



**Bartłomiej Walczak**

University of Warsaw

ORCID 0000-0002-0346-712X

**Iwona Jakubowska-Branicka**

University of Warsaw

ORCID 0000-0002-8603-3174

**Nikolaos Lampas**

The American College of Greece

ORCID 0000-0002-1956-2279

## **The associations between economic, social and cultural capital and social distance towards refugees: A comparative study of emerging adults in Greece and Poland**

**Związki między kapitałem ekonomicznym, społecznym i kulturowym  
a dystansem społecznym wobec uchodźców: studium porównawcze  
wschodzących dorosłych w Grecji i Polsce**

**Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and three forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus reproduction. Utilizing social distance as a measure of attitudes toward Ukrainian and Southwest Asian refugees, the research posits that these groups differ in cultural proximity to European societies and present distinct challenges to integration policies due to varying scales of inflow. Data were collected from random samples of emerging adults in Greece (n=327) and Poland (n=554). Findings indicate that higher perceived cultural distance correlates with greater social distance. Greek participants exhibited more inclusive attitudes compared to their Polish counterparts. While economic capital did not significantly predict social distance, hierarchical linear modeling revealed associations with social

capital—particularly its bridging form—and inherited cultural capital. These results support Bourdieu's concept of habitus reproduction within the family and offer insights into young adults' attitudes toward refugees.

**Keywords:** social distance, refugees, cultural capital, social capital, habitus.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding how social attitudes towards refugees are shaped, particularly in the context of emerging adults. The existing literature has shown that social attitudes towards refugees, particularly among emerging adults, are shaped by a complex interplay of actors, including perceived threats (Murray and Marx, 2013), social representations and national discourses (Hanson-Easey and Moloney, 2009), multicultural ideologies (Musso et al., 2017), and media influences (Arlt and Wolling, 2018; Crawley et al., 2019). This study aims to explore the relationship between various forms of capital - economic, cultural, and social - and the social distance emerging adults maintain towards refugees in Greece and Poland. Using Bourdieu's concepts of economic, cultural and social capital, along with Putnam's interpretation of social capital, this paper seeks to analyze how these factors influence perceptions of refugees from Ukraine and South-West Asia (SWA). Emerging adults are young adults in the process of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Jeffrey Arnett, the author of this term, proposed age brackets of 18-29, observing the increasing time of transition in industrialized societies (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults function between adolescents' dependency on their families and the full independence of grown adulthood. Most of them are still in education and/or first work experience, which will provide the foundation for their future position. As the transition period is characterized by the feeling of in-betweenness, exploration of own identity, and instability (Nelson and Barry, 2005), they form a particularly interesting and still underresearched group.

The puzzle of this paper is why, despite similar socioeconomic challenges, emerging adults in Poland display significantly higher levels of social distance towards refugees compared to their Greek counterparts. These differences raise critical questions about how cultural, social, and economic capital shapes attitudes towards refugees across different national contexts. This paper investigates how these forms of capital intersect with social attitudes and whether they offer any explanatory power for understanding variations in social distance between the two countries.

The findings of this paper suggest that social capital plays a critical role in shaping attitudes towards refugees among emerging adults in Greece and Poland. In both countries, bridging social capital - trust towards people from different backgrounds - significantly decreases social distance towards refugees, with a stronger effect in Poland. In contrast, bonding social capital - trust within close-knit social groups - does not have a significant impact on attitudes towards refugees. Additionally, cultural capital, measured through parental education levels, influences social distance in Poland but not in Greece. These results indicate that fostering broader social networks and inclusive attitudes may be essential for reducing negative perceptions of refugees, particularly in Poland.

The paper begins with a literature review that discusses Bourdieu's and Putnam's theories of capital, followed by an examination of existing studies on social distance and refugee-related attitudes, particularly among emerging adults. In the research methodology section, the paper details the data collection process and sampling methods. The results section presents a comparative analysis of Greece and Poland, highlighting significant differences and associations between social capital, cultural capital, and attitudes towards refugees. In the discussion, the findings are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and existing research. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key findings.

