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**'Strangers in Their Own Land': Development and Validation of a Balanced, Unidimensional Scale to Measure the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions**

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**Abstract**

In recent decades, individuals and communities all over the world have experienced drastic and rapid societal changes due to economic, social, cultural and political cross-national interconnections. At present, a convincing scale measuring people's perception of threat deriving from these societal changes is not available. In this study, we have developed and validated the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions (SETLOT) Scale with a quota sample of 1,548 Italian adults. The SETLOT Scale is composed of six 4-category items and is balanced against response set. After correcting for the acquiescent response set, the scale is unidimensional and has a good convergent validity. Strengths and limitations of this study and possible uses of the SETLOT Scale are discussed.

## **‘Strangers in Their Own Land’: Development and Validation of a Balanced, Unidimensional Scale to Measure the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions**

Individuals and communities all over the world are experiencing rapid societal changes due to economic, social, cultural and political cross-national interconnections. Social scientists agree on the importance of understanding the psychological, social and cultural implications of this globalization process (Diaz & Zirchler, 2012; Scholte, 2005). These analyses cannot ignore the reaction of people who feel threatened in their consolidated social practices by the growing exposure to the symbolic cues of social changes, leading them to feel like ‘strangers in their own land’ (Hochschild, 2016). However, a solid and convincing scale measuring people’s perception of threat to local traditions does not exist. This hinders a solid test of this psychological consequence of globalization. To fill this gap, we developed and validated the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions (SETLOT) Scale with a wide quota sample of the Italian adult population.

### **Globalization as a Source of Psychological Threat**

One of the crucial aspects of globalization is the upsurge of migration flows and the opportunity for different ethnic groups to meet each other. In Italy, where we carried out the present research, this phenomenon was extremely sudden and even more salient than in other European countries. Two categories of psychological responses were observed: optimistic and integrative reactions on the one hand, and exclusionary and defensive reactions on the other (Chiu & Kwan, 2016).

Citizens leaning towards an integrative orientation welcomed migrant flows and the weakening of economic and political borders as a possibility to enlarge economic opportunities, enrich local cultures, spread modernity and enhance the acceptance of universal values of human rights, freedom and democracy. For other citizens, a perception of cultural contamination and a fear of downward competition among workers and of erosion of local cultural traditions prevailed, leading to the desire of defending and reaffirming local traditional practices (Chiu, Gries, Torelli, & Cheng, 2011).

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2  
3 1 Outside the US, beyond concern for migration flows, global society's Americanization is  
4  
5 2 another relevant aspect contributing to this bewilderment (Scholte, 2005). The emerging global  
6  
7 3 culture is less a synthesis of different traditions than the affirmation of one dominant culture over  
8  
9 4 others (Beck, Sznaider, & Winter, 2003). American values, language and products (from movies to  
10  
11 5 foods) are regarded as desirable by an ever-increasing number of people, and through the younger  
12  
13 6 generations, the American lifestyle is reproduced everywhere in the world, often to the detriment of  
14  
15 7 local culture (e.g., Waters, 1996). However, US cultural hegemony has also encountered resistance  
16  
17 8 in Europe, Asia and South America (Chiu & Hong, 2006).

19 9 The cultural upheaval embodied in the increasing salience of unfamiliar customs, habits and  
20  
21 10 symbols feeds into many people's sense of feeling like 'strangers in their own land' (Hochschild,  
22  
23 11 2016). New media technologies can reinforce this feeling, freeing and disseminating individual  
24  
25 12 moods previously confined to the private sphere. This reflects what is currently happening in  
26  
27 13 Western countries, where immigrants of different ethnic origins are settling down in ethno-  
28  
29 14 culturally homogeneous contexts (Ha & Jang, 2015). In this case, the perceived threats associated to  
30  
31 15 social change derive from the heightened competition for material resources (economic threat),  
32  
33 16 from the forced cultural mash-up (symbolic threat) and from the concern for public safety (social  
34  
35 17 threat) (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005).

36  
37 18 Many researchers have analysed the consequences of such perceptions mainly in terms of attitude  
38  
39 19 towards immigrants (e.g., Caricati, Mancini, & Marletta, 2017), political orientations (e.g., Kinder  
40  
41 20 & Sears, 1981) and support for specific policies (e.g., Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002). In  
42  
43 21 addition, beyond strengthening political leaning to conservatism (Louis, Duck, Terry, & Lalonde,  
44  
45 22 2010), the nostalgic reaction of people feeling that traditional values and norms are challenged fuels  
46  
47 23 their proneness towards populism and the voting for populist parties (e.g., Hawkins, Read, &  
48  
49 24 Pauwels, 2017).

