Interventions that Reduce Exclusionary Attitudes: Personal Narratives about Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia[*]

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Abstract

Colombia has received almost two million Venezuelan immigrants in the past few years. Despite sharing cultural similarities to the host population, this wave of migrants has not always been welcomed with open arms. A growing literature in Global North countries shows promise for perspective-getting exercises, in which participants learn about the lived experience of an out-group member, as ways to increase humanitarian concerns for immigrants and other minority groups. Using two large-scale pre-registered studies, we explore what kind of narratives are more effective in reducing prejudice and increasing support for migratory policies in Colombia. In the first study, we investigate whether learning about the economic hardship or the violent environment faced by a Venezuelan immigrant moving to Colombia affects policy preferences and prejudice outcomes. In the second study, we further explore the impact of a different version of the economic narrative and a narrative that highlights the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. We find that only the economic hardship narratives effectively change both the prejudice and the support for policies across studies. We interpret this finding as evidence that host populations in middle-income countries are more likely to welcome immigrants portrayed as hard-working and not as victims of violence or humanitarian crisis.

Introduction

As the number of forcibly displaced people continues to rise globally, so do concerns about increasing exclusionary attitudes towards immigrants in hosting nations. According to the United Nations, low and middle-income countries host over 40% of the world's migrant population. In many cases, these migrants relocate to border regions close to their own countries and share many cultural traits with the receiving country's population (Zhou, 2021). This new migratory climate has sparked a previously absent public debate between those who support policies that deter migration (including deportation) and those who prefer policies to assist immigrants (granting humanitarian visas and work permits).

Recent work in the Global North has looked at the impact of learning about the experience of immigration on acceptance levels though personal narratives. Some of these initiatives, known as perspective-getting exercises, are a promising avenue to promote and increase humanitarian concerns for immigrants and other minority groups. However, we don't have enough evidence on the effect these narratives have on attitudes towards migration in low- and middle-income countries where immigrants share similar ethnolinguistic backgrounds to the host population. In particular, we do not know what type of messages are more effective in promoting empathy for immigrants and, in turn, support for policies that benefit them.

In this paper, we ask how prejudice against immigrants can be reduced and support for immigrant-inclusive immigration policies increased. To study this question, we focus on the case of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. This is one of the most critical recent humanitarian crises where around six million people have left Venezuela and now live in virtually all the countries of Latin America, especially Colombia, which hosts approximately two million Venezuelans.

Strategies to promote the integration of migrants in developing countries are now a main research topic. In particular, in this paper we study the impact that different perspective-getting exercises have on migration policy support, prejudice and stereotypical beliefs.

We use two large-scale pre-registered online experiments to study what kind of perspective-

getting interventions can effectively decrease exclusionary attitudes towards Venezuelan immigrants. To do so, we randomly assign respondents recruited through an online panel to either be in a treatment condition in which respondents read about the experience of a migrant or a control condition where they do not read the narrative. These narratives, including the ones used in these experiments, are typically published in newspapers with wide circulation. This design allows us to evaluate the impact of narratives that are already in circulation but may not reach certain populations, and to control for other factors that may affect the impact of narratives and attribute changes in the level of support for migrants solely to reading the migrant experience.

In the first study, we look at the impact of narratives by immigrants that face one of two situations: a) harsh economic conditions or b) violence in the country of destination. We find that narratives that present immigrants as hard-working people in the host country effectively reduce exclusionary policy attitudes. In contrast, narratives that portray their suffering from violence are not effective.

In the second study, we explore once more the impact of a narrative that underscores the economic hardship faced by migrants, and the impact of a narrative that emphasizes the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela not related to violence. The objective of the second experiment is to evaluate whether the results of the impact of the economic narrative in the first study are dependent on the characteristics of the portrayed migrant. We find that the economic narrative reduces prejudice but not exclusionary policy attitudes (the effect almost halves compared to the first study). In contrast, the narrative that refers to the humanitarian crisis —not related to violence— is effective only in reducing prejudice.

Taken together, we interpret these results as suggesting that even though a hard-working immigrant may pose an economic threat to the host population, the economic narrative may be less threatening, contrary to what the discourse on migration in the Global South would lead to believe. We argue this may happen because narratives on hard-working migrants may alter the host societal stereotypical perceptions about migrants: in particular, that they are

less likely to rely on welfare. However, we also note that this is only observed when the immigrant in the narrative is an exceptional immigrant exemplar.

Furthermore, we find suggestive evidence that the economic narrative effects on support for inclusive immigration policies is mediated by greater empathy for immigrants. This result indicates that one of the channels through which narratives affect attitudes has an emotional component.

While perspective-getting interventions are not the most common type of treatments used in prejudice-reducing interventions, it is supported by research in the psychology literature (Redelmeier and Tversky, 1990). Moreover, it has recently been shown to significantly and durably reduce exclusionary attitudes (Kalla and Broockman, 2020a; Audette, Horowitz and Michelitch, 2020). We want to explore to what extent these strategies can be externalized to the context of migrants in developing countries (Audette, Horowitz and Michelitch, 2020; Zhou, 2021). We also want to explore the channels through which that impact may occur, something that remains understudied in the literature. Finally, our project also emphasizes the challenges perspective-getting strategies face in affecting outcomes other than prejudice.

Global South Immigration, Narratives and Attitudes

What kind of narratives are effective in reducing prejudice towards migrants? A rich literature has analyzed the determinants of immigration policy preferences, and attitudes in general towards out-groups, in Western, industrialized, rich, democracies. Many studies have framed the discussion about attitudes as deriving from either economic or cultural reasons (see Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014, for a review of this literature). Consistently, these studies find that immigration-related attitudes are mostly driven by concerns and anxiety about cultural and economic threats to the country as a whole, rather than by material self-interest (e.g Adida, Lo and Platas, 2019; Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008; Citrin et al., 1997; Valentino et al., 2019). In the US, for example, people tend to be more welcoming to-

wards immigrants that have higher education or high status jobs and less welcoming towards people that do not have plans to work, do not speak English well, or are Iraqi (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015).[1]

A separate literature has emerged to develop strategies to counter negative views towards immigrants and other out-groups, though again focusing mostly on Global North countries. Within this literature, only a few strategies have been shown to have a causal impact on reducing exclusionary attitudes and behaviors in practice.[2]. These strategies include perspective taking exercises (Adida, Lo and Platas, 2018; Broockman and Kalla, 2016; Simonovits, Kezdi and Kardos, 2018), listening to personal narratives (Audette, Horowitz and Michelitch, 2020), or non-judgemental exchange of narratives (Kalla and Broockman, 2020b). Moreover, Newman et al. (2015) find that inducing humanitarian concerns regarding immigration can override information which evokes a threat. Although, as noted, most of these studies focus on developed countries, recent work has found that humanitarian concerns play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards refugees in less-developed contexts (Alrababa'h et al., 2019). However, this work focuses on forced migration; as a result, we still lack evidence about interventions aimed at fostering inclusionary attitudes towards economic migrants in less developed contexts. Importantly, as noted above, Venezuelan migrants are culturally similar to Colombians as they speak the same language and are likely to share religious practices and other cultural markers, but represent a source of labor market competition. Indeed, as of June 2021, PMV found that 53 percent of Colombians believed that Venezuelan immigrants took jobs away from Colombians.[3]

Perspective-getting interventions have shown to significantly and durably reduce exclusionary attitudes (Kalla and Broockman, 2020a; Audette, Horowitz and Michelitch, 2020).

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[1]In the specific case of Colombia, previous research shows that even perceived political ideology is a reason for alienating migrants (Holland, Peters and Zhou, 2021). Colombians tend to view Venezuelan migrants as left-winged, even if they are not.

[2]For an early review, see Paluck and Green (2009)

[3]See https://s3.amazonaws.com/semanaruralvzla/documentos/1628115278_boletin_21_percepci0npdf (Accessed 09/07/2021).

The findings in this literature suggest that when individuals hear the account of an out-group member and focus on the story of the individual instead of that of the group, it can promote empathy, and in turn foster inclusionary attitudes. The findings in this literature suggest that when individuals hear the account of an outgroup member and focus on the story of the individual instead of that of the group, it can promote empathy, and in turn foster inclusionary attitudes. Moreover, hearing about the experience of an immigrant may make individuals more likely to acknowledge that the disadvantaged position of out-group members, is not a consequence of negative individual attributes, but structural conditions (Kalla and Broockman, 2020a).

