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Public attitudes towards support for migrants: the importance of perceived voluntary and involuntary migration

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ABSTRACT

Immigration leads to strong and polarized public and political debates in Europe and the Western world more generally. In some of these debates, migrants are described as either having little choice but to migrate (involuntary) or as migrating out of their own free choice (voluntary). In two studies and using a social psychological perspective, native Dutch respondents were asked about their support for policies aimed at cultural rights and public assistance to perceived voluntary and involuntary migrants. Study 1 showed that stronger agreement with migration being voluntary was associated with lower policy support, while agreement with migration being involuntary was independently associated with higher support. In Study 2 the degree of support was examined as a consequence of feelings of empathy and anger. Perceived involuntariness of migration elicited feelings of empathy and therefore higher support for newcomers. In contrast, perceived voluntariness elicited stronger anger and therefore less support.

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The Netherlands is supposed to facilitate the integration of newcomers. The great majority of whom, please note, has chosen out of their own free will to come and live and stay here. (Niemöller 2017, 39)

Introduction

Continuing migration with its steady increase of newcomers has resulted in negative public attitudes towards migrants in many Western countries

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(see Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer 2010). Some research argues and demonstrates that the attitudes are (in part) group-specific and depend, for example, on immigrants' cultural similarity (Ford 2011), level of educational and work skills (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007, 2010; Helbling and Kriesi 2014), language and skin tone (Hopkins 2015), national origin (Fasel, Green, and Sarrasin 2013; Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013), and economic contribution and religion (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016).

As illustrated by the quote above, another distinction that is used in public and political debates concerns the questions whether migrants have chosen themselves to migrate (voluntary migrants) or rather have no other choice than to leave their home country (involuntary migrants) (see Verkuyten 2014). Some sections of the population and some politicians and mass media, emphasize the difficult fate of "forced migrants" and "real refugees" and the need to offer support and help to these newcomers. Other sections of the public and other politicians and media, claim that the majority of newcomers are "fortune seekers" and "bogus refugees". The relatively strong debate about the appropriate label indicates that much is at stake.¹ Although according to the UN convention, the term migrant covers all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, the term comprises a heterogeneous category in public and political debates (Moses 2006). This offers room for construing different understandings of who these newcomers are and why they are "here" (Blinder 2015; Blinder and Allen 2016).

The labels "voluntary" and "involuntary" are used in different ways and in different contexts, but underlying these differences is the distinction between, on the one hand, migrants who hardly have any other choice than to leave their home country, and, on the other hand, migrants who do have a clear choice and freely decide to move (Lynn and Lea 2003). In his influential book on "Multicultural citizenship", the political philosopher Kymlicka (1995) makes a distinction between voluntary and involuntary minority groups. He argues that cultural recognition and rights are reasonable demands for indigenous groups or groups that have been historically wronged (e.g. descendants of African slaves), but that immigrants would have waived their group-specific demands and rights by voluntarily leaving their country of origin. This distinction also features in social scientific analyses of situations and rights of "voluntary" and "involuntary" migrant populations (e.g. Ogbu 1993). Following these analyses, we focus on understanding native-born citizens' support or opposition to immigrant rights and whether this depends on the perceived voluntary or involuntary nature of migration. In addition to the relatively large sociological and political science literature on public attitudes towards immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014) and ethnic minorities (Weldon 2006), we adopt a social psychological perspective in trying to understand the underlying perceptions (Study 1) and emotions (Study 2) for endorsing immigrants' rights.

Voluntariness and responsibility

Self-determination implies a personal responsibility for one's situation and position. Social psychological research has demonstrated that responsibilities are defined differently when there is little choice and actions are predominantly determined by others or circumstances (Weiner 1995). Hence, defining or challenging a particular action as self-determined has important consequences, such as in welfare debates about "deserving" and "undeserving" citizens, in accounting for people's health and illness, unemployment, and poverty, and in relation to migrants. Appelbaum (2002) found that migrant groups which were judged to be more responsible for their need of assistance were considered less deserving of support and aid. In the Netherlands, it was found that the endorsement of cultural rights for migrants depends on whether migrants were described as being themselves responsible for their situation or not (Verkuyten 2004; see also Gieling, Thijs, and Verkuyten 2011). An experimental vignette study in 15 European countries found that migrants who immigrate for economic reasons (more voluntary) are less accepted than migrants who face political or religious persecution in their country of origin (more involuntary) (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016). And across 20 European nations, it was found that acquired criteria over which migrants themselves have control are much more important for the acceptance of migrants in one's country than ascribed criteria that cannot be changed (Green 2009).

