Changes in the Positivity of Migrant Stereotype Content: How System-Sanctioned Pro-Migrant Ideology Can Affect Public Opinions of Migrants

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Abstract

Complementing well-established antecedents of anti-migrant opinion (e.g., threat), we investigated how system-sanctioned ideologies—that is, the collection of beliefs and values espoused by the government in power—are linked with migrant stereotypes. Using Canada as a case study, across three waves of national survey data ($N = 1,080$), we found that system-sanctioned *pro*-migrant ideologies corresponded with (relatively) more positive migrant stereotype content (i.e., increases in perceived warmth and competence). Moreover, controlling for other political ideologies, increases in migrant stereotype positivity were linked to people's motivation to justify their sociopolitical systems, suggesting that system-sanctioned ideologies may be especially likely to influence the positivity of migrant stereotypes when people are motivated to justify their sociopolitical systems.

Keywords

system justification, stereotyping, social change, immigration

Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and other areas, refugees' precarious situations, and the fact that the number of displaced people worldwide has reached the highest documented number since World War II (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016) are at the forefront of international discourse. Indeed, in many countries, including the United States and Britain, migration has topped national agendas, becoming a divisive issue in key political elections and referendums. Polling data prior to the 2016 U.S. federal election, for example, showed that 70% of Americans rated immigration as a top voting issue—up from 52% in 2008 (Pew Research Centre, 2016). In Britain, immigration was the top issue for voters in their 2016 EU referendum (Ipsos MORI, 2016).

Within these highly politicized and changing contexts, knowledge of the psychological motives affecting public opinion toward migrants is increasingly critical. Public opinion polls (e.g., Angus Reid Institute, 2017; Goodwin, Raines, & Cutts, 2017) tend to focus on assessing absolute levels of support for immigration and immigrants and moderation by demographic variables such as age, gender, and political party affiliation. What they lack, however, is a theory-driven analysis of *why* people support immigration, or not, in terms of underlying personality and social–psychological motivations. Research in social and personality psychology has identified several such factors underlying public opinions toward immigration. Perceived threat (Esses, Hodson, & Dovidio, 2003;

Murray & Marx, 2013), nationalism (Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Verkuyten, 2009), dehumanization (Esses, Veenvliet, & Medianu, 2011), and social dominance orientation (SDO; Esses & Jackson, 2008; Gaucher, Neufeld, Decter-Frain, & Friesen, 2016; Sibley, 2013) are well-established predictors of negative opinions toward migrants (for reviews, see Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher, 2017; Hamilton, Medianu, & Esses, 2013). In the current article, we investigated the social–psychological factors affecting public opinion of migrants by combining the tracking of public polling methodology with the rigor of theoretically informed research on motivation. Specifically, using a system-justification (SJ) theoretical framework (Jost & Banaji, 1994), we examined whether and how the positivity of migrant stereotypes changed as a function of individual variations in system-justifying

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tendencies and a change in the Canadian government's stance on migrant acceptance.

SJ and the Positivity of Migrant Stereotypes

SJ theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) proposes that people, to varying degrees, have a psychological motivation to construe their existing sociopolitical systems as legitimate. Research in this theoretical tradition demonstrates that people engage in various psychological processes that facilitate defense and bolstering of the status quo (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009). Justifying one's systems offers psychological utility for individuals, such as reducing the negative affect associated with believing that one is participating in illegitimate institutions (Jost & Hunyady, 2002), as well as providing a sense of security, safety, and order (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008). But the positive *intra*personal benefits stand in contrast to the negative social consequences of justifying the system or defending the status quo. Well-documented negative consequences include stereotyping (Cichocka, Winiewski, Bilewicz, Bukowski, & Jost, 2015; Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009; Kay & Jost, 2003), resistance to social change (Banfield, Kay, Cutright, Wu, & Fitzsimons, 2011; Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009), greater endorsement of essentialism (Gaucher & Jost, 2014; Kray, Howland, Russell, & Jackman, 2017; Laurin, Shepherd, & Kay, 2010; Napier, 2014), information avoidance (Shepherd & Kay, 2012), self-objectification (Bonnot & Krauth-Gruber, 2016; Calogero & Jost, 2011), and applying harsh social sanctions against those who challenge the legitimacy of the system (Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Yeung, Kay, & Peach, 2014). To date, however, much less research has focused on how SJ processes may affect beliefs about different migrant classes (but see Cichocka et al., 2015; Fasel, Green, & Sarrasin, 2013; Hennes, Nam, Stern, & Jost, 2012).