In addition to testing the effects of perspective-getting narratives in developing countries, we want to explore three aspects that are understudied in the literature. First, we look at whether narratives that underscore harsh economic circumstances faced by migrants have a different effect from narratives that emphasize the violence faced by immigrants. The motivation for this treatment is to tackle the main sources of apprehension towards migrants in developing contexts: a) the idea that migrants are not hardworking, and thus represent a strain on public spending, and b) the idea that migrants coming from humanitarian crises increase crime and violence upon their arrival. We argue that personal narratives crafted to affect different potential sources of exclusionary attitudes can affect prejudice against migrants and policy attitudes differentially. In particular, economic migrants with personal narratives highlighting the necessity to leave their country and their hard work in the host country may affect natives' policy attitudes, while migrants that face violence along their journey may alter natives' stereotypes about migrants. The history of hard-working immigrants can reduce the impression that the new population will use government resources or participate in criminal activities. This means that economic narratives could be more effective in changing prevalent stereotypes related to crime and insecurity. Additionally, the narratives that emphasize the humanitarian crisis and the violence suffered by immigrants do not necessarily have the expected effect in countries where the population has already

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been affected by violence and has experienced restrictions in access to resources.

Second, we will examine the role that in-group members play in the effect of narratives. In their personal narratives, migrants often highlight the generosity or help they receive from native citizens, which usually proves to be very significant for the former. We explore whether including mentions of support from native citizens in the narratives of migrants has a larger effect on reducing prejudice and increasing support for pro immigrant policies, compared to not including such mentions. We argue that if native citizens perceive that other in-group members support migrants, then they may be less motivated to resist persuasion or to dismiss evidence and arguments contrary to their views (Leeper and Slothuus, 2014), and therefore more willing to engage with migrants' narratives.

Third, we explore to what extent the narratives are sensitive to those who share them. There is evidence in developed countries that people change their levels of acceptance depending on the type of immigrant (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). We complement this agenda by showing that a change in the person narrating the same experience affects the impacts of the narratives. In fact, we argue that these results may affect the type of acceptance (concerning policy or concerning general prejudice) that people have of migrants.

Context

In the last few years, the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has led nearly two million Venezuelans to flee to Colombia. Although the government has taken steps to promote the integration of migrants, many legal, political, and social barriers prevent their inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthen such barriers by burdening Colombia's economic and healthcare system. The crisis has put a strain on local populations, who feel that their demand for government services is unmet partly due to the unprecedented levels of migration. This pressure has sustained xenophobic sentiments and exclusionary attitudes. Public opinion polls conducted as recently as October 2020 show that around 69% of Colombians have

an unfavorable opinion of Venezuelans, and 72% feel that, after the pandemic is over, the border with Venezuela should be kept closed to prevent more migrants from entering the country. This level of polarization and discontent puts Venezuelans in Colombia at risk, as it undermines the collective response needed to implement health measures and economic policies.

According to the Colombian Foreign Ministry, the amount of Venezuelan immigrants in the country has gone from about 23,000 in 2014 to over 1.74 million in 2021.[4] A recent series of surveys conducted by the *Proyecto Migración Venezuela* (PMV), a project launched by the newspaper *Semana*, found that in August of 2020, 71 percent of Colombians had a negative view of Venezuela immigrants, up from 52 percent in 2018.[5]

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing social and economic group differences, with migrants among the groups that have experienced the most economic hardships, discrimination, and stigmatization. Migrants and people without permanent residence, experience the same health threats from COVID-19 as the native-born, but are particularly vulnerable, as they face obstacles accessing health-care, and commonly live in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions (e.g. Agudelo-Suárez et al. (2020); Doocy et al. (2019)). Additionally, attitudes towards migrants have worsened recently, as migrants are perceived to be vectors of the disease. This combination of factors increases immigrants' vulnerability to the disease, and hinders the ability of governments to take comprehensive health and economic measures to protect migrants. Displaced Venezuelans in Colombia are currently facing many of these difficulties.

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[4]See https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/infografias/ distribucion-de-venezolanos-en-colombia-corte-31-de-enero-de-2021 (Accessed 09/03/2021).

[5]See https://s3.amazonaws.com/semanaruralvzla/documentos/1606257669_ boletin_15_percepcion_y_estereotipospdf (Accessed 09/07/2021). However, there is significant regional variation in the country, with the Bogotá and northeast regions of the country being more likely to support exclusio˜sanenary policies against Venezuelan immigrants. See https://s3.amazonaws.com/semanaruralvzla/documentos/1609184052_ boletin_16_de_percepcion_regionalpdf (Accessed 09/07/2021).

To complicate matters, epidemics and economic crises can trigger exclusionary attitudes towards out-groups. Existing research suggests that anxiety and disgust sensitivity, such as that generated by a crisis caused by the outbreak of a disease increases negative attitudes towards an out-group, such as immigrants (Aarøe, Petersen and Arceneaux, 2017; Gadarian and Albertson, 2014; Navarrete and Fessler, 2006). This is particularly true in the case when an epidemic is politicized (Adida, Dionne and R. Platas, 2020). Recent work conducted amidst the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that economically affected groups tend to express more exclusionary attitudes towards out-groups (Dipopa, Grossman and Zonszein, 2021; Gottlieb, 2020). Migrants and people without permanent residence, experience the same health threats from COVID-19 as the native-born, but are particularly vulnerable, as they face obstacles accessing health-care, and commonly live in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions (e.g. Agudelo-Suárez et al. (2020); Doocy et al. (2019)). Despite the fact that a majority of Colombians recognize that Venezuelan migrants are more likely to get infected with COVID-19, 57 percent of the surveyed population believed in June 2021 that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Venezuelan immigrants should return to their country and 54 percent stated that after the pandemic subsides the border with Venezuela should remain closed.[6]

Colombia is not the only country in the Global South experiencing a surge in immigration. Therefore, studying strategies to reduce discrimination and promote the integration of migrants in developing countries is a pressing research topic that can have a global impact.

Experimental Design

In what follows, we describe the elements of the experimental design that the two studies have in common.

Both experimental studies were pre-registered before data collection. Before beginning

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[6]See https://s3.amazonaws.com/semanaruralvzla/documentos/1628115278_boletin_21_percepciOnpdf (Accessed 09/07/2021).

each experiment, participants provided consent. No deception was used in our investigation. Given the nature of our research, the project was deemed exempt from review by our university's IRBs.

Before randomization and the delivery of the intervention, respondents were asked to answer demographic and COVID-related questions (see the instrument in the Appendix). Additionally, we asked respondents to rate their feelings towards different groups, including Venezuelan migrants, using a feeling thermometer to understand whether baseline prejudice towards Venezuelan immigrants moderates the treatment effects. Respondents were then assigned with equal probability to one of the treatment conditions described below.

In the first study, respondents could be assigned to either read the narrative of a former athlete turned into an economic migrant who experienced hardships, the narrative of a migrant who experienced violence on their way to Colombia and was offered help by a Colombian, and the same narrative omitting the part of the help. For the second study, respondents in the treatment conditions read either the same narrative of the economic migrant but omitting the fact he was an athlete, or a narrative about lack of access to medicine in Venezuela. In both studies we analyze the impact of the narratives on support for deportation, prejudice against migrants, and stereotypical beliefs.

In addition to the main outcomes, we analyze whether the effects are mediated by changes in empathy towards Venezuelan migrants. We want explore to what extent the emotions that narratives arouse could explain the changes we observe in preferences for policies and attitudes in general.

We then analyze how exposure to COVID-19 moderates the relationship. Given the relevance that the pandemic had on the discussion about migration we further assess whether different treatments have heterogeneous effects depending on exposure to the pandemic both in terms of the disease itself and its economics effects.

The outcomes, the estimation procedure of the main effects, and the observational mediation analysis are the same for the two studies.