Using data from a national sample of Dutch natives, our first aim (Study 1) is to determine if the perceived voluntary and involuntary nature of migration are both unique and complementary predictors of support for cultural rights of migrants, over and above other well-known predictors of attitudes towards immigrants, such as education, political orientation, national identification, endorsement of ethnic and civic nationhood, and shared national belonging (e.g. Schildkraut 2014; Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer 2010). In general, those considered not personally responsible for their difficult situation are typically defined as deserving of sympathy and help (Weiner 1995). People tend to be positively inclined towards those who are not to blame for their plight and are willing to support them. Thus, acceptance of others and the way they are is more likely when these others themselves are not considered moral accountable for their situation ("they are forced to leave their country, so they should be made as comfortable as possible"). In contrast, those who themselves are held responsible for their difficult situation more easily face "reasonable" demands ("they themselves decided to come to our country, so they should adapt to our culture"). Therefore, we expected that stronger agreement with the proposition that most migrants have voluntarily migrated to the country is associated with less support for cultural rights, while stronger agreement with the involuntariness of their migration is associated with stronger support.

Empathy and anger

Our second aim (Study 2) is to examine the roles of empathy and anger as two emotions that might underlie the expected associations between perceived (in)voluntariness of migration and policy support. Emotional reactions are important psychological processes underlying attitudes towards out-groups, including attitudes towards migrants (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000). For example, anxiety has been identified as a mechanism connecting specific migrant groups and concerns about immigration (e.g. Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Gadarian and Albertson 2014).

In general, a profile of newcomers that matches that of the involuntary migrant (e.g. “real refugee”) is typically defined as deserving of sympathy and support, whereas those labelled as voluntary migrants (e.g. “bogus refugees”) are presented as a threat to the country’s hospitality and, as such, an understandable target of feelings of anger and resentment (Augoustinos and Quinn 2003; Maio, Bell, and Esses 1996). Appraisal theories of emotion (e.g. Frijda 1986; Smith and Ellsworth 1985) argue that specific emotions presuppose particular appraisals, such as justice and responsibility. Further, these theories indicate that the emotions triggered by appraisal promote particular behavioural tendencies. When confronted with the needs and problems of migrants, various emotions might arise depending on the assessment of their situation and their own responsibility for it. In the present research, the focus is on feelings of empathy and anger and their impact on the support for policies aimed at the cultural rights and societal assistance of migrants.

Feelings of empathy are based on identification with the unfortunate situation of others and this is more likely when the neediness of people is perceived to be beyond their control (e.g. Batson 1998; Betancourt 1990). Empathy provides a psychological basis of willingness to help and support ameliorative policies and social programmes (see Weiner 1995). Empathy has been found to be associated with a wide range of efforts to help the disadvantaged and improve their situation (see Batson 1998; Hoffman 2001; Weiner 1995). Montada and Schneider (1989), for example, found that Germans who empathize with immigrants tend to support prosocial activities. Further, in three studies conducted in the U.S.A., it was found that individual differences in humanitarian concern and empathy were associated with support for immigration (Newman et al. 2015; see also Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016). Iyer, Leach, and Crosb (2003) found that empathy is a general predictor of support for different affirmative action policies for African Americans. And Verkuyten (2004) found that feelings of sympathy positively affect Dutch native’s support of policies supporting immigrants.

Anger about the neediness of others is likely when they themselves are considered responsible for their negative situation (e.g. Feather 1999;

Schmidt and Weiner 1988). People tend to react in an irritated and hostile manner to others when they perceive them as personally responsible for their plight. Anger in this context implies an affective reproach of self-inflicted problems and needs, and can be expected to interfere with support for migrants' cultural rights. Montada and Schneider (1989) found that Germans who felt more anger towards the needs of the disadvantaged, including immigrants, had a lower readiness to make prosocial commitments. Verkuyten (2004) found that feelings of anger predicted lower policy support for economic immigrants.