As originally conceptualized, SJ theory would propose that, all other motives being equal, increases in the SJ motive would be associated with stronger defense of one's sociopolitical system (e.g., government) and its resulting status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Based on this theorizing, migrants may be seen as threats to the status quo because their cultural values and traditions could provoke social, political, and economic change (Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, & Biagas, 2012). If migrants are invariably associated with threat to the status quo, they should be viewed more negatively when SJ motives are high.

More recent SJ theorizing (Feygina, Jost, & Goldsmith, 2010; Gaucher & Jost, 2011) underscores the prediction that under some circumstances, motivated system defense could promote *positive* opinions of migrants under conditions of pro-migrant *system sanctioning*. System sanctioning occurs when leaders or system authorities convey through speeches, media coverage, or policies that a particular idea or ideology is necessary for preservation of the status quo (Feygina et al., 2010). Although the term system sanctioned implies active endorsement by an agent, a novel idea or policy could also be system sanctioned when it is associated with broader, long-term system ideals (Shepherd,

Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2015). For example, when a government website promotes migrant acceptance as being "the Canadian way," this represents system sanctioning because positivity toward migrants has been both expressed by official agents of the system and linked to societal preservation.

In sum, the nature of system sanctioning is contextual and depends on the particular system authorities, ideals, and values within a society (Gaucher & Jost, 2011). This raises the possibility that the same phenomena (e.g., the arrival of migrants) could be seen as challenging the system in some contexts (when it is inconsistent with system-sanctioned ideologies) but as supporting the system in other contexts (when that change is system sanctioned—i.e., when it is consistent with, e.g., pro-migrant ideologies held by the government in power).

In the current research, we investigate how migrant stereotype content can change depending on the nature of system-sanctioned ideology and whether people are motivated to justify their sociopolitical system. We tested for evidence of a system-sanctioned change in the positivity of migrant stereotype content within the Canadian context. In doing so, we contribute to recent theorizing (Gaucher & Jost, 2011; Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay & Zanna, 2009) and empirical work (Feygina et al., 2010; Shepherd et al., 2015) on the contextual nature of SJ. Moreover, we demonstrate the important role that the macrolevel ideological political climate and national ideologies may play in the positivity of migrant stereotypes (see also Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2006).

The Contemporary Canadian Migration Context

Using the framework of SJ theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), over an 18-month span, we conducted three cross-sectional national surveys that investigated migrant stereotype content in Canada. During this time, there was a shift in the federal government's position about accepting migrants into Canada. Wave 1 data were collected in June 2015 under the conservative government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. This government introduced several high-profile public policies relevant to immigration. These included The *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*—an act ostensibly intended to prevent polygamy, forced marriage, and honor killings but widely decried as increasing stigma toward newcomers (CBC News, 2015; Payton, 2015); mandated detention of any person classified as an "irregular arrival"; and the required removal of women's face coverings when taking the citizenship oath (Payton, 2011). Thus, our initial data were collected at a time when government policies toward immigration and asylum seeking were viewed by many as signaling an ambivalent stance toward migrants (Lenard, 2015).

The second and third waves of data were collected after the 2015 federal election of a new government, which produced a notable positive shift in the system's stance on migrants and immigration. The new Liberal government, under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, promised to bring an additional 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, a quota that was met and surpassed. In contrast to the previous government, official

Table 1. Results From Structural Equation Modeling.

