or capitalism viewed Iranians’ values as more similar to Americans’ values than those who read that Iranians promoted religious (Shari’a) law (see Table 3). The capitalism and democracy conditions did not differ from each other. The experimental manipulations weakly predicted value threat with framing Iranians as desiring capitalism being slightly more value threatening than desiring democracy. A significant effect on prejudice indicated that people felt most positively toward the Iranian people in the democracy condition, followed by the capitalism and Shari’a law conditions, with all three conditions differing significantly from one another.

Effects of perceived value congruence on prejudice and support for aid. Next, we tested the hypothesis that perceived value congruence (value similarity and threat) would predict support for foreign policies and attitudes toward Iranians, leading to significant indirect effects between the experimental manipulations and support for policy as well as prejudice. The value congruence hypothesis states that groups seen as sharing one’s core values are treated positively; however, groups seen as violating or threatening one’s

⁵We ran the path models reported next with these items included separately. Value similarity and threat did not predict a desire to provide military aid to the Iranian people but positively predicted a desire to overthrow the Iranian government. We combined these items in the path analysis for the sake of parsimony.

⁶We also explored the role of political ideology but found that it did not interact with the experimental condition, indicating that liberals and conservatives were similarly influenced by our manipulations. Because political ideology is not the focus of our article, we do not include it in our analyses presented here.

TABLE 3
Means, 95% Confidence Intervals, and Analysis of Variance Statistics for Variables by Condition

	Experimental Conditions			F Value	df	η_p^2
	Democracy	Capitalism	Religious Law			
Value similarity	2.79 ^a _[2.49–3.09]	2.50 ^a _[2.22–2.78]	1.97 ^c _[1.68–2.27]	7.67***	2, 116	.12
Value threat	2.71 ^a _[2.41–3.00]	3.14 ^b _[2.86–3.43]	2.80 ^{ab} _[2.50–3.09]	2.49+	2, 117	.04
Affect	3.85 ^a _[3.61–4.09]	3.37 ^b _[3.14–3.61]	2.71 ^c _[2.47–2.95]	21.95***	2, 121	.27
Humanitarian aid	3.56 ^a _[3.22–3.91]	3.26 ^a _[2.93–3.60]	3.46 ^a _[3.12–3.80]	.80	2, 120	.01
Diplomacy	3.43 ^a _[3.02–3.83]	3.50 ^a _[2.96–3.74]	3.37 ^a _[2.97–3.76]	.04	2, 121	.001
Military aid	2.72 ^a _[2.31–3.14]	2.54 ^a _[2.13–2.94]	2.93 ^a _[2.51–3.34]	.41	2, 121	.02
Military overthrow	2.40 ^a _[1.93–2.77]	2.63 ^a _[2.23–3.03]	2.54 ^a _[2.13–2.95]	.47	2, 121	.01

Note. All superscripts that do not share characters indicate a significant difference between conditions at the $p < .05$ level using Fischer’s Least Significant Difference post hoc test. All numbers in brackets represent 95% confidence intervals. All $N_s > 118$.

*** $p < .001$.

values are treated with prejudice and discrimination. To test this we ran path models with MPLUS (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2007), using a full information maximum-likelihood estimation procedure utilizing all available data (Peugh & Enders, 2004), and 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrapped samples to estimate indirect effects. The models we report here are saturated, so we do not report fit indices.

In the model (see Table 4) we allowed for all possible intercorrelations between the independent and dependent variables. Results in the first section of the model mirrored the analyses reported in the aforementioned section with Iranians in the democracy and capitalism conditions being viewed as holding values more similar to American values than Iranians in the religious law condition. Prejudice toward Iranians was also lower in the democracy and capitalism conditions compared to the religious law condition, suggesting that prejudice can be affected by how the people of a foreign nation are framed. Iranians were seen as slightly more value threatening in the capitalism condition compared to the democracy condition, and participants felt less direct prejudice toward Iranians in the democracy condition compared to the capitalism condition.