Outcomes: In both studies we analyzed three main outcomes related to political preferences, prejudice about immigrants and stereotypical beliefs. Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward immigration policy by asking agreement to five policy statements on a 7-point Likert scale (e.g. "The government should give out permits to allow Venezuelan immigrants to stay in the country for 10 years"), a 7-point feeling thermometer towards Venezuelan immigrants, and agreement with four stereotypical beliefs about Venezuelan immigrants (e.g. "Venezuelan immigrants are affecting employment rates in Colombia").[7]

Our main outcome, as specified in our pre-analysis plan, is support for deporting Venezuelan immigrants. However, in the analyses below we also present results for additive indices of both policy attitudes and stereotypical beliefs. To test some of our proposed mechanisms and for robustness checks, we also present analyses for individual items noting when we use each.

Estimation method: main effects We estimate the ATE of the intervention on attitudes towards migrants via OLS both without and with covariate adjustment, including age, gender and socioeconomic status. We compute robust ("HC2") standard errors. Namely we estimate the following equation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta T_i + \gamma X_i + \epsilon_i$$

where Y_i is the outcome variable of interest, T_i denotes assignment to treatment (0 if assigned to the control condition, 1 if assigned to treatment), X_i is the vector of covariate values for individual i, ϵ_i is the error term and α, β, and γ are the parameters to be estimated. β is the parameter of interest and measures the ATE.

Observational mediation analysis: We evaluate whether the treatment effects are mediated by greater empathy towards migrants. We follow the approach of Baron and Kenny

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[7]See a detailed description of the outcomes in supplementary material.

(1986), while we control for the vector of pre-treatment covariates to account for potential confounding between the mediator and the outcome variables. First, via OLS, we test whether the intervention affects the outcome. Second, whether the intervention affects the mediator and whether the mediator affects the outcome. Lastly, we check whether the intervention effects on the outcome remain significant when controlling for the mediator. Finding that that the effect is not statistically distinguishable from zero would suggest that it is mediated by increased empathy towards migrants/anger about the situation of migrants. We compute robust ("HC2") standard errors. We also follow Imai, Keele and Tingley (2010), and implement the more generalized method to analyze mediation effects, which allows us to conduct a sensitivity analysis.

To describe the two experiments, we will follow the same order. First, we will describe in detail the narratives that make up each of the treatments. Second, we will give general information about the study, such as the implementation time and sample size. Third, we will discuss the main results related to policy, prejudice, and stereotypes. Fourth, we will analyze the role of empathy in mediating the analysis of narratives. Finally, we discuss moderation by COVID-19 concerns.

Study 1: Economic Narrative, Violence and In-group Help

The first experiment was implemented online between July 7 and July 24, 2021. We recruited a sample of 2,417 respondents through Offerwise, a market research company. The sample size is the necessary to estimate the main effects according to the power analysis in the registered pre-analysis plan. We used quota sampling by department (administrative unit in Colombia) that reflects the distribution of Venezuelan immigrants across departments.

Respondents were assigned with equal probability to one of three treatment conditions described below or to a control condition. Before answering the mediator and outcome

questions, those assigned to one of the treatment groups read a narrative about the experience of a Venezuelan migrant and were asked to reflect on the narrative with two short essay questions. Those assigned to the control group, read the narrative and reflected on it at the end of the survey, after having answered the mediator and outcome questions.

Treatment conditions of Study 1

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: (1) control; (2) reading a narrative of a Venezuelan immigrant discussing the hard economic conditions he has gone through; (3) reading a narrative of of a Venezuelan immigrant detailing the dangers he has gone through to migrate; and (4) reading an expanded version of the narrative in (3), in which participants learn that the Venezuelan immigrant was helped by a Colombian. We collected these narratives from newspaper stories about Venezuelan migrant experiences and from reports from NGOs promoting migrant rights in Colombia. The narratives are the following:

1. **Control:** Respondents will read narrative (2) after completing the outcome questions.

2. **Harsh Economic Conditions:** *This is the testimony of Dwuayxo Guzmán, a Venezuelan immigrant. Dwuayxo is a professional basketball player, from the state of Carabobo, Venezuela. He is part of the group of Venezuelan professionals that have arrived in Santana, Boyacá to work in the sugar cane mills. This testimony was published in the newspaper El Tiempo. After reading it, we will ask you some questions about what you've read.*

"I was part of the Carabobo state team. I played in lots of tournaments, travelling to Barquisimeto, Caracas, and other cities. I had the opportunity to play in professional leagues. However, I had to leave all of that behind and leave my country to help my family. I did not know anything about this job. I had to learn and that's okay; but the job is a bit hard, we've got to work in the nighttime, morning, and afternoon. It's physically draining."

Think about the immigrants that arrive in Colombia. In your opinion, what are the reasons for which Venezuelans migrate to Colombia?

3. Violence (without in-group help). *This is the testimony of Jesús Alfredo Silva, a Venezuelan immigrant to Colombia. This testimony was published in* Red Clamor. *After reading it, we will ask you some questions about what you've read.*

"We rode on a trailer until we reached Ibagué. It was getting dark. There a group of people wearing soccer jerseys got on the trailer to hurt us. They beat us up and robbed our belongings. Once they got off with all of our belongings the trailer still went on and on driving for a long time. He drove through a cold, cold, cold road until we got to Neiva. There we got off the trailer."

Think about the immigrants that arrive in Colombia. In your opinion, what are the reasons for which Venezuelans migrate to Colombia?

4. Violence with in-group help. *This is the testimony of Jesús Alfredo Silva, a Venezuelan immigrant to Colombia. This testimony was published in* Red Clamor. *After reading it, we will ask you some questions about what you've read.*

"We rode on a trailer until we reached Ibagué. It was getting dark. There a group of people wearing soccer jerseys got on the trailer to hurt us. They beat us up and robbed our belongings. The driver noticed and got them off the trailer. Then he helped about 30 other Venezuelans get on the trailer and drove and drove for a long time. He drove through a cold, cold, cold road until we got to Neiva. There we got off the trailer."

Think about the immigrants that arrive in Colombia. In your opinion, what are the reasons for which Venezuelans migrate to Colombia?

Main Results of Study 1

In what follows, we present the results for the effect on policy, the effect on prejudice, and the effect on stereotypes. Throughout the text we report our results in terms of standard deviations for ease of interpretation.
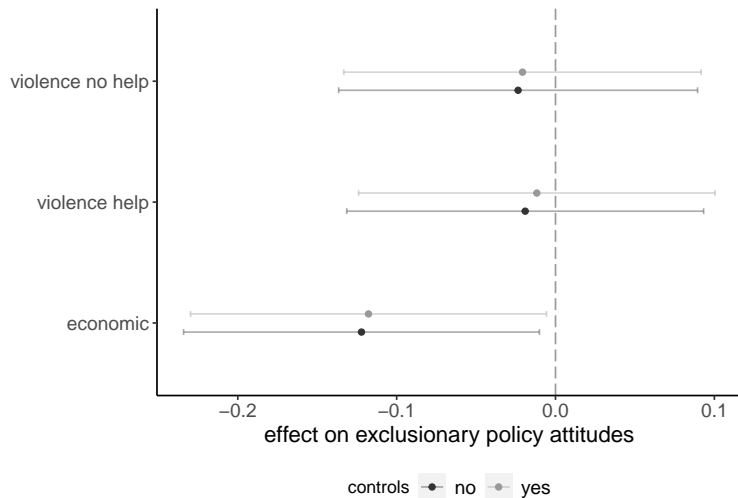

Figure 1: Effects on Policy

First, figure 1 shows the point estimate and 95 percent confidence interval of the effect of the different treatment conditions on our main policy outcome, support for deportation of Venezuelan migrants. In line with our theory, assignment to the economic narrative treatment that highlights the economic conditions of a migrant is associated with a 0.12 standard deviations reduction in support for deportation. This result shows evidence in favor of the hypothesis that economic narratives will reduce support for exclusionary attitudes.

However, the figure also shows that there is no effect of the violence narratives on policy attitudes towards deportation. The presence of a supportive in-group within the narrative does not have an impact either.