### **Theoretical framework**

The sociological theory proposed by Pierre Bourdieu has been recognized as one of the most interesting over the past decades, so it is hardly surprising that it is often cited as a tool for explaining and understanding social reality. Bourdieu (2001) introduced a whole series of new concepts into the language of sociological theory. According to him, the task of sociology is to bring to light the most deeply hidden structures of the various social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the mechanisms of their reproduction and change. This universe has the fact that the structures that make it up lead, in a sense, a double life. They exist doubly: the first time within the framework of "first-order objectivity," created by the distribution of material resources; their second existence takes place within the framework of "second-order objectivity," in the form of mental and bodily schemas, acting as "symbolic matrices" of all practices, behavior, thinking, feelings and judgments of members of society. Social facts are also objects of cognition within this reality, as human beings give meaning to the world that these facts create. The study of society should, therefore, necessarily use the method

of double reading. The first reading treats society in the manner proper to “social physics,” that is, as an objective structure captured from the outside. Taken to its extreme, objectivism, according to Bourdieu, can only propose an “ersatz” subject, painting individuals and groups as passive carriers of forces whose actions manifest themselves mechanically, according to their proper logic. Therefore, the second reading, in order to avoid the reductionist trap, must focus on the visions and interpretations of social subjects as an inalienable component of the holistic reality of the social world.

Bourdieu assumes that there is a correspondence between social structure and thought structures, between objective divisions of the social world, especially into dominant and dominated in different fields, and the principles of perception and division (vision and division) attributed by people to these divisions. According to this assumption, the relevant cognitive systems of community members are derived from their social systems. Classes and other antagonistic collectivities are engaged in a constant struggle for the opportunity to impose a way of seeing the world that is most consistent with their particular interests.

The central concepts in Bourdieu’s theory are habitus and field. A field is a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power. Fields correspond to “orders of life”, so we can talk about economic, political, religious, aesthetic intellectual, etc. fields. In each field, different processes take place, and there are conflicts and struggles for power; as a result of various circumstances, changes in the interrelationships between actors in the field occur. The field enters into mutual relations with the habitus.

Habitus takes the form of a set of historical patterns “deposited” inside the individual in the form of mental and bodily patterns of perception, judgment and action. Habitus is, as Bourdieu (2007; 2001) writes, a modelling mechanism operating inside individuals, a mechanism shaped by the field of which the individual is a participant. Habitus is the result of internalizing external structures; it is assimilated by the individual through socialization, and it is a socially formed basis for perceiving and evaluating the world. Different fields shape different habitus, different patterns of perceiving and defining the world, and different patterns of reaction. Symbolic violence and symbolic power effectively serve the individual’s internalization of the patterns preferred in a given field, instil certain values in successive generations, and reproduce the legitimate culture, the legitimate culture (in a given field). According to Bourdieu, the sources of cultural capital are the activities described by the terms authority and pedagogical and school work,

the educational system, and finally by the fundamental concepts of symbolic violence (*violence symbolique*) and legitimate or legitimate culture (*legitime*).

The author describes the process in question using the example of an analysis of the school system in France (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2006). Socialization is always the instilling of values. Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of transmitting cultural capital, the distribution of which is the most important goal of socialization of the younger generation. However, he also underlines the importance of economic capital in the process of distributing cultural capital, and above all, he draws attention to the class nature of the distribution and reproduction of habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

The theory proposed by Bourdieu is a deterministic theory. It leaves little, if any, hope for the individual to change the symbolic paradigm. Trapped in a habitus determined by class allocation, the individual has no chance to think and value beyond the habitus unless he enters another symbolic field that changes his habitus. Thus, if we look to Bourdieu's theory for an explanation of more or less positive attitudes toward "strangers," we must resort to an analysis of the "legitimized" cultural patterns transmitted in a given field through the process of reproduction. The concept of social capital, introduced by Bourdieu, also does not lead, in the context of our considerations, to a clear conclusion. This is because Bourdieu considered social capital to be the property of the individual rather than the collective, resulting primarily from position and status in the field. Conceived in this way, social capital enables a person to exert power over a group or individual, without prejudging values.

Social capital was defined differently by Robert Putnam (2008). In the 1970s, he and his team conducted a famous study of the problems of civic life in various regions of Italy. He posed the research question of what are the conditions for the creation of a strong, responsive, efficient representative institution and the smooth functioning of civil society. The conclusion of the research can be summed up in the statement that everyone would be better off if everyone worked together and everyone trusted each other. This principle is rational and pragmatic from the point of view of the interests of each interaction partner. Putnam defines social capital as the totality of norms, networks of mutual trust, loyalty, and horizontal networks of dependence in a given social group, including the state. He distinguished two forms of capital: bonding, which is developed inside the given social group, and bridging, which expands beyond the group boundaries.