In Study 2 we examined whether the endorsement of the two representations of migrants (voluntary or involuntary) are differentially related to empathy and anger as two emotions underpinning the support for policies aimed to support immigrants. We expected that stronger agreement with the proposition that they themselves have decided to migrate (voluntary) will be associated with higher anger, and through anger with lower support for rights and assistance. In contrast, stronger agreement with the involuntary nature of migration was expected to be associated with higher empathy and therefore with stronger support.

Study 1

Data and method

Sample

Data for Study 1 come from an online research (conducted in 2012) among a large probability sample drawn from a nationally pool of the native Dutch population.² The sample covered various segments of the Dutch public in terms of age, gender, education, household size, and the region of residence. The sample was selected by a research consultancy company (TNS-NIPO), which maintains a database of Dutch people who regularly participate in surveys in return for remuneration. In total 928 Dutch natives, between 18 and 88 years, ($M = 49.82$, $SD = 17.15$; 47.7 per cent females, 52.3 per cent males) responded to the questionnaire.

Measures

Two statements (7-point Likert scales; 1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree") were used to assess the *perceived voluntariness of migration*: "The majority of migrants chose to come to live in the Netherlands themselves", and "Migrants typically come to the Netherlands voluntarily." The responses to these two statements correlated strongly $r = .72$ ($p < .001$).

Also, two statements (7-point Likert scales) were used to measure the *perceived involuntariness of migration*. These statements suggested that newcomers have no choice in leaving their country of origin: "The majority of

migrants are forced to leave their country by circumstance” and “Many migrants have no other choice than to leave their own country.” Responses to these two statements were also strongly correlated, $r = .75$ ($p < .001$).

The support for immigrants’ *cultural rights* was measured with eight items (7-point Likert scales) taken from previous research in the Netherlands (Verkuyten 2011). Three sample items are “Immigrants deserve support in the preservation of their own culture”, “Immigrants may live according to their own values and norms, including outside their homes”, “Immigrants must give up their own culture and adopt the culture of the country” (reverse coded). For these items, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$.

To account for the influence of possibly confounding constructs, we controlled for a number of established correlates of anti-immigrant attitudes (Schildkraut 2014; Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer 2010). The measures (7-point scales) were taken from previous Dutch research (Verkuyten and Marti-novic 2015). Four items were used to measure *national identification* (e.g. “I identify strongly as Dutch”, $\alpha = .94$); two items measured *ethnic conception of nationhood* (e.g. “A real Dutch person is someone who is of Dutch origin”, Spearman Brown reliability = .94); also two items measured *civic conception of nationhood* (e.g. “Anyone who legally resides in the Netherlands is a real Dutch person”, Spearman Brown reliability = .84); and three items were used to measure *common national belonging* (e.g. “Even though the Netherlands is a culturally diverse society, I have the feeling we all belong to one community”, $\alpha = .90$). *Political orientation* was assessed with the well-known political self-placement scale (see Jost 2006). The scale had 5 categories: (1) left, (2) centre left, (3) centre, (4) centre right, and (5) right: 28 per cent of the respondents placed themselves on the political left, 28 per cent on the right, and 44 per cent in the middle. Furthermore, demographic controls were included for *age* in years, *gender* (0 = male, 1 = female), and highest completed level of *education* (0 = no education, 8 = PhD or Master’s degree). Six respondents who did not indicate their level of education were treated as missing and the missing values were imputed using the Full Information Likelihood (FIML) technique in Mplus 7 (Muthén and Muthén 2012). Information about income or social class was not available (Mewes and Mau 2013), but in the Netherlands, the level of education tends to be strongly associated with these indicators (e.g. Barone and van de Werfhorst 2011).