In the second section of the model, we used perceptions of value similarity and threat to predict support for humanitarian aid, diplomacy, military overthrow of the Iranian government, and prejudice toward the Iranian people. Value similarity predicted increased support for humanitarian aid and diplomacy, and lower prejudice. Significant indirect effects emerged demonstrating that portraying the Iranian people as supporting democracy and capitalism compared to religious law significantly drove support for humanitarian aid ($ab = .05$, $SE = .03$, $p = .04$), diplomacy ($ab = .08$, $SE = .03$, $p = .02$), and lower prejudice ($ab = -.05$, $SE = .02$, $p = .02$), through value similarity. Value threat predicted increased support for military overthrow and (marginally) predicted lower support for humanitarian aid. No indirect effect emerged through value threat.

Study 3 Discussion

Study 3 provided support for the value congruence hypothesis in the context of attitudes and support for foreign aid and diplomatic relations toward the people from an enemy nation. By experimentally manipulating the goals of the people of Iran, we were able to control

TABLE 4
Results of the Path Model for Study 3

	DV: Value Similarity b (SE)	DV: Value Threat b (SE)	DV: Humanitarian Aid b (SE)	DV: Diplomacy b (SE)	DV: Military Overthrow b (SE)	DV: Prejudice b (SE)
Democracy/capitalism vs. religious law contrast	.22 (.06)***	.05 (.06)	-.06 (.07)	-.07 (.08)	-.09 (.07)	-.26 (.05)***
Democracy vs. capitalism contrast	.13 (.10)	-.21 (.11)*	.07 (.12)	-.01 (.13)	.05 (.12)	-.20 (.09)*
Value similarity	—	—	.25 (.10)**	.35 (.12)**	.06 (.11)	-.21 (.07)**
Value threat	—	—	-.21 (.11)†	-.03 (.13)	.35 (.12)***	-.06 (.09)

Note. Numbers represent unstandardized coefficients. Parentheses represent standard errors. DV = dependent variable.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

for the panoply of geopolitical forces that shape perceptions of U.S.–Iranian relations and the effects of media portrayals of the Iranian culture and its people. This allowed us to narrow our investigation to the role that perceived value congruence plays in public opinions toward a foreign nation.

When the Iranian people were described as pursuing goals that are aligned with U.S. values (democracy and free-market capitalism), community participants were more likely to see the people of Iran as sharing similar values with the United States. However, when the Iranian people were framed as pursuing religious (Shari'a) law, participants perceived them as endorsing dissimilar values. Furthermore, perceiving value similarity and threat predicted support for particular U.S. foreign policies toward Iran, with perceived value similarity predicting positive attitudes toward Iranians and support for aid and diplomatic relations, and perceived value threat predicting denial of aid and support for military action against Iran (our value congruence hypothesis).

Despite overall support for the value congruence hypothesis, we did not expect that people would perceive Iran to be more threatening in the capitalism condition compared to the other conditions. This is perhaps due to fears that a hostile Iran could become more dominant on the world stage with a competitive economic model. Participants may have felt threatened by perceptions of a competitive, capitalist Iran. Once again, value similarity played a stronger role than value threat in predicting policy support. The weaker effect of value threat compared to value similarity may result from participants evaluating the people of Iran, when the greatest source of threat comes from the Iranian government and not the people. If we tested attitudes toward the government, we might have seen more direct effects of perceived value threat on policy preferences.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of all three studies support the value congruence hypothesis and shed light on how value congruence affects feelings toward other countries and levels of support for policies related to international relations. Across all three studies, perceptions of value similarity were associated with more favorable evaluations of a wide array of countries across a variety of dimensions. Perceptions of value similarity and threat predicted levels of prejudice, social closeness, and support for foreign aid and accounted for a significant amount of the relationship between several dimensions of similarity and subsequent policy preference. Specifically, the belief that the citizens of other nations are supportive of the values of one's own country (in this case, the United States) lead to more positive feelings, a desire for more

prosocial relations, and an increased desire to help similar nations.