### **Social attitudes towards refugees**

An extensive body of research explores social attitudes towards refugees, with much of it focusing on negative perceptions shaped by symbolic and realistic threats. Symbolic threats involve concerns over cultural and national identity, while realistic threats are associated with economic stability and security risks. These negative attitudes influence voting behaviors and government policies toward refugee management (Verkuyten, 2004; Yitmen and Verkuyten, 2018). However, cross-national differences in these attitudes—particularly between countries with similar socioeconomic challenges—are less explored, leaving an important gap in understanding how cultural, social, and economic capitals interact with national contexts to shape perceptions of refugees. This paper addresses this gap by examining why emerging adults in Poland exhibit significantly higher social distance toward refugees than their Greek counterparts, despite facing similar socioeconomic challenges.

Demographic factors remain foundational in explaining attitudes toward refugees (Hodson and Dhont, 2015). Research consistently shows that gender, age, education, and political orientation shape these views. Pedersen et al. (2005) developed the Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers Scale (ATAS), revealing that older individuals, men, and those with lower levels of education often exhibit more negative attitudes. Subsequent studies further validate these findings, showing the influence of political conservatism and strong national identity (Deslandes and Anderson, 2019; Nickerson and Louis, 2008). While these studies highlight demographic determinants, they often lack comparative analysis across nations, particularly in the context of shared socioeconomic challenges like those faced by Greece and Poland.

Ideological frameworks, including the Dual Process Model of Prejudice (DPM), offer deeper insights. Duckitt and Sibley (2010) identified Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) as ideological predictors of prejudice. SDO emphasizes hierarchical social structures and intergroup competition, while RWA is rooted in fear-based authoritarianism aimed at preserving societal uniformity. Empirical evidence, such as Anderson's (2018) work, underscores how these orientations independently drive negative attitudes toward refugees, though cross-national differences in the prevalence and interaction of these ideological traits remain underexplored.

The Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) (Stephan and Stephan, 2000) complements these frameworks by analyzing how perceived symbolic and realistic threats exacerbate prejudicial attitudes. Media portrayals often amplify these perceptions, framing refugees as societal threats linked to illegality

or terrorism (Augoustinos and Quinn, 2003). Schweitzer et al. (2005) demonstrated that Australians viewing refugees as both symbolic and realistic threats were more likely to favor restrictive immigration policies. This highlights the importance of cultural narratives and media framing, which may vary significantly between nations like Greece and Poland, contributing to divergent social attitudes despite shared challenges.

Social processes also shape attitudes, with direct and indirect contact playing pivotal roles. Larson and Lewis (2024) found that perspective-taking interventions in Uganda reduced negative attitudes, and these effects extended through social networks. Similarly, Landmann et al. (2022) emphasize the impact of indirect contact, particularly through close relationships, in mitigating bias. Social media platforms like Twitter often mirror public anxieties, with negative sentiments predominantly fueled by perceived threats. Nonetheless, instances of solidarity and empathy, though less frequent, also exist (Uluğ et al., 2023). Comparative studies reveal that refugees tend to be perceived more negatively than immigrants from European Union countries, with heightened feelings of threat driving this disparity (Meidert and Rapp, 2019). However, the extent to which such social mechanisms operate differently across cultural contexts remains underexplored, particularly in countries with contrasting histories of migration and integration policies.

While existing research provides valuable insights into predictors of refugee attitudes, significant gaps remain in understanding how these attitudes vary across national contexts with similar socioeconomic challenges. Bourdieu's theory of capital, emphasizing inherited and acquired resources, offers a promising framework for exploring these differences. For instance, Greece's historical role as a migration gateway contrasts with Poland's relatively homogenous cultural landscape, potentially shaping how cultural capital influences refugee perceptions. Similarly, the structural differences in social capital—such as Greece's proximity to migration routes versus Poland's geographic and cultural insularity—may explain variations in intergroup dynamics and social distance toward refugees. Economic capital also warrants further exploration, particularly in how resource scarcity shapes perceptions. Greek respondents may view economic competition differently due to the country's reliance on tourism and international aid linked to refugees, a dynamic less prominent in Poland.