Second, Figure 2 shows the the point estimate and the 95 percent confidence interval of effect of the different treatment conditions on prejudice. The economic narrative reduces prejudice against migrants. However, contrasting with our hypotheses, assignment to the violence narratives did not reduce prejudice against migrants. While the coefficient is in
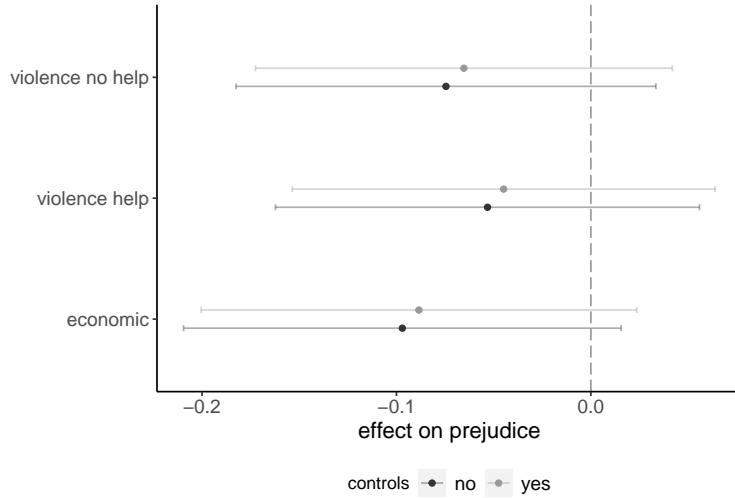
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Figure 2: Effects on Prejudice

the hypothesised direction, neither the narrative with help nor the narrative without help significantly reduces prejudice.

Finally, Figure 3 shows the the effect of the different treatment conditions on stereotypes. We do not see a significant effect of the violence narratives on reducing stereotypes, but see a small reduction, of about 0.1 standard deviations, in the amount of prejudice expressed by participants assigned to the economic hardship narrative with respect to those in the control condition.
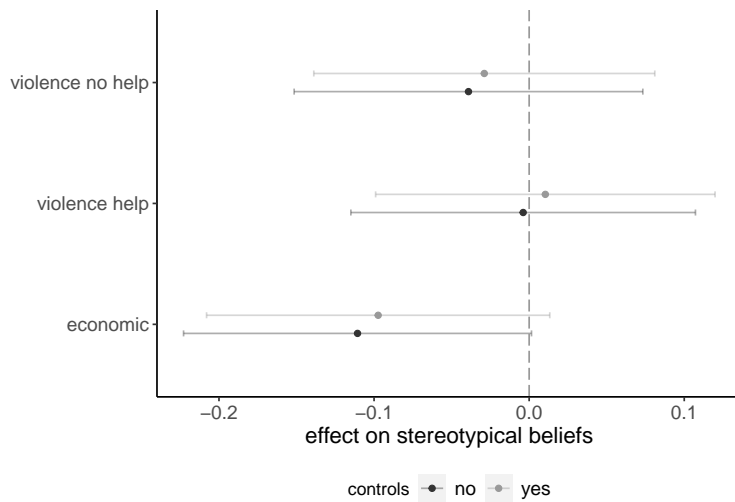
Figure 3: Effects on Stereotypes

Taken together, the results suggest that the economic narrative is very effective in promoting positive attitudes towards immigrants in Colombia. However, the violence narrative did not change any of the outcomes.

Mediation analysis of Study 1

Following on our pre-analysis plan, we analyze whether the main effects are mediated by changes in empathy towards Venezuelan migrants.

From top to bottom, Figure 4 indicates that the economic narrative decreases exclusionary policy preferences, as shown by the negative coefficient and 95 percent confidence intervals of the narrative effects on policy. Second, the narrative increases empathy towards immigrants, as indicated by the negative (smaller values indicate more empathy) and statistically significant effect of the narrative on empathy. Third, empathy is positively associated with preferences for inclusionary policies, as indicated by the positive coefficient and 95 percent confidence intervals of the relationship between policy and empathy. Lastly, the effect of the narrative on inclusionary policy preferences shrinks and is no longer statistically significant when controlling for empathy (policy control empathy), suggesting that part of the reduction of exclusionary attitudes generated by the treatment is driven by increases in empathy.

Identification of the mediation effect requires that the ignorability assumption holds both for our treatment and the mediator (Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010). This is satisfied in the case of the treatment, since it was randomly assigned, but not in the case of the mediator. Although we control for all available potential confounds, like age, gender, and socio-economic status, there could still be omitted variables. Thus, we implement the more generalized method proposed by Imai, Keele and Tingley (2010), which in addition to calculating mediated effects, allow us to conduct sensitivity analysis. Figure 5 presents the results. It shows a statistically significant average causal mediation effect (ACME) for the policy index outcome, suggesting that the treatment effect is mediated by empathy. However, these results also
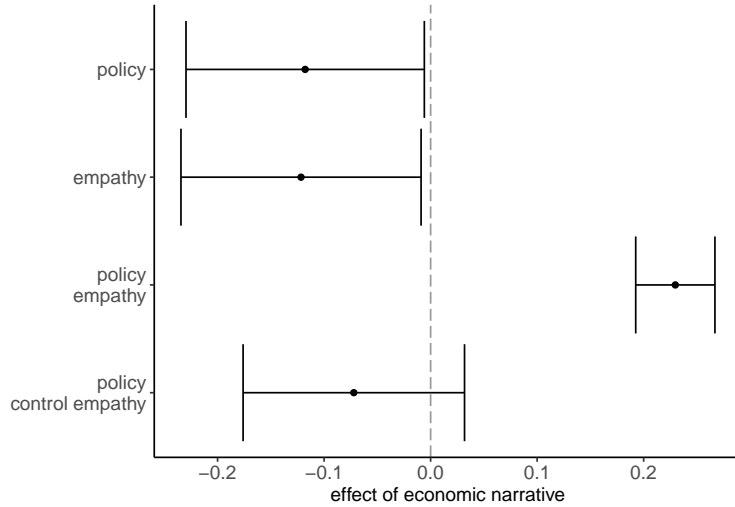
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Figure 4: Mediation Analysis - Economic narrative on policy

show that the average effect of the treatment variable on the outcome that operates through the mediator is approximately 0.04, suggesting that there are other relevant mediators which should be explored.
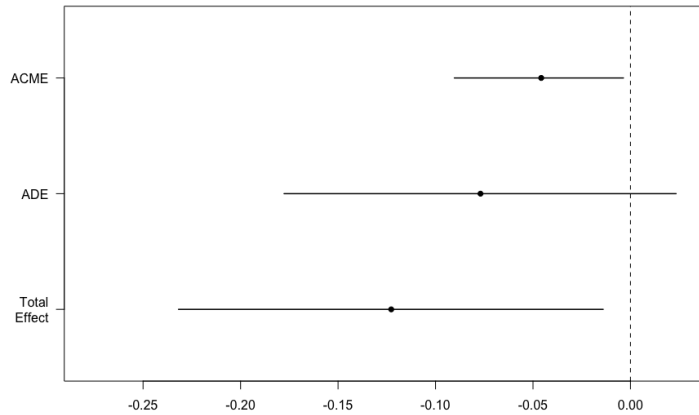

Figure 5: Mediation Analysis (Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010)- Economic narrative on policy

In the Online Appendix (see Figure 17) we present graphically the results of the sensitivity analysis for violations to the key identifying assumption. For our policy index outcome, we find that our sensitivity parameter would have to be $\rho = 0.4$ for our ACME to drop to zero, suggesting that the sequential ignorability assumption is strong for our main outcome.

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Jointly, these results suggest that empathy is an important, albeit no the sole, mechanism by which narratives can increase support for inclusionary policies.

Below we report some exploratory analyses that we did not pre-register, but that help us provide a more in depth view of the impact of the economic narrative treatments including the analysis with different outcomes and considering pre-treatment levels of prejudice against Venezuelan immigrants. We describe these in the appendix.