Measurement model

Using confirmatory factor analysis in Mplus 7, we examined whether the seven different measures formed empirically distinct latent constructs. After removing one poorly fitting cultural rights item (“Natives should put more effort into learning the habits and customs of immigrants”), the measurement model was found to have a good fit, $\chi^2(188) = 482.84$, $p < .001$, AIC = 60,442.30, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04. All items loaded

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all main variables in Study 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Immigrant rights	3.66	0.96	.36***	-.35***	-.11**	.35***	-.45***	.58***
2. Involuntary migration	3.93	1.32		-.30***	.02	.31***	-.15***	.36***
3. Voluntary migration	5.24	1.10			.17***	-.22***	.24***	-.24***
4. National identification	5.40	1.13				-.02	.33***	-.04
5. Civic citizenship	3.86	1.48					-.20***	.38***
6. Ethnic citizenship	4.54	1.71						-.39***
7. Common belonging	4.15	1.47						

above a .40 cutoff point (lowest loading $> .57$) and all had an explained variance of $> R^2 = .30$. To examine whether the items for perceived voluntariness and perceived involuntariness of migration constitute one factor rather than two, the four items were grouped as if predicted by one latent variable. This model was found to have a significantly worse fit to the data, $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 754.49$, $p < .001$ (Satorra and Bentler 2001), and overall fitted the data poorly, $\chi^2(194) = 1,157.89$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, TLI = .88, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07. This indicates that both constructs can be distinguished empirically which is also indicated by their relatively low correlation ($r = -.30$, Table 1), and that there is no statistical problem of multicollinearity. This suggests that the alternative understandings of most people migrating out of their own free choice or as being forced to migrate due to the circumstances do not form a single construct but emerge side by side as contrasting understandings among the public. This reflects the heterogeneous category of “migrant” in public and political debates (Moses 2006) with the related possibility of construing different understandings. Furthermore, the full measurement model clearly indicates that perceived (in)voluntariness differs from the endorsement of cultural rights.

Results

Descriptive findings

Table 1 indicates that the proposition that most migrants voluntary leave their home country is stronger endorsed than the view that most of them are forced to leave their country, $t(927) = 20.35$, $p < .001$. Both endorsements are significantly associated with the support for cultural rights, and with most of the control variables. The control variables are associated with each other in the expected directions.

Predicting rights support

Stepwise structural equation modelling was conducted in predicting support for cultural rights. The first step included the demographic variables (age, gender, education, and political orientation), the second one the control constructs, and in the third one the two measures of perceived (in)voluntariness

of migration were entered in the equation. Due to some moderately skewed variable distributions, a maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator was applied in Mplus since this is robust to non-normal distributions (Muthén and Muthén 2012). To compare model fit, the Satorra–Bentler scaling method (Satorra and Bentler 2001) was applied to chi-square comparisons.

The model in the first Step fitted the data reasonably (Table 2, Model 1) with higher support for cultural rights of newcomers among females compared to males, the higher educated compared to the lower educated, and for people with a more left-wing political orientation. Adding in Step 2 the latent variables for national identification, ethnic and civic conception of nationhood, and shared national belonging yielded a model with a good fit (Table 2, model 2) that explained 53 per cent of the variance. Apart from national identification, the other constructs were significantly associated with the support of immigrants' cultural rights. In the third Step and as expected, stronger endorsement of the voluntariness of migration was independently associated with lower support for immigrants' cultural rights, while the endorsement of the involuntariness of migration was associated with higher support for immigrants' right. Yet, the former association was stronger than the latter, as revealed by Wald testing the hypothesized model against a model in which these two associations are constrained to be equal, $\chi^2(1) = 41.98, p < .001$. The model in Step 3 has a better fit to the data than the previous model (Table 3, Model 3).

In summary, the first study demonstrates that voluntary and involuntary understandings of migration emerge side by side as contrasting normative images among the public. Further and as expected, the findings show that stronger perception that most migrants decide themselves to migrate was

Table 2. Regression coefficients and model fit for predicting support for migrant's cultural rights in Study 1.