Social capital and its influence on intergroup dynamics present another area of inquiry. While intergroup contact theory emphasizes the importance of social networks in reducing prejudice, little attention has been given to the structural variations in social capital between nations. Poland's relative



cultural and geographic insularity, compared to Greece's role as a key migration route, may account for differences in social distance toward refugees. Economic capital also plays a crucial role, particularly in contexts of perceived resource scarcity. Despite facing similar economic challenges, Greek respondents may frame economic competition differently due to the country's reliance on tourism and international aid linked to refugees, a dynamic less prominent in Poland. Investigating these nuances can reveal how economic capital interacts with refugee attitudes across distinct national settings.

Finally, comparative frameworks in refugee research remain underdeveloped. Much of the existing literature focuses on individual nations or broader regional trends, neglecting direct comparisons between countries like Greece and Poland that share socioeconomic pressures but exhibit divergent attitudes. By employing the lens of inherited and personal capital, this paper seeks to provide a deeper understanding of these differences, contributing to the broader discourse on refugee perceptions in varied national contexts.

### **Social distance**

The concept of social distance comes from the work of Robert E. Park (1924). Park originally defined social distance as a measure of understanding and intimacy in personal and social relationships. He hoped that an insight into social distance between different social groups could reveal the social organization that forces our activities towards the representatives of different groups. Emory Bogardus soon operationalized the concept. In his first research (Bogardus, 1925), he identified the complexity of the mechanism of racial prejudices, showing that they are generalization habits emerging from traditions and shared opinions, rarely based on direct experience. In the latter paper published in the same year (1925a), Bogardus proposed measuring social distance by the extent of social contact rate (a social contact range index, SCR). He identified seven spheres of different intimacy levels, from allowance to appear in the respondent's country to establishing kinship. SCR is an indicator of respondents' attitudes towards different groups. It also allows the computation social contact distance index (SCD) for each group in the study, a measure that shows the generalized perception of the group.

This approach to the measurement of attitudes towards Others has seen numerous uses and iterations all over the world. In Greece, the Bogardus index was adapted by Marina Economou and co-authors (2010). In Poland, adaptations were proposed, among others, by Krystyna Skarżyńska (1976), Ida Kurcz (1994), Ewa Nowicka (1996) and Jan Buszkowski (2003).



Adaptations of Bogardus index have been used in periodic research by the Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) since the late 1970s.

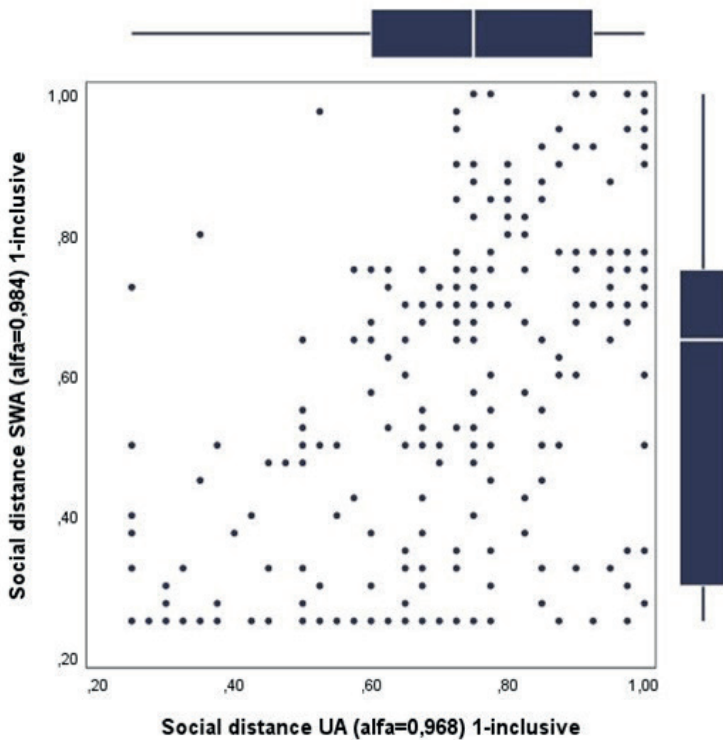
In our research, we decided to use ten items divided into four spheres: public, private, intimate and biological. While most of the items follow typical questions asked in a Bogardus-like research project, we decided to use an indicator of possible power relationship (being supervised by the refugee) and an indicator of the biological dimension of distance (blood donation), being a modified version of question used by Nowicka (1996). As all the items have the same share in the final score values, we are naming it as an index, however Bogardus-inspired tools are commonly called scales (cf. Babbie, 2003).