Moderation by COVID-19 Concerns of Study 1

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to amplify xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes. Therefore, we analyze whether individuals that are particularly concerned about the pandemic, either due to illness or job loss, have a differentiated (weaker) response to the narratives. Figure 6 shows that, although individuals concerned by COVID-19 exhibit a weaker reduction in exclusionary attitudes, the difference between those who are and are not concerned is not significant.
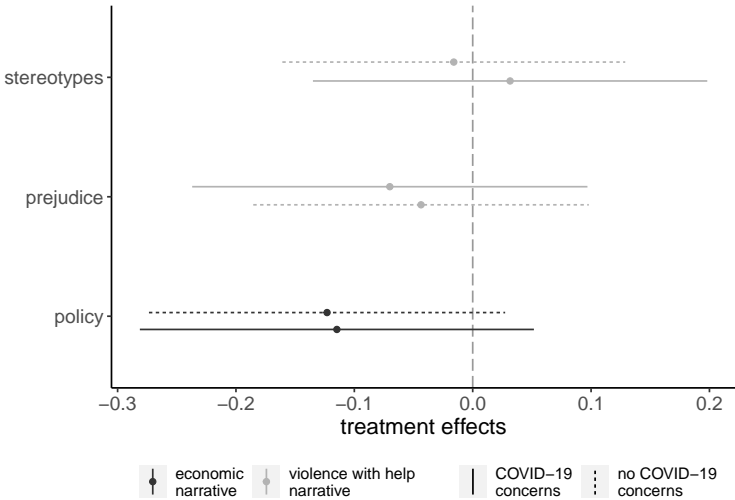

Figure 6: Moderation by COVID-19 Concerns

Study 2: Economic Narrative and Humanitarian Crisis

The second experiment was implemented online between March 25 and April 18, 2022. We recruited a sample of 5,037 respondents through the market research company Offerwise. The sample size again reflects the necessary size to estimate the main effects according to the power analysis in the registered pre-analysis plan. We used quota sampling by Colombian departments that reflects the distribution of Venezuelan immigrants across departments.

Based on the results of Study 1, our second experiment deploys an economic narrative that does not portray an exceptional person (an athlete) to establish whether our findings are driven by the narrative or by the fact that the character in the narrative is an atypical exemplar rather than a more common migrant. Although the finding in Study 1 is robust and sizeable in nature, it is worth seeing to what extent its results are sensitive to the identity of the narrator and not to the economic nature of the narrative.

In Study 2, the 'economic' narrative changes the past occupation of the Venezuelan immigrant from a professional basketball player to a manufacturing sector worker, one of the most common occupations in Venezuela. In addition, we now present a narrative that highlights the lack of essential resources in Venezuela as a reason for the migration decision. Such a narrative is representative of a common concern typically voiced by Venezuelan immigrants in Colombia. This change, from violence to the scarcity of resources narrative, reflects current findings in the literature (e.g. Fraser and Murakami, 2021) suggesting that humanitarian concerns arise from immigrants' living conditions in their countries of origin.

Treatment Conditions of Study 2

1. Control: Respondents will read narrative (2) after completing the outcome questions.

2. Harsh Economic Condition Variation: *This is the testimony of Dwuayxo Guzmán, a Venezuelan immigrant. Some data has been changed to maintain the confidentiality of*

the person. Dwuayxo is a worker in the manufacturing sector, from the State of Aragua, Venezuela, he is part of the group of Venezuelan professionals who have come to Santana (Boyacá) to work in the sugar mills. This testimony was published in the newspaper El Tiempo. After you have read it, we will ask you some questions about what you have read.

"I worked in the manufacturing industry in Maracay and traveled to Valencia, Caracas and other cities. I had the opportunity to have a good job, but all of that is behind me because I had to leave my country to help my family. I didn't know anything about this trade, I had to learn and it seems good to me; although the work is a bit heavy, you have to work at dawn, in the morning, in the afternoon and at night, that exhausts you physically".

3. Resource scarcity narrative *This is the testimony of Jesús Alfredo Silva, a Venezuelan who migrated to Colombia. This testimony was published in Red Clamor. Some data has been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the person. After you have read it, we will ask you some questions about what you have read.*

"We made the decision to leave our country, mainly, to be able to get my son Mario's medications, he is diabetic and it was very difficult for us to get his medications there. The mother of a friend of ours sent him the medications from Spain but there was a time when she couldn't do it anymore and we had to look for them on the 'black' market at excessive costs. it served him for approximately 15 or 20 days, it was very expensive and it was too difficult for us. There were months when we couldn't get insulin, we spent a month or so looking for insulin, without him being able to inject himself, that was making him unbalanced, he was getting deteriorating, there came a point where he weighed 56 kilos, that was worrying".

Results of Study 2

As with Study 1, we present the results for the effect on policy, the effect on prejudice, and the effect on stereotypes. Again, we report our results in terms of standard deviations for
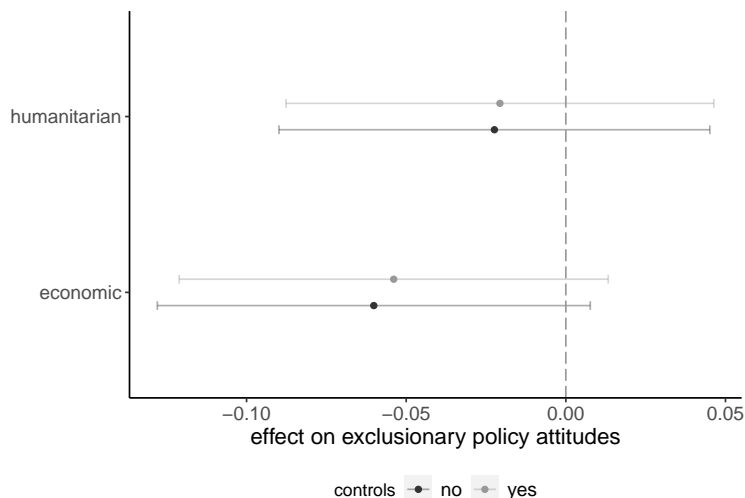
ease of interpretation.

Figure 7: Effects on Policy (Study 2)

Figure 7 shows the point estimate and 95 percent confidence interval of the effect of the different treatment conditions on our main policy outcome, support for deportation of Venezuelan migrants. The narrative that refers to the humanitarian crisis does not have an impact on exclusionary attitudes. The economic narrative reduces exclusionary policy attitudes (p-value = 0.08). However, it is important to note that while the economic narrative reduces exclusionary policy attitudes the effect size is almost half of the effect of the same narrative but with the athlete that we implemented in Study 1. In the Study 1 we observe a 0.12 standard deviations reduction, and in Study 2 the effect is 0.06 standard deviations. This results suggests that the economic narrative reduces exclusionary attitudes, but the presence of an exceptional person, such as a professional athlete, can affect the size of the change.

We observe a different result when we look at the impact of the two narratives on prejudice: Figure 8 shows that both the economic and humanitarian narratives are effective in reducing prejudice. The size of the estimate of the economic narrative effect is bigger than that of Study 1 and more precise in Study 2. Based on these results, it is clear that there is an important difference between the effect of the narratives on policy and the effect on

prejudice. These results suggests that the narratives are more powerful when it comes to change in prejudice rather than than policy preferences.
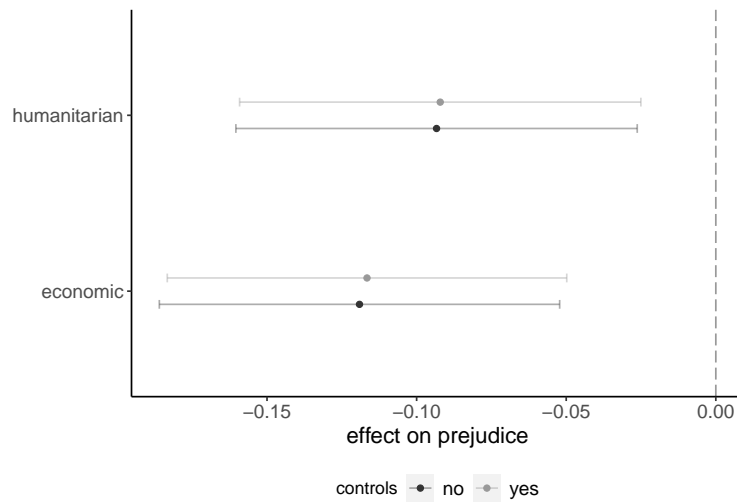

Figure 8: Effects on Prejudice (Study 2)