Model	Effect	Path	B	b	SE	Z	p	LB	UB
								Path Estimates / 95% CI	
1	System justification	a	.263	.178	.015	11.51	<.001	.149	.207
	Wave (linear)	b	.108	.111	.024	4.73	<.001	.064	.158
	Wave (quadratic)	c	.041	.023	.013	1.79	.074	−.002	.048
	SJ × Wave (linear)	d	.070	.059	.019	3.10	.002	.022	.096
	SJ × Wave (quadratic)	e	−.036	−.017	.011	−1.59	.113	−.039	.005
2	System justification	a	.231	.157	.015	10.40	<.001	.128	.186
	Wave (linear)	b	.121	.125	.023	5.48	<.001	.080	.170
	Wave (quadratic)	c	.046	.026	.013	2.09	.037	.001	.051
	SJ × Wave (linear)	d	.048	.040	.019	2.13	.033	.003	.077
	SJ × Wave (quadratic)	e	−.037	−.017	.010	−1.66	.096	−.037	.003
	SDO	f	−.151	−.119	.019	−6.29	<.001	−.156	−.082
	Perceived competition	g	−.095	−.070	.012	−5.79	<.001	−.094	−.046
	Political orientation	h	−.016	−.006	.009	−0.67	.504	−.024	.012
3	System justification	a	.254	.172	.016	11.04	<.001	.141	.203
	Wave (linear)	b	.116	.120	.024	5.05	<.001	.073	.167
	Wave (quadratic)	c	.042	.024	.013	1.84	.065	−.001	.049
	SJ × Wave (linear)	d	.059	.049	.019	2.54	.011	.012	.086
	SJ × Wave (quadratic)	e	−.041	−.020	.011	−1.81	.071	−.042	.002
	Political orientation	h	−.087	−.033	.009	−3.78	<.001	−.051	−.015
	SJ × Political Orientation	i	.059	.017	.007	2.55	.011	.003	.031
	Political Orientation × Wave (linear)	j	.009	.004	.011	0.36	.718	−.018	.026
	Political Orientation × Wave (quadratic)	k	−.016	−.004	.006	−0.70	.482	−.016	.008
	SJ × Political Orientation × Wave (linear)	l	−.014	−.005	.008	−0.61	.540	−.021	.011
	SJ × Political Orientation × Wave (quadratic)	m	.012	.002	.005	0.52	.604	−.008	.012

Note. The path column refers to the path labels on Figure 1. Model 1 is structural equation modeling including only focal variables; Model 2 adds control variables (SDO, political orientation, and perceived competition). Model 3 tests all interactions between wave, system justification (SJ), and political orientation. Standardized path estimates (B) are the mean coefficients of all paths constrained by that letter in the path column. 95% CIs are based on unstandardized path estimates. SDO = social dominance orientation; CI = confidence interval; LB = lowerbound limits of the confidence interval; UB = upperbound limits of the confidence interval.

statements about refugee arrivals contained welcoming and positive language. For example, a government website described how the public could welcome refugees to Canada and highlighted sympathetic refugee stories. More so, several government statements explicitly tied immigration to dominant ideologies such as framing being welcoming to migrants as the "Canadian way" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016). Although there were publicized incidents of opposition to increased immigration and refugee settlement, such as vandalism, these incidents were strongly condemned by official government statements (CBC, 2016; Dormer, 2016). Given the system-level shift in the pro-migrant position of the government, we were able to investigate whether migrant stereotypes among members of the Canadian public reflected the governments' new, more positive shift and, critically, whether this shift in positivity was especially likely to occur among individuals higher in the tendency to justify their sociopolitical systems.

The Current Study

Our main analyses tested whether and how the positivity of migrant stereotypes changed across the three study waves, hypothesizing a linear trend over time where positivity increased as government support for immigration increased. Next, and

most central to the system sanctioning change hypothesis, we also tested for a wave by SJ interaction. In particular, as pro-immigration and refugee ideology became more entrenched in national policy over time, and thus system sanctioned, we expected that the relationship between the SJ motive and migrant stereotype positivity would strengthen. We tested these main hypotheses while also investigating several alternative possibilities. Specifically, we examined whether the relative increases in the positivity of migrant stereotype content, if any, could be accounted for by political orientation or SDO (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or by general increases in the SJ motive itself.

Method

Participants and Design

Canadian citizens were recruited online using the survey company Qualtrics Panels in three cross-sectional waves that were nationally representative on age, sex, and region ($N_{\text{Wave 1}} = 302$, $N_{\text{Wave 2}} = 391$, and $N_{\text{Wave 3}} = 387$). Sample sizes were based on Qualtrics' guidance for achieving national representation; we also conducted power analyses that are reported in the Online Supplemental Material (OSM). Details of participant exclusions based on quality checks are also reported in the OSM (Table 1). In the final sample, 47.8% of respondents were

men and 52.2% were women; reported ethnicities included White (79.0%), East Asian (6.7%), South Asian (3.8%), Black (3.1%), and other ethnicities (7.4%).