Also, all three studies suggest that perceptions of value similarity may be a more consistent and powerful predictor of feelings toward people in foreign nations than perceptions of value threat. The fact that value similarity was more consistent in predicting policy, especially humanitarian policy, may reflect a desire to help people with values congruent with one's own beliefs. Value threat, on the other hand, was more associated with a desire to topple governments that threaten the power of one's own nation. The results presented here suggest that the way that nations are portrayed in the media (Study 3) may impact perceptions of value congruence, indirectly driving support for positive diplomatic relations with other countries or increasing support for aggressive policy. If media outlets focus on the value similarity between two nations, this may increase support for aid, but if they focus on how each nation threatens the other's values, then this may increase support for war. These findings have implications for policymakers and concerned citizens and may be informative in shaping the dialog about international relations to create more public support for positive and effective interactions between nations.

Although this research was conducted in the United States, we believe that these results are likely to generalize across countries spanning the globe. If one watches the news or listens to political discourse, it is easy to see how polarized politics is across the globe. Regardless of nationality, people on all sides of an issue feel animosity toward those who disagree with them. Recent research also shows that even those who hold views espousing tolerance often exhibit a desire to discriminate against ideological rivals (e.g., Brandt et al., 2014; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013; Wetherell, Brandt, et al., 2013). Hence, it may be useful for policymakers and media outlets across the globe to understand the ways in which value congruence influences support for international policy broadly.

Predictors of Value Similarity Versus Value Threat

In this research, we also explored what dimensions of similarity (e.g., ally status, racial, religious or cultural similarity, and goals) are associated with perceived value similarity or threat. In Study 1, ethnic/racial similarity was only predictive of value similarity but not value threat. In Study 2, ethnic/racial similarity did not play a role in predicting perceived value similarity or threat once cultural and religious similarity were taken into account. Religious similarity was related only to value similarity but not to value threat. These results suggest that similarities in certain dimensions (in this case, religious and racial) may serve as a cue that the groups

may share some common ground, but a lack of similarity in these dimensions does not necessarily suggest a lack of common ground. Countries with different racial backgrounds may come together under the umbrella of other, more powerful value systems that cancel out negativity that may arise from racial or religious differences, such as support for similar ideologies such as democracy or capitalism (see Study 3). For example, the United States and Israel have a powerful alliance despite having different national religions. It may also be the case that when there are a variety of indicators of similarity to pick from, religious and racial similarities are the least informative indicators of value congruence.

Supporting the idea that ethnic/racial and religious similarity may be ancillary to other predictors of value similarity and threat, our data suggest that the effects of ethnic/racial and religious similarity were superseded by perceptions of cultural similarity and ally status. When simultaneously entered into multilevel models with the other predictors, cultural similarity and ally status were positively related to value similarity and negatively related to value threat, suggesting that being culturally dissimilar to, or not allied with, the United States may actually threaten U.S. values more than being racially or religiously dissimilar. These findings reinforce the idea that demographic similarities are less relevant to value similarity and threat compared to similarities rooted in alliances and shared cultural norms.

Convergent evidence for this can be found in research demonstrating that shared ideology is a more potent predictor of intergroup attitudes than racial differences (Chambers et al., 2013), and research showing that people often see dissimilar others (i.e., Blacks and gays) not as threatening but as simply less supportive of cherished values (Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996). Similarly, research demonstrates that Whites view people in their own racial group more positively than people in other racial groups, but this does not necessarily mean they view other groups negatively (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner & McLaughlin, 1983). It may be the case that only when people are given explicit information germane to judgments of threat, such as whether a nation is a friend or foe, does perceived threat come into play.

Using a community sample, the results from Study 3 demonstrated that a manipulation of value congruence more powerfully affected value similarity than value threat, lending additional credence to the idea that cultural or ideological similarity more consistently predicts value similarity than value threat. Taken along with our other findings, these patterns suggest that people may not see racial and religious differences as threatening, and highlighting the racial and religious similarity of a country in a way that is detached from their cultural

similarity or ally status may not necessarily increase perceptions of value threat.⁷

Predictors of Intergroup Attitudes and Foreign Policy

Just as not all types of similarity were related to all measures of value congruence (i.e., value similarity and value threat), not all dimensions of similarity appeared to be predictive of prejudice and policy support equally across the board. Ally status and cultural similarity were the most consistent predictors of intergroup attitudes and levels of policy support. Racial/ethnic and religious similarity predicted intergroup attitudes (i.e., prejudice) but had little to no direct effect on policy support, suggesting that demographic diversity does not necessarily undermine support for foreign nations (see Study 2). Rather, the most consistent support for aid was best predicted by perceived value similarity and threat (our value congruence hypothesis).