**Table 1.** Social distance index

| Dimension  | Item  |
|------------|---|
| Public     | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees living in Greece/Poland?                                    |
| Public     | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees living in your town?  |
| Public     | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees living in the same building as you?                         |
| Private    | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees going to the party you also attend?                         |
| Public     | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees working with you?   |
| Public     | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees supervising you at work/study?                              |
| Private    | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees spending leisure time with your acquaintances?              |
| Private    | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees becoming a spouse/partner of your close relative or friend? |
| Intimate   | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees becoming your spouse/partner?                               |
| Biological | Would you accept Ukrainian/SWA refugees donating blood to the blood bank?                           |

Source: own research

Respondents answered using a five-item scale (from definitely not to definitely yes). We used two sets of questions, one about Ukrainian refugees, and the second about SWA refugees. Both indexes got high Cronbach Alfa values ( $\alpha_{UA}=0,968$ ,  $\alpha_{SWA}=0,984$ ) and showed good psychometric values as all variables load to one factor in EFA. The correlation between UA and SWA indexes is moderate ( $R=0,677$ ,  $p<0,001$ ).



**Figure 1.** Correlation between social distance indexes for Ukrainian and SWA refugees  
Source: own research

### Methodology

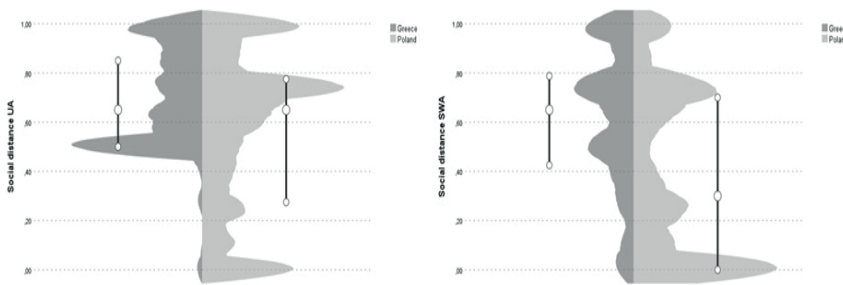
The results presented below come from a random sample of Greeks and Poles aged 18-29. The sample was stratified by age, gender, and locality size to fit the population's characteristics. Respondents were sampled from the commercial internet panels, which were the biggest panels available in both countries (QED/Cint in Greece and Ariadna in Poland). Both panels have strict quality control policies, including individual verification and controlling geolocation data, and are audited by national ESOMAR branches. The respondents were reached by email and completed the CAWI questionnaires. Internet-based samples may be affected by the digital divide, but this risk of bias is reduced by the popularity of Internet use in this age cohort. According to Eurostat 2023 data, in Greece it was 97.16%, while in Poland 98.98% (Eurostat, 2024a)

The research was conducted in September – October 2023. The final sample sizes are 327 respondents in Greece and 554 in Poland. The maximum sampling error on a 95% confidence level is +/- 5.6% in the Greek sample and +/- 4.4% in the Polish one. All the analyses were performed with SPSS package ver. 28.

## Results

There are significant differences between Greek and Polish emerging adults in social distance toward Ukrainian refugees. The average score in Polish sample ( $M=0.562$ ;  $SD=0.319$ ) was significantly lower ( $t(874.64$ ;  $n=881)=7.541$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $d=0.471$ ) than in Greek sample ( $M=0.695$ ;  $SD=0.203$ ). The fraction declaring the highest level of social distance, scoring zero on the index (denying the presence of SWA refugees in any sphere, including living in the respondent's country), was over ten times bigger in Poland (10.5%) than in Greece (0.9%). The effect size (Cohen's  $d=0.47$ ) is small.

Also, the average distance toward SWA refugees is lower in Greece than in Poland ( $t(788.673$ ;  $n=881)=10.255$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $d=0.68$ ). As we can see, the effect size (Cohen's  $d=0.68$ ) is moderate, meaning that the difference between countries is more extensive than for Ukrainian refugees. The score for the Greek sample was 0.612 ( $SD=0.284$ ), and for the Polish one 0.391 ( $SD=0.345$ ). The share of Greek respondents scoring zero on the index was 4%, while in Poland, it reached 25.3%, meaning that every fourth emerging adult in Poland would not accept SWA refugees living in his/her country.