Procedure

After quota screening and informed consent, participants learned that the survey was about perceptions of "groups of people within Canada" and read definitions of four migrant groups: *Refugees* are people escaping persecution, torture, or cruel and unusual punishment in their home countries; *temporary foreign workers* (*TFW*) are foreign nationals hired by Canadian companies to fill temporary labor and skill shortages when qualified Canadian citizens or permanent residents are not available; *economic immigrants* are skilled workers and business people who enter Canada for longer periods; and *illegal immigrants* are people who have entered or are living in Canada unlawfully, in a way that violates the immigration laws of Canada. The former three groups correspond to Canadian visa categories.

Main variables. Next, participants rated the warmth and competence of the four migrant groups (Fiske, Glick, Cuddy, & Xu, 2002).[1] Instructions read, "Consider how [group] are viewed by Canadians in general. As viewed by most Canadians, how much are [group] viewed as each of these terms?" In keeping with Fiske, Glick, Cuddy, and Xu (2002), we used the "most Canadians" framing (rather than directly assessing participants' own perceptions) to lessen social desirability concerns. Each group was rated using eight adjectives reflecting perceived warmth and competence (competent, capable, confident, skillful, warm, friendly, good natured, and sincere) on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*). Reliability for these items was high (*M* α = .95), and we used their mean as an index of the positivity of migrant stereotype content. Higher scores represented higher warmth and competence.

Subsequently, as a measure of chronic tendencies to engage in SJ, participants completed a Canadian version of the SJ scale (Kay & Jost, 2003). The SJ motive can be both elicited situationally using experimental manipulations (Kay et al., 2009) and measured as an individual difference. Generally, individuals who score more highly are those who also engage in more direct forms of SJ (Cutright, Wu, Banfield, Kay, & Fitzsimons, 2011; Shepherd et al., 2015). The scale includes items such as "In general, Canadian society is fair." Participants indicated agreement with each item on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* scale (α = .87) and a mean score of the 8 items was used (*M* = 4.16; *SD* = 1.22).

Control variables. Following the variables of interest, participants completed measures of political orientation, SDO, and perceived competition with each group as control measures. Political orientation was assessed with 2 items asking, "Politically, how do you consider yourself on . . . " (a) "social issues" and (b) "economic issues." Possible response options fell on a 9-point scale anchored at −4 = *very liberal*, 0 = *neutral*, and +4 = *very*

conservative. These items were significantly correlated, *r*(1,079) = .61, *p* < .001, and we combined them into a single index of political orientation (*M* = −0.75, *SD* = 2.17), where higher scores indicated more conservative attitudes.

We included the 16-item SDO Scale (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) because of its well-established negative relation with attitudes toward immigrants (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007, 2010; Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). A sample item is, "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups." The measure uses a 7-point, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* scale, which showed high reliability (α = .91; *M* = 2.61; *SD* = 1.05).

Perceived competition was also included because of its well-established relation with attitudes toward immigrants (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005; Fussell, 2014). Perceived competition was assessed for each target group separately using Fiske et al.'s (2002) 3-item scale. For instance, 1 item read, "As [group] gain power, to what extent do other residents of Canada lose power?" Possible responses ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely* (*M* α = .92). Finally, participants completed demographic questions such as age, sex, and ethnicity.[2]

Results

Data were analyzed using structural equation Modeling (SEM) in IBM AMOS (22.0). First, to account for sampling error (i.e., differences between population data and achieved sampling quotas), we generated case weightings based on age and sex using government census data (OSM Tables S2 and S3). All analyses are based on the weighted data. See Table 2 for the correlations used in the primary analyses (Table 1, Model 1) and the OSM (Table S7) for all correlations used in all models. Unweighted correlations are also provided for transparency.