	Model 1 <i>B</i> (SE)	Model 2 <i>B</i> (SE)	Model 3 <i>B</i> (SE)
Involuntary	–	–	.08 (.04)*
Voluntary	–	–	–.22 (.04)***
National identification	–	–.02 (.04)	.00 (.03)
Civic concept of citizenship	–	.09 (.04)*	.04 (.03)
Ethnic concept of citizenship	–	–.18 (.03)***	–.17 (.03)***
Common belonging	–	.38 (.04)***	.33 (.04)***
Political orientation	.16 (.02)***	–.14 (.03)***	–.11 (.03)***
Education	.16 (.02)***	.05 (.02)**	.05 (.02)**
Age	.00 (.00)	–.00 (.00)	–.00 (.00)
Female	.20 (.07)**	.17 (.06)**	.15 (.05)*
<i>R</i> ²	.20	.53	.57
χ^2 (df)	1001.34 (263)***	693.12 (259)***	645.94 (257)***
Scaled $\delta\chi^2$ (δ df)	–	235.08 (4)***	48.68 (2)***
RMSEA	.06	.04	.04
CFI/TLI	.93/.91	.96/.95	.96/.95
SRMR	.11	.04	.04

Table 3. Mean, standard deviations, and correlations for the “voluntary” sub-sample ($N = 88$), and the “involuntary” sub-sample ($N = 85$) in Study 2.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2.	3.	4.
<i>Voluntary sub-sample</i>					
1. Migrant rights	4.16	1.17	-.08	-.50***	.45***
2. Voluntary migration	4.97	1.59	–	.34***	-.22***
3. Anger	3.67	1.81		–	-.36***
4. Empathy	3.17	1.59			–
<i>Involuntary sub-sample</i>					
1. Migrant rights	3.81	1.33	.48***	-.45***	.41***
2. Involuntary migration	3.77	1.62	–	-.40***	.46***
3. Anger	3.99	1.69		–	-.31***
4. Empathy	3.26	1.63			–

associated with lower endorsement of cultural rights, while stronger perception that they involuntarily left their country of origin was associated with higher endorsement of rights. The perceived voluntariness was a stronger predictor of cultural rights compared to perceived involuntariness. Thus peoples' support of cultural rights was more dependent on whether they believed that most migrants migrated out of their own choice than whether they believed that most of them had no other choice but to leave their home country.

Study 2

Following social psychological theories about people's underlying emotional reactions (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000), in Study 2 we examined whether feelings of empathy and anger underlie the associations between perceived (in)voluntariness of migration and policy support. In order to examine the mediating roles of empathy and anger, we presented half of the sample with questions on perceived voluntariness of migration (“voluntary” sub-sample) and the other half with questions on perceived involuntariness (“involuntary” sub-sample). The reason is that we wanted to examine the role of both feelings when respondents were asked to think only about their agreement with the view that most migrants decide themselves to leave their country of origin or rather that most of them have hardly any other choice than to leave. Thus, we wanted to prevent possible confounding effects of the combination of questions on voluntariness and involuntariness on empathy and anger.

Data and method

Sample

The data used in Study 2 were again gathered on-line (in 2014) among a different sample drawn from the nationally representative pool of the native Dutch population maintained by TNS-NIPO. The native Dutch

participants ($N = 173$) were between 19 and 81 years of age ($M = 51.77$, $SD = 16.24$) and 48 per cent of was female.

Measures

Respondents in the “voluntary” sub-sample were asked first about *perceived voluntary migration* using the same two questions and Likert scales that were used in Study 1. The responses to these two items were strongly correlated $r = .79$ ($p < .001$). The respondents in the involuntary group were asked first about *perceived involuntary migration* using the same two questions as in Study 1 ($r = .75$, $p < .001$).

Subsequently and in both sub-samples, the same two mediator variables were presented (7-point Likert scales). *Empathy* was assessed with the following question: “I often feel emotionally involved in the fate of migrants coming to the Netherlands.” And the respondents answered the following question about *anger*: “I sometimes get angry when I think about migrants coming to the Netherlands.”

Support for rights and assistance was subsequently assessed with the same four questions (7-point Likert scales, 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”) in both sub-samples: “Newcomers have the right to retain their own culture”, “Newcomers may live according to their own values and norms, including outside their homes”, “Newcomers should receive help from the government with finding a job”, and “There should be free courses for newcomers to learn the Dutch language and culture.” Confirmatory factor analyses showed adequate loadings in both the “voluntary” sub-sample (.645 to .802; $\alpha = .65$) and the “involuntary” sub-sample (.711 to .847; $\alpha = .76$).