**Figure 2.** Social distance towards Ukraine and SWA refugees  
Source: own research

### **Inherited cultural capital**

Due to the low number of respondents whose parents finished education at the primary or secondary level, we decided to merge the lowest levels into one category, combining primary, secondary, and vocational education. The second category is emerging adults with parents who have completed high school, and the third category is those with a university degree (BA, MA, or PhD level).

There are no statistically significant differences between social distance toward Ukrainian refugees ( $F(2, 324, n=327)=0.102; p>0.05$ ) and SWA refugees (Welch  $F(2, 119.797, n=327)=2.59; p>0.05$ ) depending on the Greek respondents' parents educational level.

In Poland, inherited cultural capital is associated with social distance for both groups of refugees: Ukrainian (Welch  $F(2, 312.483, n=508)=12.328, p<0.001, \epsilon=0.041$ ) and SWA (Welch  $F(2, 320.284, n=508)=11.455, p<0.001, \epsilon=0.04$ ). In both cases, effect sizes are weak. The social distance decreases with a higher educational status. For the respondents whose parents completed primary, secondary, or vocational schools, the mean score was 0.506 ( $SD=0.328$ ) for Ukrainians and 0.308 ( $SD=0.315$ ) for SWA refugees; for a high school level 0.54 ( $SD=0.31$ ) and 0.36 ( $SD=0.342$ ) respectively and for the university level 0.572 ( $SD=0.315$ ) and 0.487 ( $SD=0.354$ ) respectively. The post-hoc Tamhane's T2 test for both social distance measures shows that there is a significant difference ( $p<0.001$ ) between the group with the highest level of inherited cultural capital and others, but there is no significant difference between respondents with parents with the lowest and middle educational level.

### **Economic capital**

The economic situation self-assessment was recoded from the original 5-item scale to 3-item (negative, neutral, good) due to the low share of answers in extreme categories. Greek emerging adults differently estimating their households' financial status do not differ in social distance level ( $F(2, 324, n=327)=0.006; p>0.005$ ) for Ukrainian and  $F(2, 324, n=327)=0.107, p>0.05$  for SWA refugees). Also in Poland, we did not observe significant differences between wealth groups (Welch  $F(2, 150.99, n=554)=2.712, p>0.05$  for Ukrainian and  $F(2, 551, n=554)=1.569, p>0.05$  for SWA refugees).

### **Bonding social capital**

We constructed the bonding capital indicator from four questions repeated from the European Value Study (EVS, 2017) about trust in people from the respondent's family, neighborhood, known from school or studies, and known personally. Respondents could answer the question with a four-item

scale (from “I don’t trust at all” to “I trust completely”). We computed it into one index, scoring from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates the highest level of trust. The level of internal coherency is moderate (Cronbach alfa =0.611).

The bonding social capital level does not correlate with social distance toward Ukrainian refugees in Greek emerging adults ( $R=0.035$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), but there is a weak but significant positive correlation with social distance toward SWA refugees ( $R=0.123$ ;  $p=0.026$ ).

In Poland, the associations between bonding social capital and social distance are similar to those in Greece. There is no correlation for Ukrainian refugees ( $R=0.123$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), but we observed an extremely weak, significant positive correlation for SWA refugees ( $R=0.097$ ,  $p=0.023$ ).

### **Bridging social capital**

The bridging capital was operationalized with four questions used in EVS (2017) about the level of trust towards people the respondent meets for the first time, people of another religion, nationality, and culture. The format of answers and the way the index was computed are exactly the same as those for bonding social capital described above. The index has a high internal coherence, with Cronbach alfa =0,842.

In Greece, the bridging social capital does not correlate with social distance toward Ukrainian refugees ( $R=-0.014$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) but there is a moderate, positive association with social distance towards SWA refugees ( $R=0.357$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). As the social distance index’s high values indicate more inclusivity, the higher level of bonding social capital means less declared social distance toward this particular group of refugees.

In Poland, the bridging social capital reduces both social distances toward Ukrainian refugees ( $R=0.409$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and SWA refugees ( $R=0.485$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Both correlations are moderate.