We examined the relationships between SJ and positivity of migrant stereotype content across Waves 1–3 as depicted in Figure 1. That is, we predicted positivity toward the four migrant groups using SJ, wave (linear and quadratic contrasts), and the SJ × Wave interaction (linear and quadratic contrasts). Exogenous continuous variables were mean centered. We predicted a linear effect of wave such that migrant stereotype content would become more positive over time. Importantly, we also predicted a SJ × Wave (linear) interaction such that the relationship between SJ and the positivity of migrant stereotype content would get stronger over time. We did not have hypotheses concerning quadratic effects but quadratic predictors were included to fully account for variance in the effect of wave. Although we included four migrant groups, we did not make predictions about the mean positivity of any group differing from the others in terms of its relation with SJ or change across waves. Therefore, for model parsimony, the equivalent paths across migrant groups were initially constrained to be equal. That is, the paths from SJ to economic, refugee, TFW, and illegal immigrant positivity of stereotype content were constrained to be equal to one another.

Table 2. Zero-Order Pearson Correlation Matrix used in Primary Analyses (Table 1, Model 1).

	System Justification	Wave (Linear)	Wave (Quadratic)	SJ × Wave (Linear)	SJ × Wave (Quadratic)	Economic Positivity	Refugee Positivity	Illegal Positivity	TFW Positivity
SJ	1	−0.00	0.04	0.05	0.03	**0.29**	**0.28**	**0.23**	**0.28**
Wave (linear)	−0.00	1	*−0.08*	−0.03	−0.00	**0.09**	**0.11**	**0.10**	**0.13**
Wave (quadric)	0.04	**−0.08**	1	0.00	0.03	*0.06*	0.05	0.00	0.03
SJ × Wave (linear)	0.06	−0.03	0.00	1	−0.03	*0.07*	**0.12**	**0.12**	0.03
SJ × Wave (quadric)	0.03	−0.00	0.03	−0.05	1	−0.04	−0.02	0.00	−0.04
Economic positivity	**0.29**	**0.09**	*0.06*	*0.07*	−0.05	1	**0.54**	**0.46**	**0.62**
Refugee positivity	**0.28**	**0.10**	0.05	**0.13**	−0.02	**0.54**	1	**0.61**	**0.55**
Illegal positivity	**0.23**	**0.10**	0.00	**0.13**	0.01	**0.46**	**0.61**	1	**0.50**
TFW positivity	**0.27**	**0.13**	0.04	0.04	−0.04	**0.62**	**0.55**	**0.50**	1
M	4.16	0.08	0.09	0.00	0.07	3.28	2.79	2.35	3.15
SD	1.22	0.80	1.44	0.99	1.75	0.76	0.86	0.92	0.79

Note. Population-weighted correlations used in analyses are below the diagonal and unweighted correlations are above the diagonal for comparison. Continuous variables reported below were mean-centered before analysis. Correlations in bold are $p < .05$, and correlations in italics are $p < .10$. $N = 1,080$. SJ = system justification; TFW = temporary foreign workers.
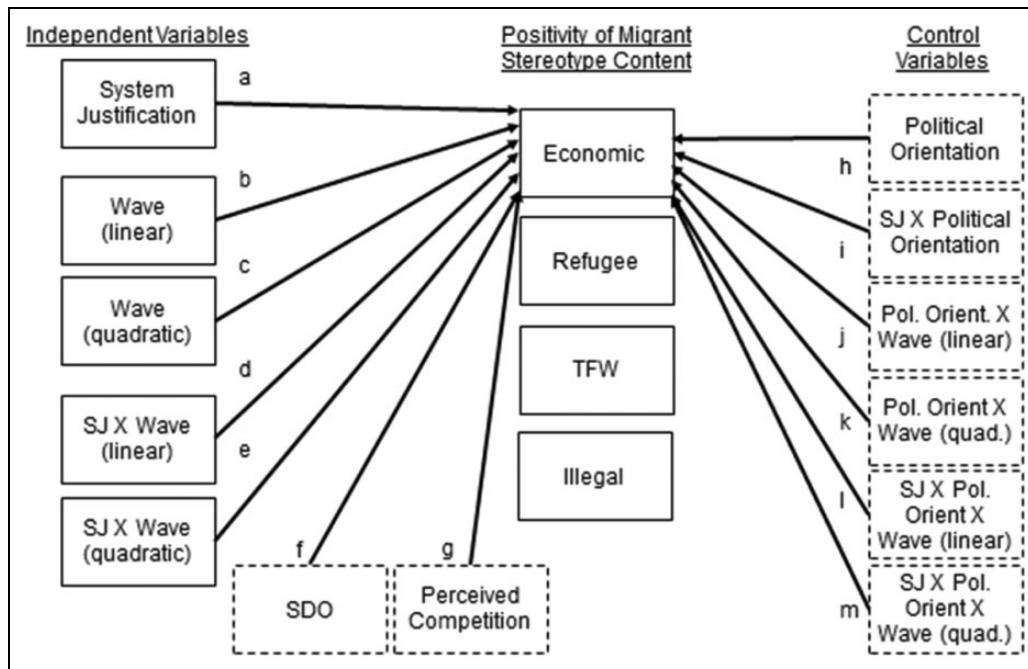