Four control variables were available in Study 2: age, gender (1 = male), education, and political orientation. The latter two control variables were measured in the same way as in Study 1. In this sample, 34 per cent of the respondents placed themselves on the political left, 33 per cent on the right, and 33 per cent in the middle.

Analysis

Descriptive analyses were conducted in SPSS, while confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model, and structural equation modelling were conducted in Mplus 7 to examine the hypothesized model. One respondent did not indicate his level of education and 31 participants did not respond to the political orientation question. These missing values were imputed using FIML.³ The analyses were conducted for the two samples separately and the results are presented accordingly.

In both sub-samples, a measurement model was fitted with the two latent variables, perceived (in)voluntary migration and support for cultural rights and assistance. Two residual variances of two items measuring the dependent variable were allowed to be correlated, as they both tap into official help

immigrants should get either in the form government assistance or free courses. This model yielded a good fit in both the “voluntary” sub-sample, $\chi^2(7) = 6.01$, $p > .1$, RMSEA = .000, CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.015, SRMR = .055, and the “involuntary” sub-sample, $\chi^2(7) = 7.55$, $p > .1$, RMSEA = .030, CFI = 0.997, TLI = 0.994, SRMR = .026.

Results

Descriptive findings

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the different observed constructs are presented in Table 3. Similar to Study 1, the perception that most migrants decide themselves to leave their home country is stronger than the perception that they do not have any other choice but to leave, $t(171) = 7.11$, $p < .001$. Further, the support for cultural rights and assistance is similar in the “voluntary” sub-sample compared to the “involuntary” sub-sample, $t(171) = 1.83$, $p = .068$, and the feelings of anger and empathy are also quite similar in both sub-samples ($p > .10$). In both sub-samples, all constructs are significantly correlated, except for the perception of voluntary migration and support for cultural rights and assistance.

Predicting cultural rights and assistance

The main hypotheses were tested by estimating a structural mediation model with cultural rights and assistance as the dependent variable, empathy and anger as the two mediator variables, and either the questions on involuntary or voluntary migration as the independent variable. In total, two indirect paths were estimated per group. The residuals of the mediators were allowed to be correlated and gender, age, education, and political orientation were controlled for in relation to all estimated paths. We obtained confidence intervals for the indirect effects based on bootstrapping with 1,000 replacement samples (Preacher and Hayes 2008). A 95 per cent confidence interval that does not include zero indicates a significant indirect effect.

Figure 1 shows the unstandardized coefficients of the mediation model for the “voluntary” sub-sample and Figure 2 for the “involuntary” sub-sample. In Figure 1, stronger endorsement of voluntary migration is associated with stronger feelings of anger, and these feelings are associated with less support for migrants’ rights and assistance. The indirect path via anger is significant, $b = -.065$, $p < .10$ (lower CI = $-.171$, higher CI = $-.015$). Stronger feelings of empathy are associated with more support, but empathy is not associated with perceived voluntariness of migration. There is no total effect of voluntary migration on migrant rights, nor a remaining direct relationship, after including the mediators ($p = .068$).

In Figure 2, stronger perceived involuntariness of migration is associated with stronger feelings of empathy and less feelings of anger. The indirect

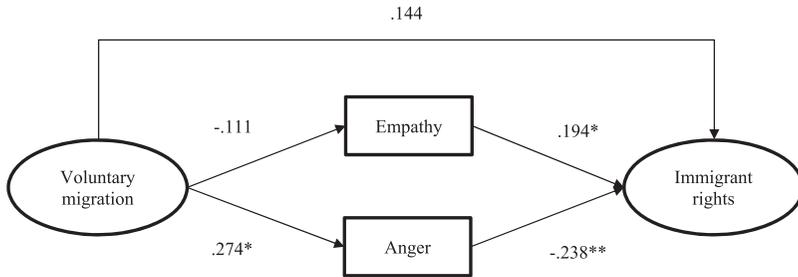


Figure 1. The effects of perceived voluntary migration on immigrant rights, mediated by empathy and anger ($N = 88$).

Notes: Model fit: $\chi^2(31) = 37.98, p > .10, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .051, SRMR = .056$. Unstandardized coefficients presented; the residual covariance between the two mediators was accounted for (empathy and anger $b = -.360, p > .10$). Control variables age, gender, education and political orientation were included in the model. $*p < .05, **p < .01$.