50  
51 25 However, the extant measures do not allow researchers to capture the cultural disorientation  
52  
53 26 citizens may experience due to the changes stemming from globalization.

## 1 **The Cultural Threats**

2 Economic threat is linked to the autochthonous individuals' belief that immigrants usurp  
3 jobs and social resources needed for native-born individuals (e.g., Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong,  
4 1998), and social threat derives from the perception that immigrants are often involved in criminal  
5 activities (e.g., Wang, 2012), but the cultural threat is a more complex and multifaceted concept  
6 (Diaz & Zirkel, 2012).

7 One facet of this concept is captured by the notion of symbolic threat stemming from the  
8 forced contact between culturally distant ethnic groups, which leads people to perceive a challenge  
9 to previously established and shared worldviews, values and traditions (Stephan & Stephan, 2013).  
10 Symbolic threat elicits hostility and discrimination towards outgroups (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner,  
11 2006), individual proneness to populist political offers (e.g., Hawkins, Read, & Pauwels, 2017) and  
12 political leaning to conservatism (e.g., Bornschieer, 2018).

13 Symbols play an important role in the perception of this conflict, since cultural threat is  
14 triggered by the juxtaposition or the alignment of minority and dominant cultures (Rosenmann,  
15 Reese, & Cameron, 2016). When symbols of different social practices or traditions (e.g., foods,  
16 clothes, religious objects and holidays) are exposed simultaneously, 'culture' becomes the salient  
17 category people use to interpret the social world (Chiu & Cheng, 2010). Thus, the cognitive co-  
18 activation of cultures fosters the perception of intercultural differences and of social cohesion that,  
19 in turn, orients the individual expression of culturally stereotypic preferences (Hong, Morris, Chiu,  
20 & Benet-Martinez, 2000).

21 Another relevant dimension likely to foster cultural disorientation is the feeling of national  
22 nostalgia. This typically emerges in periods of social changes as an expression of resistance to the  
23 new situation, which can be contrasted to the good, socially homogeneous and lost past (Rapport &  
24 Dawson, 1998). This shared emotion promotes prejudice towards immigrants as a way to defend  
25 collective identity (Smeekes, Verkuyten, & Martinovic, 2015) and, at the same time, attenuates  
26 inter-subgroup competition in name of a supra-ordinate identity (Martinovic, Jetten, Smeekes, &

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2  
3 1 Verkuyten, 2018). Therefore, national nostalgia *per se* does not capture the genuine negative feeling  
4  
5 2 of threat to traditions elicited by the exposure to social change symbols. Traditions are sources of  
6  
7 3 meaning concretely embodying values and collective identity, which in turn root the actor within a  
8  
9 4 coherent and meaningful context. As consolidated social practices, traditions become implicit social  
10  
11 5 norms about 'our' way to face social objects. Thus, feeling the decline of traditions could translate  
12  
13 6 into a sense of *anomie*, the term Durkheim (1893) coined to refer to a state of alienation and  
14  
15 7 normlessness. According to Hawkins et al. (2017), there has still not been an adequate clarification  
16  
17 8 of the role of *anomie* in promoting the social-psychological consequences of the globalization  
18  
19 9 turmoil.

### 23 10 **Measuring the Perceived Threat to Local Traditions**

24 11 The goal of the SETLOT Scale is to tap the generalized perceived threat brought about by  
25  
26 12 the current cultural and societal changes, thus overcoming two limitations of the extant scales. First,  
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28 13 the specific relational (i.e., intergroup) definition of the symbolic threat notion leads most of its  
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30 14 operational definitions to mention explicitly the immigrants as the threat source, thus narrowing  
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32 15 substantially the focus of the possible studies (Riek et al., 2006). Moreover, the measures of  
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34 16 symbolic threat fail to address other aspects of the cultural threat deriving from globalization and  
35  
36 17 affirmation of American lifestyles in other countries. Second, the concept of national nostalgia fails  
37  
38 18 to capture a genuine sense of discontentment about social and cultural changes as witnessed by the  
39  
40 19 items of Smeekes et al.'s (2015) scale (e.g., 'How often do you bring to mind nostalgic experiences  
41  
42 20 related to the way the Netherlands was in the past?').

43  
44 21 We contend that a measure of the sense of threat to local traditions caused by the current  
45  
46 22 social change would be an important tool for integrating the operational definition of the symbolic  
47  
48 23 threat and of national nostalgia, able to contribute to a fine-grained understanding of the public  
49  
50 24 opinion of the present social change.