### **Intersection of the capitals**

To address research questions about the role of social, cultural, and economic capital, we run a multilevel linear model (HLM). Following the literature showing the impact of gender, we decided to control it in the model. Gender was dichotomized, and respondents declaring the third gender were excluded due to the extremely low number. We also dichotomized the inherited cultural capital indicator (having a parent with a BA diploma at least vs. lower levels) and self-assessment of financial status (positive vs. negative with middle answers excluded). The bridging social capital indicator is a continuous variable. We used a mean social distance indicator, computed from indexes for Ukrainian and SWA refugees, as an outcome variable. All predictors were tested for multicollinearity and centered.

The null model shows that there are significant differences in variance among individuals within the country samples (Wald  $Z=20.984$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), but the intercepts do not vary significantly across the subsamples (Wald  $Z=0.700$ ;  $p=0.484$ ). The ICC value, however, is 0.183, providing evidence for substantial clustering.

Two predictors resulted to be significant: the bridging social capital ( $\beta=0.736$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and cultural capital ( $\beta=0.087$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Having a higher level of trust towards people from outside their own group and at least one parent with a university diploma decreases social distance. The pseudo R square value was 0.232.

**Table 2.** Multilevel linear model

| Parameter               | Estimate | SE    | df  | t      | p      | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|-------------------------|----------|-------|-----|--------|--------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                         |          |       |     |        |        | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Intercept               | 0.549    | 0.009 | 762 | 64.104 | <0.001 | 0.532                   | 0.566       |
| Gender                  | -0.020   | 0.017 | 762 | -1.156 | 0.248  | -0.054                  | 0.014       |
| Cultural capital        | 0.087    | 0.018 | 762 | 4.877  | <0.001 | 0.052                   | 0.122       |
| Economic capital        | -0.024   | 0.026 | 762 | -0.924 | 0.356  | -0.076                  | 0.027       |
| Bridging social capital | 0.736    | 0.054 | 762 | 13.531 | <0.001 | 0.629                   | 0.842       |

Source: own research

We performed two independent models to explore the associations within the countries in the study. The variables used are the same. Both models were well fit to the data ( $F(4;299)=9.412$ ;  $p<0.001$  for Greece and  $F(4;458)=37.785$ ;  $p<0.001$  for Poland), but explain only 11.2% of the variance of social distance in Greece ( $R^2=0.112$ ) and 10.2% in Poland ( $R^2=0.102$ ). Bridging social capital remains a significant predictor in both countries. The higher level of this form of capital decreases social distance ( $\beta_{GRE}=0.305$ ;  $p<0.001$  and  $\beta_{POL}=0.451$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The cultural capital results to be significant only in Poland. Having at least one parent with a university diploma slightly decreases the social distance ( $\beta=0.145$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 3.** Separated HLM models for Greece and Poland

|     |                         | Unstandardized Coefficients |       | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig.   |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| B   |                         | SE                          | Beta  |                           |        |        |
| GRE | (Constant)              | 0.501                       | 0.034 |                           | 14.918 | <0.001 |
|     | Gender                  | 0.022                       | 0.018 | 0.069                     | 1.266  | 0.207  |
|     | Cultural capital        | 0.029                       | 0.018 | 0.088                     | 1.609  | 0.109  |
|     | Economic capital        | 0.006                       | 0.026 | 0.013                     | 0.237  | 0.813  |
|     | Brigding social capital | 0.331                       | 0.059 | 0.305                     | 5.568  | <0.001 |
| POL | (Constant)              | 0.234                       | 0.045 |                           | 5.221  | <.001  |
|     | Gender                  | -0.043                      | 0.025 | -0.072                    | -1.763 | 0.079  |
|     | Cultural capital        | 0.094                       | 0.027 | 0.145                     | 3.523  | <0.001 |
|     | Economic capital        | -0.028                      | 0.039 | -0.029                    | -0.699 | 0.485  |
|     | Brigding social capital | 0.849                       | 0.077 | 0.451                     | 11.012 | <0.001 |