In addition, not all types of value congruence were identically related to prejudice and policy support. In Study 1, value similarity was more closely related to decreased prejudice and increased social closeness than any other variable in the model; however, value threat was not related to either of these variables. In Study 2, both value similarity (positively) and threat (negatively) predicted positive affect, desire for closeness and support for aid, but value similarity appeared to have played a larger role in driving these sentiments. Similarly, in Study 3, value similarity was related to all forms of positive engagement with other nations, whereas value threat was related only to decreased support for humanitarian aid (weakly) and increased support for military overthrow.

Overall, it appears that value similarity and threat predict domain specific policies: Value similarity may be more relevant to attitudes toward foreign nations and support for humanitarian and diplomatic policies, but value threat is more relevant to aggressive policies. Rhetoric focusing on forms of similarity that decrease perceptions of value threat as well as increase perceptions of value similarity (e.g., cultural similarity) may be more effective in both increasing support for aid and decreasing support for aggressive policy toward nations that may sometimes be seen as threatening cherished values.

In addition to their strong direct predictive power, perceptions of value congruence accounted for

⁷This appears to be the case at least for this sample. However, racial and religious dissimilarity may play a more powerful role in other countries where political conflicts are more likely to fall along ethnic or religious lines (e.g., in some African or Middle Eastern nations).

a significant amount of the relationships between perceived ally status and ethnic/racial, cultural, and religious similarity on attitudes toward foreign countries and support for foreign aid overall. Perceived religious, racial/ethnic, and cultural similarity at times remained significant predictors of attitudes and support toward foreign nations upon inclusion of measures of value congruence in the models, but value similarity was a more consistent (and potent) predictor than the other measures of similarity. These results suggest that perceptions of value congruence drive a significant amount of the relationship between perceptions of similarity and support for policy. It appears that much of the effect of demographic and cultural dimensions of similarity on attitudes and policy support can be explained by perceptions of value congruence, particularly value similarity.

The consistencies in findings between the studies reported here are given additional credence by the diverse methodologies and samples (student and community) employed across these studies. The statistical and experimental methods utilized here suggest not only that preexisting perceptions of cultural and demographic similarity influence policy preference via perceptions of value similarity and threat but also that it is possible to change perceptions of similarity, value congruence, and subsequent affect and policy support by shifting focus from less to more similar ideologies between nations (Study 3). Despite the seemingly extreme differences between America and Iran, we were able to successfully focus on three types of ideological goals that do exist simultaneously in Iran, leading to changes in perceptions of value similarity, value threat, and subsequent changes in support for both diplomatic and aggressive foreign policy in a community sample. These results suggest that it is possible to find and focus on common ground even between nations who view each other with animosity, and that focusing on common ground can have beneficial effects on the international stage.

Limitations and Future Direction

One limitation of the present research is that we did not fully distinguish between perceptions of the people within these countries and the government of these countries (e.g., Studies 1 & 2 asked about “the countries and the people residing in the countries”). It is very possible that people have different perceptions of value congruence when evaluated at the level of a country’s government. Future research should assess how participants respond to the governments of the individual countries. For example, very corrupt governments or governments that operate under a different political structure (e.g., monarchy, communism) may be seen as

promoting less congruent values than the people affected by those governments.