### 58 25 **The Present Study**

#### 59 26 **Goals and Hypotheses**

1 We aimed to develop and validate the SETLOT Scale by testing its factorial structure and its  
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1 We aimed to develop and validate the SETLOT Scale by testing its factorial structure and its  
2 convergent validity. The criteria for developing the scale were the following. From the substantive  
3 point of view, we worded items referring to ‘social changes’ without any further specification of  
4 threat sources (e.g., immigrants). From the methodological point of view, we aimed to develop a  
5 short, unidimensional and balanced scale.

6 Based on the literature above, we expected the SETLOT Scale to show positive associations  
7 with: (a) negative attitude towards immigrants (H1); (b) populist orientation (H2); (c) voting for  
8 populist parties (H3); and (d) political conservatism (H4).

## Method

### Context

11 We performed this study within the 2018 ‘Italian National Election Studies’ (Itanes: see  
12 <http://www.itanes.org/en/>) research on the political attitudes and voting behaviour of Italians in the  
13 2018 national election.

### Participants and Procedure

15 Via email (using the Computer-Assisted Web Interviews method), we surveyed a quota  
16 sample composed of 1,548 Italians over 18 years old (men = 46.3%,  $M_{age} = 47.52$ ,  $SD = 13.16$ ),  
17 stratified according to gender, age, geographic area of residence and size of area of residence. As an  
18 average, our sample declared 14.17 years of formal education ( $SD = 3.23$ ). In terms of geographic  
19 area of residence, 24.2%, 21.4%, 20.7%, 22.3% and 11.4% of the participants, respectively, lived in  
20 North-Western Italy, North-Eastern Italy, Central Italy, Southern Italy and on the main Italian  
21 islands (Sicily and Sardinia). A total of 34.9% of the respondents lived in large towns (>100,000  
22 inhabitants), while the other 65.1% lived in smaller population centres.

### Measures

24 We used the following set of questions, taken from a larger questionnaire available from the  
25 corresponding author.



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3 1 ***Sense of Threat to Local Traditions Scale.*** We constructed a concise, balanced scale,  
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5 2 composed of six items, reflecting what can be heard from people's discussions about the current  
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7 3 social change. Three statements are focused on traditions being under attack and negative  
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9 4 consequences, while the other three are focused on potential benefits of the evolution and  
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11 5 integration of customs. Respondents had to rate each statement as 'very true', 'somewhat true', 'a  
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13 6 little true', or 'not true at all'. Table 1 reports the Italian version of the items, their English  
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15 7 translation and the factorial loadings stemming from confirmatory factor analyses (see below).  
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19 8 ***Attitude towards immigrants*** was measured via three items. First, 'Would you say it is  
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21 9 generally bad or good for Italy's economy that people come to live here from other countries?'  
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23 10 Second, 'Would you say it is generally bad or good for Italy's culture that people come to live here  
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25 11 from other countries?' Third, 'Some people say that we receive too many immigrants. Others say  
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27 12 that we can receive many more. Suppose these people are at the extreme of the following scale. Of  
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29 13 course, others have intermediate opinions. Where would you place your opinion?' We took the first  
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31 14 two items from the European Social Survey (ESS: see [www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)) and the third  
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33 15 from the 2013 ITANES post-electoral survey (see [http://www.itanes.org/wp-](http://www.itanes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ITA2013_QuestionnaireCAPI_English_2014_08_07.pdf)  
34  
35 16 [content/uploads/2012/06/ITA2013\\_QuestionnaireCAPI\\_English\\_2014\\_08\\_07.pdf](http://www.itanes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ITA2013_QuestionnaireCAPI_English_2014_08_07.pdf)). Based on  $\alpha =$   
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37 17 .85, we averaged them, after recoding them all to a 0–1 range to give them the same unit of  
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39 18 measurement (originally, the first two items had an 11-category response format and the third a 7-  
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41 19 category response format). High scores indicated a negative attitude towards immigrants.  
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46 20 ***Populist orientation.*** We measured participants' populist orientation using Akkerman,  
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48 21 Mudde, and Zaslove's (2013) scale, composed of eight 5-category items, such as 'The people, and  
49  
50 22 not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions' and 'I would rather be  
51  
52 23 represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician'. Based on  $\alpha = .87$ , we averaged them into a  
53  
54 24 populist orientation index. High scores showed high levels of populist orientation.  
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58 25 ***Voting for a populist party.*** Based on Corbetta, Colloca, Cavazza, and Roccato (2018),  
59  
60 26 according to which the 5 Star Movement and the League are the most populist Italian parties, we

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3 1 recoded the answers to the question asking participants which party they voted for in the 2018  
4  
5 2 election into a dummy variable, contrasting voters for a non-populist party, coded as 0 ( $n = 461$ ),  
6  
7 3 with voters for the 5 Star Movement ( $n = 432$ ) and for the League ( $n = 148$ ), coded as 1.