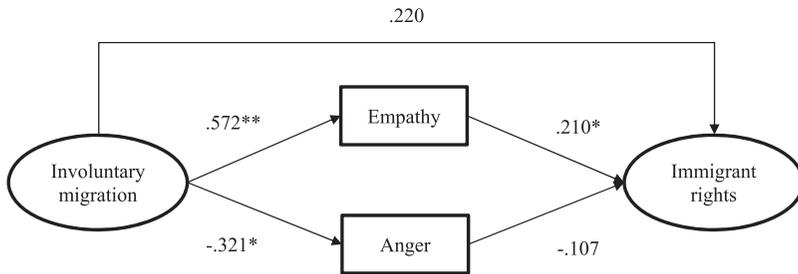


Figure 2. The effects of perceived involuntary migration on immigrant rights, mediated by empathy and anger ($N = 85$).

Notes: Model fit: $\chi^2(31) = 55.90, p < .010, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .097, SRMR = .051$. Unstandardized coefficients presented; the residual covariance between the two mediators was accounted for (empathy and anger $b = -.304, p > .10$). Control variables age, gender, education and political orientation were included in the model. $*p < .05, **p < .01$.

path via empathy is significant, $b = .120, p < .10$ (lower CI = $.023$, higher CI = $.332$). The indirect effect via anger is not significant. The total effect of involuntary migration on immigrant rights is significant, $b = .375, p < .01$, and the remaining direct relationship, after including the mediators, is not significant ($b = .220, p = .085$), which suggests full mediation.

In summary, Study 2 demonstrates that a stronger perception that most migrant leave their home country out of their own free choice is associated with stronger feelings of anger and via anger with less support for migrants' cultural rights and societal assistance. In contrast, stronger perception that most migrants do not have much of a choice but to leave their home country is associated with less feelings of anger and higher feelings of empathy, and only via empathy to stronger support for rights and assistance.

Discussion and conclusion

This research examined whether the way in which the reasons for migration are perceived has implications for support of cultural rights and assistance to migrants. Previous sociological and political science research on immigrant attitudes has focused, for example, on the importance of the distinction between culturally similar or more dissimilar migrant groups (Ford 2011), between highly skilled and low-skilled immigrants (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007, 2010), and between migrants who immigrate for political or humanitarian reasons (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2016). We went beyond this research by using a social psychological perspective to examine the support or opposition towards immigrants in relation to the distinction between perceived voluntary and involuntary migrants and the related emotional reactions. This distinction features in many debates, including in the debate about the European “refugee crisis” and in scientific debates about cultural recognition and rights (Kymlicka 1995; Ogbu 1993). In line with this latter debate, we focused on people’s endorsement of immigrant rights.

Study 1 was conducted among a large sample of Dutch natives and showed that stronger endorsement of the view that most migrants have no other choice but to leave their country was associated with stronger support for newcomers’ cultural rights. In contrast, stronger endorsement of the view that most newcomers migrate out of their own free choice was independently associated with lower support for cultural rights. These associations were found while controlling for well-known correlates of anti-immigrant attitudes (Schildkraut 2014; Wagner, Christ, and Heitmeyer 2010) and therefore show that the perceived (in)voluntariness of migration matters over and above these factors. The fact that these perceptions are not only associated with cultural rights support but can have a causal effect is demonstrated in experimental studies among convenient samples (Gieling, Thijs, and Verkuyten 2011; Verkuyten 2005). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the effect of perceived (in)voluntariness on migrants’ cultural rights exists for immigrants and emigrants (Gieling, Thijs, and Verkuyten 2011, Study 2). Thus, perceived (in)voluntariness of migration appears to matter for the endorsement of migrants’ cultural rights more generally. It defines migrants’ own responsibility for leaving their home country and this makes a difference for the attitude that the public has towards cultural rights for newcomers. Future studies could examine whether perceived (in)voluntariness also matters for other attitudes such as accepting migrants’ to enter and stay in one’s country and global feelings towards migrants as a group. Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner (2016) demonstrated that native-born citizens are more willing to accept migrants in their country who migrated for political reasons than for economic reasons. Although these reasons are likely to be related to perceived (in)voluntariness, they do not explicitly focus on the social psychological dimensions of

attributed responsibility and moral accountability with the related emotional reactions. However, these attributions are central in societal debates about “deserving” and “undeserving” citizens and feature in debates about different types of migrants (Verkuyten 2014).