Figure 1. Simplified structural equation model showing system justification (SJ), wave, and their interaction predicting the positivity of migrant stereotype content. Paths from each independent variable were constrained to be equal across migrant groups (e.g., paths, labeled a, from SJ to economic, refugee, temporary foreign workers, and illegal that were all constrained to be equal). Path labels a–m correspond to Table 1. Solid boxes are focal variables, and dashed boxes are control variables. Aspects of the model that were included but are not shown in this figure: (a) all paths from each independent variable to each migrant group, (b) covariances among all independent/control variables and among all dependent variable error terms, and (c) error terms for all migrant groups. Not all displayed variables were included in every model: see Table 1.

Results are presented in Table 1. Model 1 shows results from focal predictors alone, and Model 2 shows results with control variables added. In sum, we found (a) a significant main effect of SJ, such that higher system justifiers showed more positive migrant stereotype content; (b) a significant linear main effect of wave, such that migrant stereotype content became more positive over time; and (c) a significant SJ × Wave (linear) interaction, such that the association between

SJ and migrant stereotype content became stronger over time. These effects were significant in Models 1 and 2. That is, the effects of SJ, wave, and the SJ × Wave (linear) interaction were robust and independent of SDO, political orientation, and perceived competition. SDO and perceived competition exerted independent effects on migrant positivity. Replicating past work (Duckitt & Sibley 2010; Thomsen et al., 2008), individuals higher in SDO and individuals who expressed higher

levels of perceived competition with immigrants expressed less positive migrant stereotype content. Furthermore, political orientation did not significantly predict migrant positivity when SJ, SDO, and competition were entered into the model.

Exploratory and Secondary Analyses

An unpredicted marginal negative quadratic effect of wave emerged in Model 2 when control variables were added. This suggested that the increase in migrant positivity was stronger between Waves 1 and 2 than the increase between Waves 2 and 3. Although not predicted, this is consistent with our theorizing that the magnitude of positivity change should reflect the magnitude of change in system sanctioning, which was greater between Waves 1 and 2 (with the change in government) relative to between Waves 2 and 3 (which represented increased, but less dramatic, pro-migration system sanctioning from the same government).

Initially, paths across migrant classes were constrained to be equal as explained above. In an exploratory analysis, we tested an alternative Model 2 with no imposed path constraints; this produced significantly improved model fit, $\chi^2_{change}(24) = 59.54$, $p < .001$. Examining the individual path estimates revealed that this improved fit was driven by differences in the SJ × Wave (linear) interaction across migrant groups. That is, the relation between SJ and positivity in migrant stereotype content across waves became stronger for refugees, $B = .079$, $b = .068$, $SE = .024$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [.021, .115], $z = 2.81$, $p = .005$, and illegal immigrants, $B = .098$, $b = .091$, $SE = .027$, 95% CI [.038, .144], $z = 3.33$, $p < .001$, but not for economic immigrants, $B = .029$, $b = .022$, $SE = .022$, 95% CI [−.021, .065], $z = 1.02$, $p = .309$, or TFW, $B = .018$, $b = .014$, $SE = .023$, 95% CI [−.031, .059], $z = 0.61$, $p = .539$. The preceding four path estimates represent Figure 1 path d, if it were allowed to vary across immigrant groups.

Moreover, one-way analyses of variances testing whether SJ, SDO, and political orientation differed by wave revealed no significant effects, $Fs < 1$, $ps > .381$ (OSM Table S4). This suggests that changes in the positivity of migrant stereotype content that occurred across waves were less likely due to a general increase in SJ, and more consistent with our account that a shift in stereotype content occurred among those who were already high system justifiers.