9  
10 4 Respondents who did not report a valid vote were excluded from this variable.

11  
12 5 **Political conservatism.** We operationalized participants' conservatism via the standard ESS  
13  
14 6 11-category item asking participants about their political placement: 'In politics people sometimes  
15  
16 7 talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10  
17  
18 8 means the right?'

## 21 9 **Data analyses**

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24 10 We validated the SETLOT Scale via a twofold procedure. First, we tested its factorial  
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26 11 structure through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). According to the literature, especially when  
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28 12 surveying samples from the general population, a distortion stemming from the acquiescent  
29  
30 13 response set is likely. From the multivariate point of view, this phenomenon can bias the results, in  
31  
32 14 that a genuinely unidimensional scale can appear as bi-dimensional (Winkler, Kanouse, & Ware,  
33  
34 15 1984). When, as in our case, the scale is balanced, CFA allows correction of such a distortion by  
35  
36 16 employing the correlated uniqueness (CU) approach (Marsh, 1989), which correlates the errors of  
37  
38 17 the con-trait items to control for the error variance stemming from the response set. Thus, we  
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40 18 remained open to testing the dimensionality of the SETLOT Scale via a two-step procedure without  
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42 19 resorting to the CU approach, and then, if needed, by resorting to such an approach. As a second  
43  
44 20 step, we tested the convergent validity of the SETLOT Scale. Based on the literature above, we  
45  
46 21 expected the SETLOT Scale (measured as a latent variable) to be positively associated with a  
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48 22 negative attitude towards immigrants, with participants' populist orientation, with voting for a  
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50 23 populist party and with political conservatism. We tested the fit of our models by analysing the *TLI*,  
51  
52 24 the *CFI* and the *RMSEA*. We considered the *TLI* and the *CFI* satisfactory if  $> .90$  and the *RMSEA* if  
53  
54 25  $< .08$  (Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).  
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## 26 **Results**

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3 1 Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics of the variables we used and their bivariate  
4  
5 2 correlations.

### 3 **Factorial Structure of the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions Scale**

4 A first CFA led to unsatisfactory results. As Table 1 (penultimate column) shows, all the  
5 factorial loadings of the scale were shown to be significant. However, the fit of the model was not  
6 satisfactory:  $TLI = .56$ ,  $CFI = .74$ ,  $RMSEA = .20$  (90%  $CI = .19, .22$ ). Consistent with this: (a) the  
7 bivariate correlations between the pro-trait and between the con-trait items were systematically  
8 higher than those between the pro-trait and the con-trait items, and two of the latter were even non-  
9 significant (see Table 3); and (b) the  $\alpha$  of the scale was under the usual threshold,  $\alpha = .67$ .

10 However, a second CFA, performed by resorting to the CU approach, led to completely  
11 satisfactory results. Indeed, all the factorial loadings remained significant (see the last column of  
12 Table 1). Moreover, the associations between the con-trait items also reached statistical  
13 significance, with  $r$ 's ranging from  $r = .30$  to  $r = .43$ , and all  $p$ 's  $< .001$ , demonstrating the need to  
14 correct for the bias stemming from the acquiescent response set. Finally, the indices of fit of the  
15 model passed all the thresholds:  $TLI = .96$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $RMSEA = .06$  (90%  $CI = .05, .08$ ). The  
16 Average Variance Extracted ( $AVE$ ) index was  $= .49$ , while the composite reliability ( $CR$ ) was  $=$   
17  $.65$ .<sup>1</sup>

18 Based on two other CFAs, we could exclude a bi-factorial structure. Indeed, the fit of a bi-  
19 factorial model, with the con-traits loading on one factor and the con-trait items on the other, led to  
20 worse fit indices –  $TLI = .87$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ,  $RMSEA = .11$  (90%  $CI = .10, .12$ ), even when we freed the  
21 correlation between the two factors:  $TLI = .90$ ,  $CFI = .95$ ,  $RMSEA = .11$  (90%  $CI = .08, .11$ ). The  
22 much lower  $AIC$  and  $BIC$  of our model ( $AIC = 70.971$ ,  $BIC = 71.107$ ) as compared to those of the  
23 first ( $AIC = 201.538$ ,  $BIC = 201.647$ ) and the second ( $AIC = 148.206$ ,  $BIC = 217.687$ ) bi-  
24 dimensional models confirmed this conclusion. More analyses, available as supplementary material,  
25 showed that the two factors of a bi-factorial model yielded substantially the same correlations with  
26 the variable we used to test the SETLOT's convergent validity (see the next paragraph). Thus, we

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3 1 concluded that, after the correction of the factor method stemming from acquiescence, the SETLOT  
4  
5 2 Scale had a unidimensional structure.