Finally, we study the impact of narratives on stereotypical beliefs about Venezuelans. Figure 9 shows that neither of the two narratives have a significant impact on the stereotypical beliefs of Venezuelans. The results of the economic narrative are striking if we take into account that in Study 1 the same narrative with the basketball player had twice a greater and statistically significant impact.
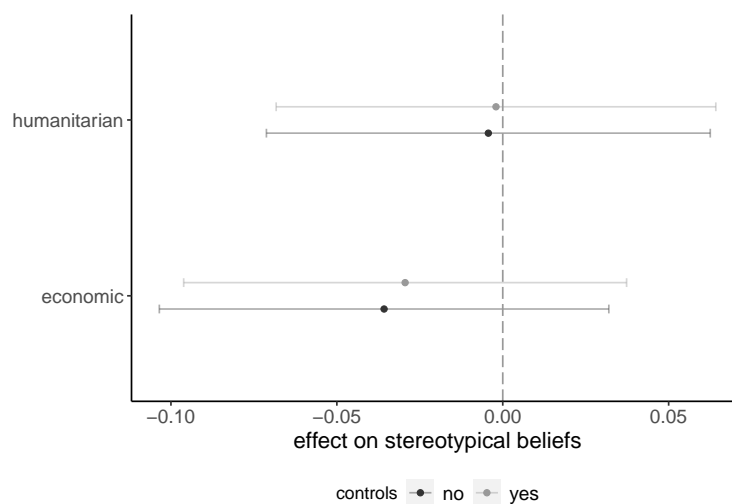

Figure 9: Effects on Stereotypes (Study 2)

Taken together, the results of Study 2 confirm the hypothesis that economic narratives can improve the attitudes of people in the host country. However, the impact of this narratives may be sensitive to changes in the type of migrant.

Mediation Analysis of Study 2

For Study 2 we also conduct a mediation analysis. The results of the second mediation analysis support the hypothesis that the effects of the economic narrative are mediated by changes in empathy towards migrants. Figure 10 shows that empathy is positively associated with preferences for inclusionary policies and that the effect becomes smaller in magnitude when we look at the effects of the treatment on policy preferences and control for empathy. However, given the more imprecise treatment effects on Study 2, the difference is harder to detect. This also applies to the mediation analysis that follows Imai, Keele and Tingley (2010), where although empathy seems to be a potential mediator, the estimates are less precise.
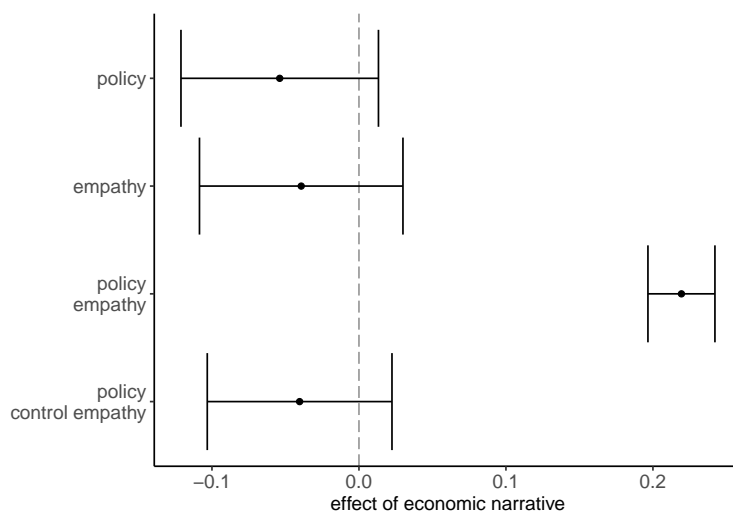

Figure 10: Mediation Analysis - Economic narrative on policy (Study 2)
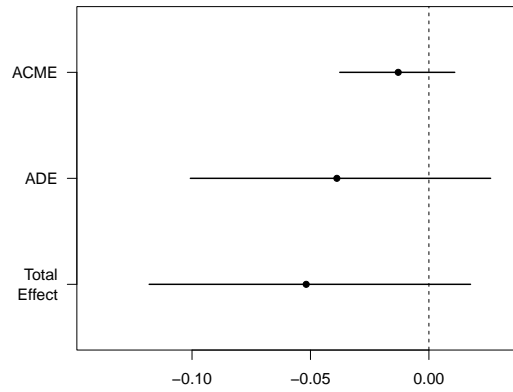
Figure 11: Mediation Analysis (Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010)- Economic narrative on policy (Study 2)

Moderation by COVID-19 Concern of Study 2

Finally, it is worth mentioning the results of the moderation analysis by COVID-19 concerns. Surprisingly, the results show that the reduction in exclusionary attitudes is larger for individuals who had COVID-19 related concerns, although the effects are not statistically distinguishable from effects on individuals without concerns (except for the case of effects on stereotypical beliefs).
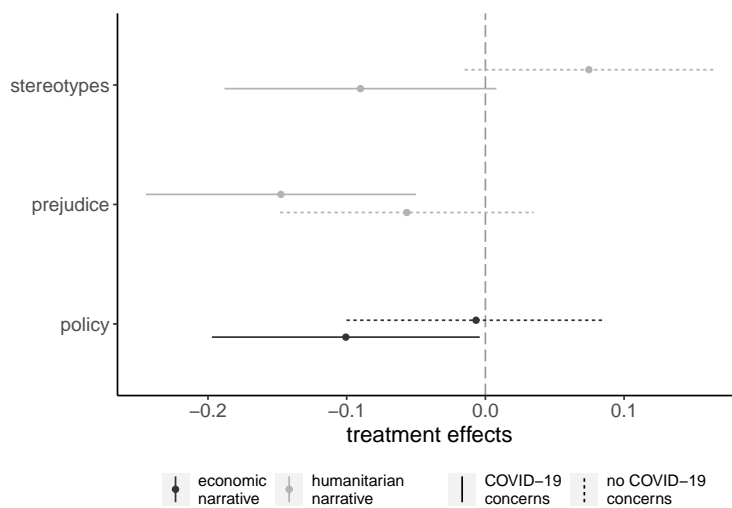

Figure 12: Moderation by COVID-19 Concerns (Study 2)

Discussion

The current literature analyzing the effect of perspective-receiving exercises poses that they foster inclusionary attitudes, either by promoting empathy or counteracting stereotypes. Our Study 1 results suggest that the economic narrative, which portrays an immigrant as economically active in the host country, despite facing hard working conditions, is particularly effective at reducing support for exclusionary policies and at reducing stereotypical beliefs about migrants. In contrast, we do not find such effects for a narrative that expose their suffering as victims of violence or narratives that highlight the humanitarian crisis. Beyond being more useful in promoting empathy, it is possible that the economic narrative operates, in part, by reducing concerns about perceived costs of immigration, like increased crime or migrants' reliance on welfare.

Figure 13 suggests that this may be the case. We find that the effect of the economic narrative reduces the belief that immigrants will depend on welfare whereas the narrative about experiencing violence does not (panel a). Neither narrative has much effect on perceptions that immigrants will commit crime. However, relative to the violence narrative, the economic hardship narrative reduces both the belief that immigrants increase crime and violence and that they encroach on the welfare state, as suggested by a negative coefficient (statistically significant at the 10% level) on the difference of the narrative effects. We observe a similar pattern when we compare the economic vs. humanitarian narratives from Study 2 (panel b), albeit at a smaller magnitude.