Finally, recall that we proposed that the change in the positivity of migrant stereotype content over time was due to an increase in system sanctioning of pro-migrant ideologies, which led to more positivity in stereotype content among high system justifiers. Another possibility, however, is a social identity–based explanation in which it was the change in government from the Conservative Party to the Liberal Party that increased both SJ and positivity toward migrants. In particular, such an argument would suggest that because political liberals' preferred government was now in power at Wave 2, liberals were more likely to be both satisfied with the system and, coincidentally, more pro-immigrant.

To investigate this possibility, we conducted an SEM that tested the effects of SJ, wave, and political orientation with all of their possible interactions, the results of which are shown in Table 1, Model 3. Although conservative political orientation was independently associated with reporting less positive migrant stereotypes, the critical SJ × Wave (linear) effect of interest was still significant when political orientation and the interactions were included in the model.

General Discussion

The current findings contribute to knowledge on how system-level variables such as government policies interact with individual-level psychological motives to predict socially relevant outcomes such as the positivity of migrant stereotype content. Across three waves of nationally representative survey data, migrant stereotype content became more positive and was moderated by individuals' SJ tendencies. We suggest that this increase in positivity occurred, in part, because of the shift in the Canadian governments' pro-immigration and pro-refugee stance from Wave 1 to Waves 2 and 3. Supporting this account, increased positivity in migrant stereotype content was especially likely among people who reported stronger motives to justify their sociopolitical system. Importantly, these associations and increases in positivity held when controlling for political orientation as well as other established predictors of attitudes toward migrants such as SDO and perceived competition.

Exploratory analyses suggested that the increases in the positivity of migrant stereotypes were largest for the categories of refugees and illegal immigrants. Although national discourse was largely focused on refugees, SJ was also associated with positivity toward illegal migrants who are attempting to enter the country outside of approved means. An examination of the zero-order correlations between SJ and migrant positivity at each wave (OSM Table S5) indicates that SJ did not significantly predict illegal migrant positivity at Wave 1, $r(300) = .09$, $p = .125$, but did so at Wave 2, $r(389) = .23$, $p < .001$, and Wave 3, $r(385) = .35$, $p < .001$. One interpretation of the null effect at Wave 1 is that before national discourse about migration came to the forefront, illegal immigration was indeed unassociated with status quo preservation in the Canadian context. Regarding the increased associations at Waves 2 and 3, captured in the exploratory analyses above, we speculate that this occurred because refugees and asylum seekers—who may be associated with illegal immigration—were the categories that were most often the subjects of Canadian government sanctioning (Black, 2015). That is, while all four target groups saw some increases in stereotype positivity across waves, this may have been especially so for those groups most relevant to new government policies and positive pronouncements, including refugees and those sometimes deemed "illegal migrants." Moreover, the significant quadratic effect suggests that the greatest magnitude of change in migrant stereotypes occurred between Waves 1 and 2, where the increase in system

sanctioning of pro-migrant sentiment was greatest. It is also important to note that although the positivity of illegal migrant stereotypes increased across waves, these increases were relative. Mean stereotype positivity about illegal migrants was lower than that for all other groups and always below the scale midpoint (OSM Table S4).

Implications for SJ Theory and Stereotyping

One notable contribution of SJ theory has been to demonstrate how group-based beliefs such as compensatory stereotypes contribute to perceptions of system legitimacy (Kay et al., 2007). For example, stereotyping specific ethnic groups as low in morality, but high in competence (or vice versa) has been associated with individual differences in SJ (Cichocka et al., 2015). Similarly, SJ has been shown to increase when people are exposed to stereotypes of women as communal but not agentic (Jost & Kay, 2005). The current work complements this literature by showing how group-based beliefs about migrants change over time as a function of SJ. It is also different from past work in that we combined warmth and competence into a single index of the positivity of migrant stereotype content rather than examining them separately (Cichocka et al., 2015). This choice was made because of the current article's focus on system sanctioning—a relatively understudied mechanism within SJ research—rather than on compensatory stereotyping. Furthermore, our focus was also on change over time, and we did not expect that compensatory stereotypes about warmth and competence would change over time as a function of SJ levels. This made the unitary measure of migrant positivity a more parsimonious choice for analysis. Future research could more directly investigate processes of compensatory stereotyping within the context of migration classifications groups.