### 3 **Convergent Validity of the Sense of Threat to Local Traditions Scale**

4 Consistent with H1, the SETLOT Scale had a positive association with participants'  
5 negative attitude towards immigrants ( $r = .69, p < .001$ ), both measured as latent variables:  $TLI =$   
6  $.96, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06$  (90%  $CI = .05, .07$ ). Moreover, consistent with H2, the SETLOT  
7 Scale showed a positive correlation with participants' populist orientation, both measured as latent  
8 variables:  $r = .43, TLI = .91, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .07$  (90%  $CI = .06, .07$ ). Consistent with H3, the  
9 SETLOT Scale, measured as a latent variable, showed a positive point-biserial correlation with  
10 voting for a populist party:  $r_{pb} = .23, p < .001, TLI = .96, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05$  (90%  $CI = .04,$   
11  $.07$ ). Finally, consistent with H4, the SETLOT Scale scores, measured as a latent variable, were  
12 positively correlated with political conservatism:  $r = .53, p < .001, TLI = .93, CFI = .96, RMSEA =$   
13  $.07$  (90%  $CI = .06, .09$ ). Thus, we concluded that the SETLOT Scale showed a satisfactory  
14 convergent validity.

## 15 **Discussion**

16 The psychological crux of globalization consequences is the sense of feeling like a 'stranger  
17 in one's own land' (Hochschild, 2016). This feeling has been conceptualized in social,  
18 psychological, sociological and political science literature mainly in terms of symbolic threat  
19 elicited by forced cohabitation with immigrants, or by national nostalgia encouraged by radical  
20 changes in the national culture. The extant research on the social implications of symbolic-cultural  
21 threat has been mostly limited, on the operational level, to the perception of the fight among  
22 fundamental and sometimes incompatible values. However, citizens' fear of change may be rooted  
23 in a sense of value threat, and values are embodied in a variety of different and new customs and  
24 habits that people observe as compared to a previously homogeneous social environment. The  
25 everyday exposure to concrete symbols (foods, religious items, clothes etc.) of different ways of life

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3 1 activates the intergroup framework able to forge citizens' political attitudes, feelings and  
4  
5 2 behaviours.

7 3 The aim of the present study was to provide a tool to capture this sense of threat to local  
8  
9 4 traditions. For this purpose, we developed the SETLOT Scale and validated it through a survey of a  
10  
11 5 sample of the Italian general population by testing its factorial structure and its convergent validity.  
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13 6 The SETLOT Scale consists of a short, unidimensional and balanced set of six items referring to the  
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15 7 emotional reluctance derived from custom evolution as opposed to the welcome of innovation and  
16  
17 8 social change.

21 9 Overall, the SETLOT Scale displays satisfactory psychometric properties. The CFA of the  
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23 10 initial item pool yielded one factor. The relationships between the criterion measures and the  
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25 11 SETLOT Scale confirmed the anticipated scale's convergent validity. In line with our hypotheses,  
26  
27 12 the scale score was strongly associated to a negative attitude towards immigrants, even though none  
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29 13 of the items explicitly cite this issue. Moreover, the scale appeared to be associated to a number of  
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31 14 political attitudes that have been conceived as globalization consequences, such as populist  
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33 15 orientation, voting for populist parties and political conservatism.

37 16 This study was not without limitations. First, as with the other existing scales in this field of  
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39 17 study, we validated the SETLOT Scale with a population sample from a single nation. Future cross-  
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41 18 cultural research could explore the factorial stability of the scale across different cultures. Second, it  
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43 19 was administered using a CAWI approach only. A comparison of the SETLOT Scale's performance  
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45 20 across different methods of administration could be interesting. Third, due to space limitations in  
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47 21 the questionnaire we used, we could not explore the scale's unique predictive validity in  
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49 22 comparison to other scales. This exploration could represent another line of future research. Fourth,  
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51 23 the *AVE* (= .49) of the scale was slightly below the .50 threshold conventionally chosen to test the  
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53 24 convergent validity of a measurement model. However, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981),  
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55 25 the *CR* of the scale was high enough to conclude that the SETLOT's items showed a satisfactory  
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57 26 convergent validity. Finally, the single factor of the SETLOT scale explained a low variance of two