However, results in our Study 2 suggest that when we switch the identity of the migrant in the economic narrative from an exceptional migrant (a professional basketball player) to a more common one (a manufacturer worker), while keeping everything else constant, the narrative is no longer effective at reducing exclusionary attitudes or stereotypical beliefs (the effect almost halves). This suggests that the effectiveness of 'light-touch' interventions relying on narratives is bounded by the narrator's identity. In these studies, we varied the migrant's occupation, but we could expect that varying (or making more or less salient)
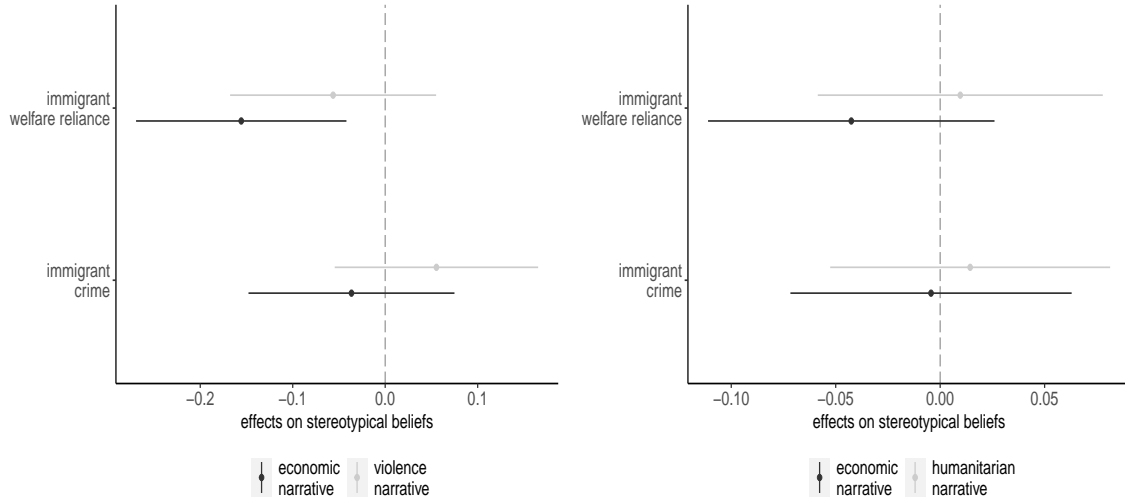
Figure 13: Heterogeneous effects by previous prejudice against immigrants

other strata like race, religion or social class may also impact the narratives' effectiveness in changing attitudes. Such a sensitivity on the narrator's identity raises questions about the ecological validity and potential for scalability of this type of intervention.

Regarding reductions in prejudice against immigrants, our results suggest that narratives are effective when they tap into push factors (scarcity of vital resources), but not as much when the narrative presents the narrator in their migration journey, but omits the reason to migrate. This suggests that establishing the humanitarian concern can help reduce prejudice against immigrants.

In terms of whose attitudes we are able to change, we find that, in Study 1 the economic narrative has a larger effect on promoting inclusionary policy attitudes for respondents with higher pre-treatment levels of prejudice against Venezuelan immigrants. However this effect is not statistically distinguishable from the effect on respondents with expressed low levels of prejudice. Moreover, the violence narrative has a larger effect on reducing prejudice against Venezuelan immigrants for respondents with higher pre-treatment levels of prejudice against Venezuelan immigrants, and this effect is statistically distinguishable from the effect on respondents with expressed low levels of prejudice as can be seen in Figure 15 in the Appendix. The same results do not hold for Study 2, where we find that the reduction in

exclusionary policy preferences is strongest for individuals with lower prejudice, although in this case none of the results are statistically distinguishable for individuals with different levels of baseline prejudice, as can be seen in Figure 16 in the Appendix.

Conclusion

Our results have direct and concrete implications for public policies. Given that low- and middle-income countries are increasingly becoming the final destination for immigrants, the question of how to reduce attitudes of exclusion is crucial to minimizing the levels of xeno-phobia and discrimination that can arise in receiving countries.

Despite the fact that many times migrants share ethno-linguistic backgrounds with people in their host country, they are not always welcomed (Zhou, 2021). This is true in the case of Colombia, were in recent years almost 2 million Venezuelan immigrants have entered the country and have not always been received with open arms. This lack of welcome rings true particularly in border areas, where the shared background is most evident Holland, Peters and Zhou (2021). In this context, we used a variety of perspective-getting exercises to try to reduce prejudice, change stereotypical beliefs, and increase support for inclusionary migratory policies. We found that a narrative that portrays an exceptional immigrant as hardworking is particularly useful at reducing support for exclusionary policies. This result is consistent with findings in developed countries, which show people tend to support policies that might benefit immigrants if they are portrayed as being highly educated, having high status jobs, or being hardworking (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2018; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015).

Future research needs to assess the temporal validity of the effects, and the potential for scalability of this type of intervention. Moreover, further research may explore other avenues to counteract exclusionary attitudes. Previous research has found that in order to alienate Venezuelan immigrants, who share a similar ethno-linguistic background, some

Colombians stress their national identity Holland, Peters and Zhou (2021). Researchers can, therefore, try to prime a pan-Latin American identity in participants so that people focus on what makes them similar to Venezuelan immigrants instead of what makes them different. Indeed, previous research has found that priming supranational identities can be effective at fostering tolerance and cooperation between nationals of different countries (Rosenzweig and Zhou, 2021).

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Appendices

Appendix to Study 1

The results of the economic narrative on exclusionary policy preferences are robust to changing the item we use for this test. In particular, we find that our results are consistent with using as an outcome an additive index of the six different inclusionary policies toward migrants we asked participants their opinion on. The magnitude of the effect is similar to the effect on our main outcome (preferences for limiting the entry of migrants), and the effect is statistically significant at the 10% level.
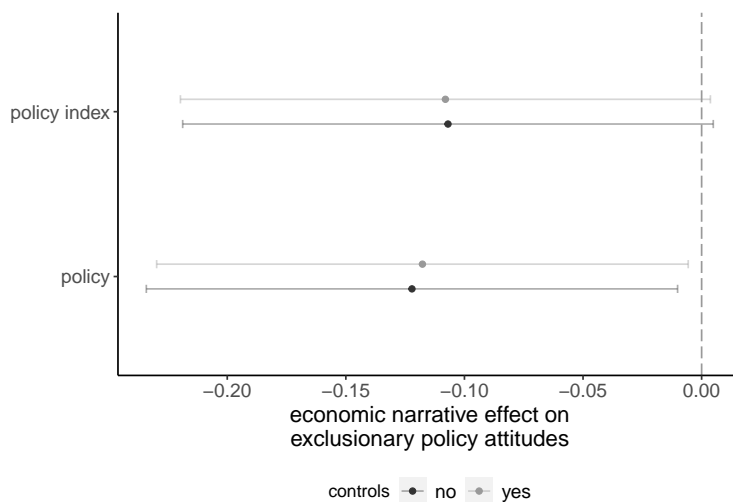

Figure 14: Robustness Check - Effect of economic narrative on policy index
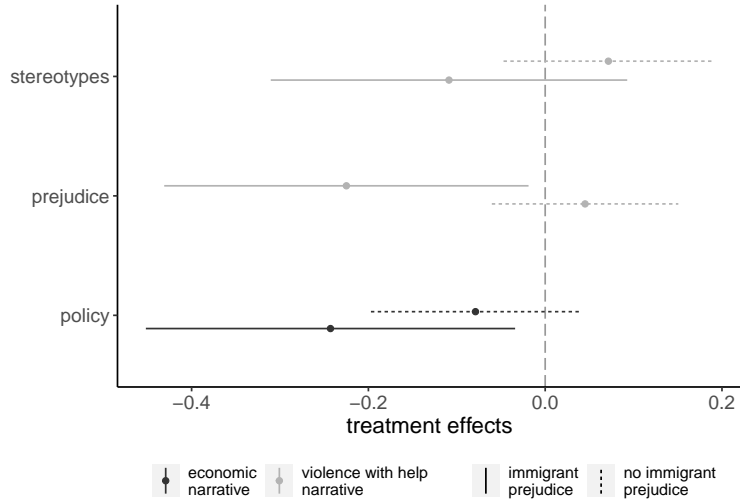
Figure 15: Study 1: Heterogenous effects by previous prejudice against immigrants
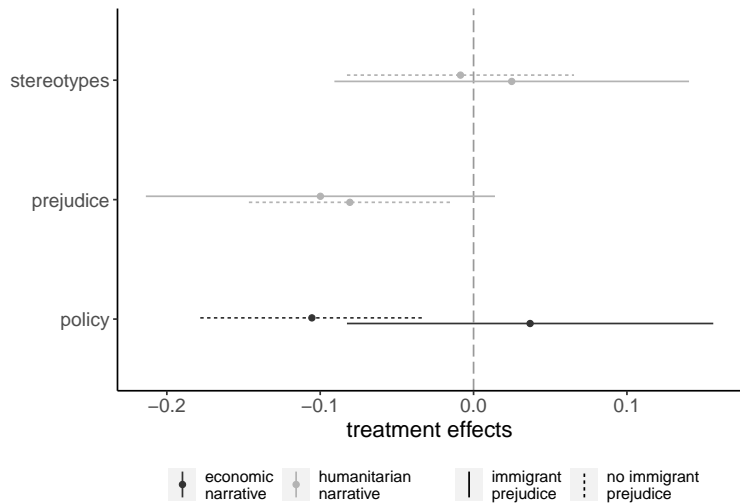