To be sure, the idea that government positions on social issues such as immigration can exert an influence on individuals' social stereotypes or attitudes more broadly is not unique to SJ theory. For example, research and theory on status quo bias (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2012; Eidelman, Crandall, & Pattershall, 2009) and social normative influence (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991) would also predict that perceptions of migrants would become more positive over time because immigration became more common. It is also possible that the increase in publically shared individual refugee stories may have led Canadians to embrace humanitarianism (Slovic, 2007) or that personal contact with refugees may have improved intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Because of the correlational nature of the current research, the possibility that factors such as intergroup contact might explain, in part, the main effect of time on migrant positivity cannot be conclusively ruled out. More consistent with a SJ account, however, is the interaction between wave and SJ. Because the greatest increases in migrant positivity occurred among those higher in SJ, this suggests that the SJ motive, at least in part, contributed to the observed changes. To provide definitive answers about causation, however, future experiments should investigate this issue.

Furthermore, theorizing and research by Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, and Lalonde (2006)]) show that national identities and national-level norms can affect attitudes toward migrants. Specifically, they have shown that highly identifying with one's nation can lead to personal adoption of national-level norms of tolerance or discrimination: Highly identifying as Australian, for instance, can lead people to conform to hostile norms when they perceive the Australian norm to be negative. Because we did not include measures of national identity in the current studies, we can only speculate about the relative contribution of group identity processes within the current data. However, it seems plausible that both identity and SJ processes are operating, and this would be consistent with past theoretical (Jost & Banaji, 1994) and empirical work (Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009) that finds group- and SJ-based motives are distinct from one another.

Limitations

Given the correlational nature of the current data, we cannot make definitive causal claims. However, the increased associations between SJ and the positivity of migrant stereotype content over time suggest that, to the extent that people are motivated to justify their sociopolitical systems, social stereotypes can increasingly reflect, at least in part, national ideology as promoted by government policy.

An outstanding question is to what extent the outcome measure of migrant stereotype positivity reflects participants' personal attitudes versus a perceived descriptive norm about other Canadians' attitudes. Of course, both attitudes and norms have the potential to influence intergroup behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Cialdini et al., 1991) and descriptive norms particularly so when the SJ motive is high (Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009). Whether system-sanctioned change has stronger effects on descriptive norms or attitudes is an important theoretical question that should be addressed in future research that uses measures specifically designed to tease apart these constructs.

The current research focused on relative changes in the strength of the association between SJ and migrant positivity over time. One could also derive predictions grounded in SJ Theory about the absolute direction of this association at Wave 1 when the government was more negative about migration, relative to Waves 2 and 3. In particular, that the association between SJ and positivity at Wave 1 would be negative. What made us avoid absolute predictions, however, was considering the influence of historical, institutional multiculturalism in Canada. Since 1971, multiculturalism has been official government policy—even if some administrations in Canada have been less supportive of that ideology than others. Because of the historical influences of multiculturalism, predicting the absolute magnitude/direction of the correlation between SJ and migrant positivity in the Canadian context becomes complex. In contexts that lack historical system ideals of multiculturalism or where system authorities most strongly promote anti-migrant beliefs, however, we would

indeed expect the SJ motive to be negatively associated with the positivity of migrant stereotype content in an absolute sense.

In conclusion, the current results support the contention that SJ processes—and government policy concerning migrants—should be considered in attempts to understand changes in beliefs about migrants. In addition to highlighting the contextual nature of SJ processes and documenting how and why SJ is associated with migrant stereotype positivity, this research underscores the important role that governments can play in setting the tone for (un)welcoming communities.

Authors' Note

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Supplemental Materials

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

Notes

1. The warmth and competence items were originally chosen to test predictions derived from the stereotype content model (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; Fiske et al., 2002) about perceived warmth and competence across the four migrant classifications (e.g., that refugees would be higher in warmth than competence). Because of the different theoretical focus and the high internal consistency of the combined 8 items ($\alpha = .95$), we treated them as a single index of the positivity of migrant stereotype content.
2. After the measures reported here, participants completed scales outside the scope of the current analyses, which included perceived status (Fiske et al., 2002); Protestant work ethic (Quinn & Crocker, 1999); two diversity items; and an evaluative thermometer and items about immigration levels (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Waves 2 and 3 only).

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