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3 1 con-trait items. New administrations of the SETLOT Scale could be interesting to test the inter-  
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5 2 situational robustness of our unidimensional solution  
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8 3 Despite these limitations, the SETLOT Scale has some relevant advantages: it is a short  
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10 4 scale consisting of six items only; it is balanced, thus it allows to correct the individual scores from  
11  
12 5 participants' idiosyncratic use of the scale through structural equations modelling (Marsch, 1989); it  
13  
14 6 is short and can therefore be used instead of, or as a complement for, other scales—e.g., Stephan,  
15  
16 7 Stephan, and Gudkunst's (1999) symbolic threat scale and Smeekes et al.'s (2015) national  
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18 8 nostalgia scale. We believe that the short and comprehensive nature of the SETLOT Scale will help  
19  
20 9 facilitate the understanding of socially and politically relevant phenomena, such as inter-ethnic  
21  
22 10 relations and technology acceptance. Moreover, because it does not mention outgroups as a source  
23  
24 11 of threat (e.g., immigrants), it could be used extensively across different countries to expand our  
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26 12 knowledge on the 'demand side' of populism as a reaction to undesired and incomprehensible social  
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28 13 changes, allowing a methodologically convincing test of the 'cultural road' to populist orientations  
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31 14 (e.g., Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2016).  
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## Footnote

<sup>1</sup>The SETLOT scale's *AVE* gave a result slightly under the usual .50 threshold. However, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), a lower (even .40) threshold is acceptable if a scale's *CR* is higher than .60, as in our case. Thus, we concluded that the items of the SETLOT Scale showed a satisfactory convergent validity.

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Table 1

*The Sense of Threat to Local Traditions Scale: Items and Standardized Factorial Loadings*

| Item   |   | Standardized factorial loadings |  |
|--|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Italian version  | English version   | Unidimensional model            | Unidimensional model with the correlated uniqueness correction |
| 1. Oggi in Italia le tradizioni sono minacciate come mai prima d'ora.  | 1. Today in Italy, traditions are under attack as never before.   | .80***                          | .79***   |
| 2. I cambiamenti sociali sono più un miglioramento che una minaccia. (R)                                     | 2. The changes we see in society are an improvement rather than a threat to our tradition. (R)              | .33***                          | .31***   |
| 3. Mi sento spesso uno straniero a casa mia.   | 3. I often feel like a stranger in my own country.  | .60***                          | .60***   |
| 4. La nostra società dovrebbe rinunciare ad alcune tradizioni per adattarsi meglio ai tempi che corrono. (R) | 4. We need to give up some traditions in order to adapt ourselves better to the times in which we live. (R) | .16***                          | .13***   |

|  |   |        |        |
|--|---|--------|--------|
| 5. I cambiamenti sociali stanno minando le nostre radici culturali.                        | 5. The changes we see in society are threatening our very culture.          | .82*** | .83*** |
| 6. La nostra società dovrebbe dare più importanza all'innovazione che alle tradizioni. (R) | 6. We need to give more importance to innovation rather than tradition. (R) | .13*** | .10**  |

Note. (R) = reversed item. All the reversed items are recoded so that high scores indicate a high sense of threat to local traditions. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Our Variables and Bivariate Correlations between Them*

|                               | Descriptive statistics |           | Correlations |        |        |        |        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                               | <i>M</i>               | <i>SD</i> | 1            | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      |
| 1. SETLOT                     | 2.57                   | .53       | 1            | .57*** | .31*** | .19*** | .34*** |
| 2. Attitude toward immigrants | 6.04                   | 2.33      |              | 1      | .35*** | .27*** | .44*** |
| 3. Populist orientation       | 3.88                   | .75       |              |        | 1      | .32*** | .22*** |
| 4. Vote for a populist party  | .37                    | .48       |              |        |        | 1      | .14*** |

Note. SETLOT = Sense of threat to local traditions. Scale scores computed as average scores. The 'mean' of voting for a populist party is the proportion, on a 0–1 scale, of the respondents who voted for a populist party. When voting for a populist party is involved, the point-biserial correlation is displayed.

Table 3

*Bivariate Correlations between the Items of the SETLOT Scale before the Correlated Uniqueness correction*

|            | Item 1 | Item 2 (R) | Item 3 | Item 4 (R) | Item 5 | Item 6 (R) |
|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
| Item 1     | 1      | .25***     | .49*** | .14***     | .65*** | .11***     |
| Item 2 (R) |        | 1          | .15*** | .33***     | .29*** | .31***     |
| Item 3     |        |            | 1      | -.01       | .50*** | -.02       |
| Item 4 (R) |        |            |        | 1          | .10*** | .44***     |
| Item 5     |        |            |        |            | 1      | .08***     |
| Item 6 (R) |        |            |        |            |        | 1          |

Note. (R) = reversed item. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### Supplementary online material

In this supplementary online material, we present some reasoning in favour of a unidimensional structure of the SETLOT Scale, and the results of our convergent validity tests performed using a bi-factorial model instead of the unidimensional model we chose to present in the paper.