Figure 16: Study 2: Heterogenous effects by previous prejudice against immigrants

Moderator: Pre-treatment Prejudice

Sensitivity Analysis

Outcome Measures

Outcomes

Respondents will be asked about their attitudes toward immigration policy, feelings towards immigrants, and stereotypical beliefs about immigrants.[8]

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[8]The feeling thermometer will also be asked before treatment to assess whether the treatment has heterogeneous effects by participants' pre-treatment feelings towards immigrants.
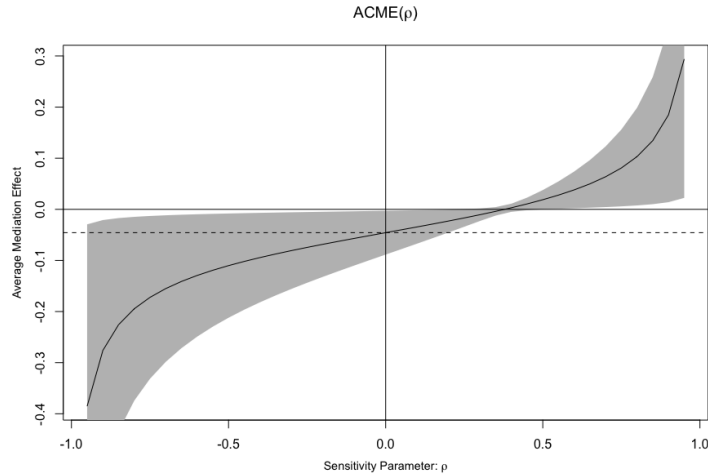
Figure 17: Sensitivity Analysis for Mediator (Imai, Keele and Tingley, 2010)- Economic narrative on policy

Main Outcomes

Attitudes towards immigration policy: *To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Colombia should limit the number of immigrants entering the country.* Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 7-point Likert scale.

Feelings towards immigrants: *We would like to know your feelings towards Venezuelan migrants entering Colombia. To answer this question you are going to use something we call a feeling thermometer. Scores between 5 and 7 mean that you feel favorable and warm towards migrants. Scores between 1 and 3 mean that you do not feel favorable towards migrants and that you do not care too much about them. Use a score of 3 if you don't feel particularly warm or cold towards migrants.* Responses range from completely cold to completely warm on a 7-point Likert scale.

Stereotypes Index

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

37

- Venezuelan immigrants increase crime and insecurity.

- Venezuelan are affecting employment rates in Colombia.

- Venezuelan are responsible of spreading diseases such as COVID-19.

- Venezuelans are a burden for the State's social services.

Responses are on a 7-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The items will be aggregated in an index via simple sum.

Additional Outcomes

For comparability, we include an additional set of outcomes used in previous studies in the context of developed countries. In particular, we ask respondents their attitudes towards a set of immigrant and immigration policies that are specific to Colombia, and that are currently being discussed in the country. **Index of attitudes towards immigration policy**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?.

- Colombia should limit the number of immigrants entering the country

- The government should give permits to Venezuelan migrants so that they can remain legally in the country for 10 years.

- Venezuelan immigrants should receive legal documents to be able to work.

- Venezuelans living in Colombia should have access to health services through government subsidies.

- The government should give Colombia nationality to children born of Venezuelan parents.

- The government should include Venezuelan immigrants in the COVID-19 vaccination plan.

Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 7-point Likert scale. We aggregate these items in a simple sum index. Because we do not have power with 2,000 respondents in the first study to detect effects on this outcome we treat it as as an exploratory analysis.

Survey in Spanish

Preliminary questions

Vamos a empezar con algunas preguntas sencillas sobre usted.
age ¿Cuál es su edad?
gender ¿Cuál es su género?
schooling ¿Cuál es el nivel de escolaridad máxima que ha obtenido?
department ¿En qué departamento vive usted?
marital_status ¿Cuál es su estado civil?

prejudice Nos gustaría conocer sus sentimientos hacia diferentes grupos sociales en Colombia. Para contestar esta pregunta va a usar algo que llamamos termómetro de sentimiento. Tiene que calificar en una escala de 1 a 7 qué tan frío o cálido se siente hacia un grupo social. Las calificaciones entre 5 y 7 significan que se siente favorable y cálido hacia miembros del grupo social. Las calificaciones entre 1 y 3 significan que no se siente favorable hacia el grupo y que no se preocupa demasiado por ellos. Use la calificación de 4 si no se siente particularmente cálido o frío hacia miembros del grupo.

Como se siente hacia las/los…

	Extremadamente frío (1) (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Extremadamente cálido (7) (7)
feministas							
empresarios							
indígenas							
homosexuales lesbianas							
inmigrantes venezolanos							
militares							
ricos							
pobres							
inmigrantes							

worked Durante el mes pasado, ¿usted trabajó?

economic_loss ¿Qué tan preocupado está usted de tener pérdidas económicas como consecuencia de la crisis económica relacionada con la pandemia de COVID-19? (Por ejemplo, perder el trabajo).

worried_contagion ¿Qué tan preocupado está usted de contagiarse de COVID-19?

Outcomes – Mediators

emotions Pensando en los migrantes venezolanos que llegan a Colombia, ¿cuán frecuentemente experimenta las siguientes emociones cuando piensa en los migrantes venezolanos?

	Nunca (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Siempre (10)
Enojo por su situación Empatía hacia los inmigrantes							

border_outcome ¿Qué tan de acuerdo está con la siguiente afirmación?   "Colombia debería impedir la entrada de inmigrantes al país".

　　Totalmente en desacuerdo (1)
　　En desacuerdo (2)
　　Algo en desacuerdo (4)
　　Ni en desacuerdo, ni de acuerdo (5)
　　Algo de acuerdo (6)
　　De acuerdo (7)
　　Totalmente de acuerdo (8)

outcome [En la misma escala] ¿Qué tan acuerdestá con la siguientes afirmaciones?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
El gobierno debe emitir permisos a inmigrantes venezolanos para que puedan permanecer legalmente en el país por 10 años.							
Es necesario que a los inmigrantes venezolanos se les otorguen documentos legales para poder trabajar.							
Los venezolanos residentes en Colombia deben acceder a los servicios de salud a través de los subsidios que ofrece el Estado.							
El gobierno debe reconocer la nacionalidad colombiana a hijos de padres venezolanos.							
El gobierno debería incluir en el plan de vacunación contra el COVID-19 a los inmigrantes venezolanos.							

feeling_outcome Nos gustaría conocer sus sentimientos hacia los migrantes venezolanos que llegan a Colombia. Tiene que calificar en una escala de 1 a 7 qué tan frío o cálido se siente hacia los migrantes. Las calificaciones entre 5 y 7 significan que se siente favorable y cálido hacia los migrantes. Las calificaciones entre 1 y 3 significan que no se siente favorable hacia los migrantes y que no se preocupa demasiado por ellos. Use la calificación de 4 si no se siente particularmente cálido o frío hacia los migrantes.

Completando la siguiente frase, indique qué tan frío o cálido se siente hacia los migrantes venezolanos:

Extremadamente frío (1) (1)
Muy frío (2) (2)
Algo frío (3) (3)
Ni frío, ni cálido (4) (4)
Algo cálido (5) (5)
Muy cálido (6) (6)
Extremadamente cálido (7) (7)

stereotypes ¿En qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones?

	Totalmente en desacuerdo (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Totalmente de acuerdo (7)
Los inmigrantes venezolanos aumentan la delincuencia y la inseguridad. (1)							
Los inmigrantes venezolanos están afectando la tasa de empleo en Colombia. (2)							
Los inmigrantes venezolanos son responsables de propagar enfermedades como COVID-19. (5)							
Los inmigrantes venezolanos son una carga para los servicios sociales del Estado. (6)							