The aim of Study 2 was to examine which emotional reactions might underlie the associations found. The plight of migrants can elicit various emotional feelings that influence the support for policies aimed at assistance and rights for migrants. Anger about the neediness of others is a common emotional reaction when people themselves are considered responsible for their own plight (e.g. Schmidt and Weiner 1988), whereas sympathy is more likely when their neediness is perceived to be beyond their control (e.g. Betancourt 1990). Hence, the perception that most migrants have a “personal choice” or rather a “lack of choice” provides different frameworks for supporting policies for newcomers. In line with this, the results of Study 2 show that feelings of sympathy and anger mattered in different ways. Respondents who more strongly believed that most migrants have no other choice but to leave their home country, indicated stronger feelings of empathy and, via empathy, stronger support for cultural rights and assistance to migrants. In contrast, respondents who more strongly believed that migrants themselves are responsible for leaving their country reported more feelings of anger and, therefore, less support for the rights and assistance.

We tested these expectations with survey data and therefore cannot establish causality. Hence, it is important to further examine these expectations in future studies using, for example, vignette experiments embedded in large-scale public opinion research. This would allow for a systematic investigation of how and why involuntary and voluntary migrants trigger different attributions of responsibility with their related emotions that have consequences for people’s support for or objection to immigrants and their rights. In an experimental research among a small convenient sample it already was found that in a “lack of choice” experimental condition, only feelings of sympathy were a predictor of immigrants policy support, while in a “personal choice” condition, only anger predicted policy support (Verkuyten 2004). This suggests that people may possess similar emotional reactions to groups of migrants, but depending on their understanding of why most migrants leave their home country, they may use feelings of anger or sympathy as a basis for their policy attitudes. This is consistent with research on attitude function that has shown that depending on the message presented, people can base their attitudes on different values and emotions (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). The implication is that the attitude towards different groups of migrants can be quite similar while the underlying reasons can differ. Future studies could examine these processes in more detail, for example, by including direct measures of perceived responsibility of migrants, feelings of threat and intercultural contact (Ward and Masgoret 2008), and also deservingness which has been identified as a critical factor in support for affirmative action policies (e.g. Appelbaum 2002; Reyna, Henry, and Korfmacher 2006).

In conclusion, the present research found that people's support for cultural rights and assistance to migrants depends on perceptions of (in)voluntariness of migration. Subsequent questions that should be examined empirically are why and when people endorse the view that most migrants have left their home country out of their own free will or rather have been forced to leave, and why these perceptions can exist simultaneously among the public. It is likely that the ways in which issues of migration are framed by the mass media and politicians play an important role in this (Blinder 2015; Herda 2015; Héricourt and Spielvogel 2014). Distinctions made between "real refugees" and "fortune seekers" can have important implications for how the public defines responsibilities and therefore how much support immigrants deserve or are entitled to. However, there also will be important individual differences that should be examined. Some people go along with the particular representation of migrants that is offered in the media or by politicians, while other people resist and oppose it. The result is an increasingly polarized society around questions of immigration which seems to characterize an increasing number of Western countries.

Notes

1. Another illustration of this is the debate in the U.S.A. after Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson referred to slaves brought from Africa as "immigrants" (March 2017). After critics lambasted him for this, he specified his remark to slaves being "involuntary immigrants".
2. The survey data used in Studies 1 and 2 contained various other constructs, and parts of these data have been analysed in other papers. These papers examined, for example, the distinction between ethnic and civic citizenship (Verkuyten and Martinovic 2015), social dominance orientation and attitudes towards multiculturalism (Hindriks, Verkuyten, and Coenders 2014), and the endorsement of common national belonging (Verkuyten et al. 2017). However, the current theoretical focus and analyses are novel and the findings of the two studies have not been published previously. Furthermore, in the current analyses, we controlled for most of these other constructs or checked whether these constructs do not play a confounding role.
3. Additional analysis without imputation yielded similar findings.

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