#### Theoretical Reasoning Supporting a Unidimensional Solution

1. According to the literature, surveys performed with samples from the general population are often distorted by the acquiescent response set (e.g., Curran, 2016), in that inaccurate respondents are over-represented within such samples (e.g., McGrath et al., 2010), especially if surveyed via email (e.g., Johnson, 2005).

2. We had a relevant symptom of acquiescent response-set: A single-factor model of a battery conceived to be unidimensional did not fit well, but its fits improved significantly when resorting to the Correlated Uniqueness approach, developed to fix response-set issues (Marsh, 1989).

3. Consistent with this, as shown in the manuscript, the congeneric model fitted the data better than a bi-dimensional model with the pro-trait items loading on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2, as consistently witnessed by the higher CFI and the TLI and the lower RMSEA of the first as compared to those of the second and by its much lower AIC and BIC.

4. Before resorting to the Correlated Uniqueness correction some items showed to be uncorrelated one to another (as shown in Table 3 in the manuscript). However, all of the factorial loadings of the congeneric model were statistically significant (as shown in Table 1 in the manuscript). Moreover, the non-significant bivariate correlations involved the pro-trait Item 3 on the one hand and the con-trait Item 4 and Item 6 on the other. This is far from surprising, in that—by definition—after reversing the con-trait items, the acquiescent response-set pushes some participants (those giving an acquiescent response-set) in a direction when responding the pro-trait items and in the opposite direction when responding the con-trait items. Consequently, in the case of distortion stemming from the acquiescent response-set, one should expect the mean correlation

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3 between the pro-trait items to be higher than that between the con-trait items, and both of them to be  
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5 higher than the mean correlation between the pro-trait and the con-trait items. That's exactly what  
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7 we have found. The mean correlation between the pro-trait items ( $mean\ r = .55$ ) was higher than  
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9 that between the con-trait items ( $mean\ r = .36$ ),  $Z = 6.71$ ,  $p < .001$ , that in turn was higher than that  
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11 between the pro-trait and the con-trait items ( $mean\ r = .12$ ),  $Z = 7.12$ ,  $p < .001$ . Not surprisingly, the  
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13 mean correlation between the pro-trait items was higher than that between the pro-trait and the con-  
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15 trait items,  $Z = 13.84$ ,  $p < .001$ .

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19 5. The SETLOT's *AVE* ( $AVE = .49$ ) was very slightly under the conventional .50 threshold.  
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21 However, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), it was not incompatible with a unidimensional  
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23 structure.

### 24 25 26 **Parallel Analyses in Favour of a Unidimensional Solution**

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28 In a new set of analyses, we repeated the convergent validity tests we included in the  
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30 manuscript modelling the SETLOT as a bi-dimensional construct, with the pro-trait items loading  
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32 on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2. Consistently across the analyses, the fit of  
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34 the models analysing the association of the bi-dimensional SETLOT Scale with our criterion  
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36 variables was worse than that of the models with a unidimensional SETLOT. Moreover, with a  
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38 slight exception, in all of the models both the factors showed the same associations with our  
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40 criterion variables showed by our single factor. Thus, we conclude that the unidimensional solution  
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42 is preferable to the bi-dimensional solution.

### 43 44 45 46 **Association between SETLOT and Attitude towards Immigrants**

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48 We modelled SETLOT as a bi-dimensional latent construct, with the pro-trait items loading  
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50 on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2. Given their semantic closeness, we did not  
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52 fix the correlation between the two SETLOT factors,  $r = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ .

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56 Like the unidimensional factor we presented in the article, both Factor 1 and Factor 2 showed  
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58 positive, significant correlations with attitude towards immigrants, measured as a unidimensional  
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60 latent construct,  $rs$  respectively =  $.68$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $r = .33$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consistent with the theoretical



reasoning above (see point # 4), the first association was stronger than the second,  $Z = 13.52$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The model analysing the association between SETLOT and attitude towards immigrants measuring SETLOT as a unidimensional construct (the results are those we presented in the article) showed a better fit than that measuring SETLOT as a bi-dimensional construct (see Table 1).

Table 1.