In the case of Study 3, we specifically manipulated participants’ views of the people of Iran. Media-savvy participants may have been aware of differences between the beliefs of Iranian citizens and the beliefs of the Iranian government. It is possible that such participants in the Shari’a law condition equated the beliefs of Iranian citizens with the beliefs of the religious Iranian government more so than in the democracy and capitalism conditions. If this is the case, it may be that results in the democracy and capitalism conditions more closely reflected attitudes toward individual Iranian citizens, and the results in the Shari’a condition represented a combination of feelings toward the people and the Iranian government. That being said, the results of all three studies were quite similar in the sense that perceptions of value similarity predicted decreased prejudice, a desire for social closeness, and support for aid. Examining these patterns in the context of foreign governments is a logical next step for understanding the scope and possible limitations of the value congruence hypothesis.

It may also be the case that manipulating the values of the Iranian government would have led to slightly different results. We would still expect perceptions of value congruence between the Iranian government and the United States to lead to greater support for diplomacy and humanitarian aid to the government of Iran. However, even if participants make a distinction between a government and its people, they may not support overthrowing a value-incongruent government if they felt the populace under it would be harmed. This may be especially true if the values of the target country’s populace were seen as congruent with participants’ values (as was found in Study 3 where the people were protesting the government). Furthermore, if the values of a government are seen as incongruent with those of participants, participants may even favor humanitarian aid for the people of the country, seeing them as oppressed by the government.

Conclusions

In summary, the body of research presented here demonstrates that believing citizens of foreign nations are similar or dissimilar to those in one’s own country (here, the United States) is associated with perceptions of value similarity and threat, which in turn predict attitudes toward foreign nationals and support for foreign aid. Perceiving the citizens of foreign nations as sharing similar values with one’s own group was a consistent, powerful predictor of positive feelings and a desire to provide aid and accounted for much of the effects of demographic similarity on attitudes toward foreign

policy. Given the multitude of global crises ranging from wars, natural disasters, and disease, humanitarian and governmental agencies may increase Americans' support for international aid by focusing on the similarities between the United States and other nations. Finally, it may help humanitarian and government agencies to portray other nations as allies or at least potential allies, as ally status seemed to increase support for aid and seemed to override the tendency for people to make decisions based on racial differences. By taking these findings into account, policymakers and media outlets may be better able to increase support for assistance to people who need it on an international scale.

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APPENDIX: STUDY 3 MANIPULATION

The current study is designed to assess people’s perceptions of political, economic, or social conditions in other countries. You will be asked to read a short portion of an essay written about another country and asked to answer a variety of questions about the people and situations described in the essay. Remember your responses are completely anonymous, so please answer as honestly as you can. If you are not certain of an answer, make your best estimate.

Below is a portion of a short essay written by a journalist for a collection of short essays on the values of people in Iran.

Democracy Condition

... Following last year’s large protests for a democratic Iran, a recent poll of Iranians finds that 73% of the population supports democratic changes to the Iranian constitution, making democracy the basis for government in Iran. As much as 55% of Iranians go as far to suggest that Iran’s entire constitution should be abandoned and replaced with a new constitution that embraces democratic ideals and human rights. These democratic reforms would require promoting free speech, equal rights for women, and free and fair elections. If the will of the Iranian people was followed, there would be significant democratic reforms in Iran...

Capitalism Condition

... Following last year’s free-trade summit in Iran, a recent poll of Iranians finds that 73% of the population supports free-market capitalism and broader trade relations. As much as 55% of Iranians go as far to suggest that their vast oil reserves, which are currently state owned, be privatized and sold to established Iranian corporations to enable greater economic growth in the private sector. Currently, a majority of the larger industries in Iran are owned and operated by private citizens who seek greater economic investments from both Iranians and people throughout the world. If the will of the Iranian people was followed, there would be significant capitalist reforms in Iran. ...

Shari’a Law Condition

... Following last year’s judiciary elections in Iran, a recent poll of Iranians finds that 73% of the population supports the use of Shari’a law, the sacred law of Islam, as a founding basis for the government in Iran. As much as 55% of Iranians go as far to suggest that the supreme religious leader should be granted more power over the laws and policies of the country. These laws would require that citizens participate in Muslim religious rituals and prayers, abstain from immoral behavior such as drinking and adultery, and honor the traditional roles and duties of men and women as set out in the Qur’an. If the will of the Iranian people was followed, the influence of religious law would be more far reaching. ...