Source: own research

## Discussion

Both in Greece and Poland, the social distance towards Ukrainian refugees is lower than towards SWA refugees. This result clearly reflects the perceived cultural distance (Albada et al., 2021; Dutt, 2022). There are statistically significant differences between the countries in the level of social distance. Polish emerging adults declared a higher distance to the two groups of refugees than their Greek peers. This result is surprising when compared with outcomes from the whole population surveys. The European Value Survey (2017) shows that Poles are generally more open to migrants and refugees than Greeks. The share of respondents accepting an unlimited inflow of foreigners in Greece was 6.6%, while in Poland it was 12.2%. The Poles were more convinced that immigrants are not their competitors in the job market (by 16.8 pp.); are not increasing crime problems (by 18 pp.), and are not a strain on the welfare system (by 4.7 pp.). We assume that these contradictory results stem from the shift in the attitudes of young Poles. The global pattern shows that younger respondents are typically more open to intercultural contacts (Dražanová et al., 2021, 2022), but after the rise of moral panic by political propaganda in 2015, young Poles started to show lower acceptance to migrants and refugees than older cohorts (Łodziński, 2017). This untypical over-representation of negative attitudes in the youngest cohorts is still visible in recent surveys (CBOS, 2023a, 2023b). A possible explanation is the recent change in the ethnic structure of Polish society. Since



the end of World War 2, Poland was practically an ethnically homogenous country, with one of the lowest shares of minorities in the European Union. The massive inflow of Ukrainian migrants since 2014, which escalated after Russia's aggression in 2022, together with political migration from Belarus, economic migration from India, Nepal, Turkey, and other Asian countries, and educational migration, has changed the ethnic map of Poland (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk, 2022; EMN, 2024).

In Poland, the distance decreases with a higher level of inherited cultural capital. Post hoc analysis shows that it is a dichotomous association: while there are no differences between children of parents with primary, secondary or higher education, all these groups differ significantly from emerging adults socialized by parents with university diplomas. It aligns with the results from meta-analyses (Cowling et al., 2019; Dražanová et al., 2021, 2022). Surprisingly, no significant association was observed in Greece.

Contrary to the outcomes from meta-analyses (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018; Cowling et al., 2019; Deslandes & Anderson, 2019; Dražanová et al., 2022), there is no association between social distance and economic capital. Probably, the relative differences in self-evaluation of emerging adults' economic status do not show the real economic deprivation, which might have influenced attitudes towards refugees. Our respondents are from relatively rich Global North countries, and it is highly possible that they do not see refugees as competitors in the job market. In Greece and Poland, income inequalities are relatively low (Eurostat, 2024b)11,26]]],”issued”:{“-date-parts”:[["2024"]]]}],”schema”:"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"} , which may reduce the power of economic capital as an indicator of the position in social structure.

The results of our research show that social capital, particularly in its bridging form, plays an important role. There is a weak, positive association between bonding social capital and social distance towards SSW refugees. People having trust in members of the groups they belong to declared lower social distance. As expected, the positive association between social distance and bridging social capital is stronger than with bonding. In Greece, it was observed for SWA refugees, while in Poland, there is a moderate positive correlation for both groups of refugees. An analysis with a multilevel hierarchical model controlling for gender confirms these conclusions, showing that out of different forms of capital, the cultural and bridging social capitals are the only ones significantly and positively associated with the mean social distance for both groups of refugees. The impact of social capital is significantly stronger than that of cultural capital. The positive influence

of a high level of social capital on attitudes toward immigrants was confirmed in other international research, including the European Social Survey-based project by Herros and Criado (2009).

This study is not free from drawbacks. Although the sample was random, it was drawn from a commercial internet panel, which may be biased (Blom et al., 2016; Koivula & Sivonen, 2022). On the other hand, the relatively young age of the respondents ensures there is no digital divide bias. Nevertheless, the sample cannot be treated as representative, and conclusions should not be expanded beyond it. Another limitation is the specifics of emerging adults, who are volatile and characterized by differentiated, highly individualized transition trajectories (Arnett, 2006; Côté, 2002). The deterministic approach of Bourdieu may not allow us to grasp that multilinearity.

### **Summary**

The results from surveys in emerging adults in Greece and Poland show the association of social distance towards the refugees with bonding social capital and inherited cultural capital. What does it say about the reproduction of attitudes towards the Others in the lenses of Bourdieu's theory? We know that the primary habitus is being reproduced in the family. Even if new resources of social capital can be obtained through the life course, habitus-driven attitudes reveal the significance of familial socialization. The level of cultural capital and ability to build external social networks depends on the position in the societal structure. Therefore, any attempts to change the attitudes of the youngest age cohorts towards the Others must take a long-run perspective into notice. Educating young people from prejudices is a long-term investment. The results may be visible in the short run, but what is crucial is the impact on the reproduction processes in the next generation.

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