*Fit of the Models Analysing the Correlation between SETLOT and Attitude towards Immigrants: Comparison between the Model Measuring SETLOT as a Unidimensional Construct and That Measuring SETLOT as a Bi-dimensional Construct*

|                      | <i>TLI</i> | <i>CFI</i> | <i>RMSEA</i>                  | <i>AIC</i> | <i>BIC</i> |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Unidimensional model | .96        | .97        | .06<br>(90% CI =<br>.05, .07) | 193.934    | 194.220    |
| Bi-dimensional model | .96        | .94        | .07<br>(90% CI =<br>.06, .08) | 261.368    | 261.641    |

### **Association between SETLOT and Populist Orientation**

We modelled SETLOT as a bi-dimensional latent construct, with the pro-trait items loading on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2. Given their semantic closeness, we did not fix the correlation between the two SETLOT factors,  $r = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Like the unidimensional factor we presented in the article, both Factor 1 and Factor 2 showed positive, significant correlations with populist orientation, modelled as a unidimensional latent construct,  $r$ s respectively =  $.44$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $r = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consistent with the theoretical

reasoning above (see point # 4), the first association was stronger than the second,  $Z = 10.06$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The model analysing the association between SETLOT and populist orientation measuring SETLOT as a unidimensional construct (the results are those we presented in the article) showed a better fit than that measuring SETLOT as a bi-dimensional construct (see Table 2).

Table 2.

*Fit of the Models Analysing the Correlation between SETLOT and Populist Orientation:*

*Comparison between the Model Measuring SETLOT as a Unidimensional Construct and That Measuring SETLOT as a Bi-dimensional Construct*

|                      | <i>TLI</i> | <i>CFI</i> | <i>RMSEA</i>                  | <i>AIC</i> | <i>BIC</i> |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Unidimensional model | .91        | .93        | .07<br>(90% CI =<br>.06, .07) | 644.883    | 645.510    |
| Bi-dimensional model | .91        | .92        | .07<br>(90% CI =<br>.07, .08) | 696.064    | 696.691    |

### **Association between SETLOT and Voting for a Populist Party**

We modelled SETLOT as a bi-dimensional latent construct, with the pro-trait items loading on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2. Given their semantic closeness, we did not fix the correlation between the two SETLOT factors,  $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Like the unidimensional factor we presented in the article, both Factor 1 and Factor 2 showed positive, point-biserial correlations with voting for a populist party,  $r_s$  respectively =  $.23$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $r = .05$ ,  $p = .093$ . The second point-biserial correlation was not significant, but it was not very far from the 0.5 threshold, and the trend was in the expected direction. Moreover: (a) consistent

with the theoretical reasoning above (see point # 4), it involved the factor measured by the con-trait items, and (b) the first association was stronger than the second,  $Z = 5.12, p < .001$ .

The model analysing the association between SETLOT and voting for a populist party measuring SETLOT as a unidimensional construct (the results are those we presented in the article) showed a better fit than that measuring SETLOT as a bi-dimensional construct (see Table 3).

Table 3.

*Fit of the Models Analysing the Correlation between SETLOT and Voting for a Populist Party: Comparison between the Model Measuring SETLOT as a Unidimensional Construct and That Measuring SETLOT as a Bi-dimensional Construct*

|                      | <i>TLI</i> | <i>CFI</i> | <i>RMSEA</i>                  | <i>AIC</i> | <i>BIC</i> |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Unidimensional model | .96        | .98        | .05<br>(90% CI =<br>.04, .07) | 91.904     | 92.080     |
| Bi-dimensional model | .90        | .94        | .08<br>(90% CI =<br>.07, .10) | 170.396    | 170.563    |

### **Association between SETLOT and Political Conservatism**

We modelled SETLOT as a bi-dimensional latent construct, with the pro-trait items loading on Factor 1 and the con-trait items loading on Factor 2. Given their semantic closeness, we did not fix the correlation between the two SETLOT factors,  $r = .31, p < .001$ .

Like the unidimensional factor we presented in the article, both Factor 1 and Factor 2 showed positive, point-biserial correlations with political conservatism,  $r$ s respectively =  $.52, p < .001$  and  $r = .29, p < .001$ . Consistent with the theoretical reasoning above (see point # 4), the first association was stronger than the second,  $Z = 7.72, p < .001$ .

The model analysing the association between SETLOT and political conservatism measuring SETLOT as a unidimensional construct (the results are those we presented in the article) showed a better fit than that measuring SETLOT as a bi-dimensional construct (see Table 4).

Table 4.

*Fit of the Models Analysing the Correlation between SETLOT and Political Conservatism: Comparison between the Model Measuring SETLOT as a Unidimensional Construct and That Measuring SETLOT as a Bi-dimensional Construct*

|                      | <i>TLI</i> | <i>CFI</i> | <i>RMSEA</i>                  | <i>AIC</i> | <i>BIC</i> |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Unidimensional model | .93        | .96        | .07<br>(90% CI =<br>.06, .09) | 109.408    | 109.666    |
| Bi-dimensional model | .87        | .92        | .10<br>(90% CI =<br>.09, .12) | 177.018    | 177.261    |

### Conclusion

Based on the analyses presented in the article, the theoretical reasoning and the empirical analyses above, we concluded that it is preferable to model the SETLOT Scale as unidimensional vs. a bi-dimensional construct.

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