

**Bachelor Thesis: European Identity and Solidarity with Refugees: Emotional and  
Behavioral Reactions to Intergroup Transgressions**

Moritz Osterwald

s5165229

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

Bachelor Thesis PSB3E-BT15.2024-2025.3

Group 15

Instructor/supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ernestine Gordijn

June 09, 2025

## Abstract

This study investigated the impact of European identity and attitudes towards refugees on the emotional and behavioural reactions to intergroup transgressions involving refugees and citizens. The examined emotions were guilt, shame and anger, while the behavioral reactions focused on anti-refugee action tendencies. 417 participants received in an experimental design one of two fictional articles in which either a group of citizens or refugees hurt the other. Attitudes towards refugees were the strongest explanatory variable and uniquely predicted all outcome measures. This study hypothesized that individuals with a strong European identity would experience more guilt and shame when European citizens were the perpetrators (**H1a**), while those with a weaker European identity would feel more anger in the same condition (**H1b**). Additionally, it was expected that individuals with a strong European identity would experience more anger and show greater anti-refugee action tendencies than low identifiers when refugees were the perpetrators (**H2**). Except for shame in **H1a** were all Hypothesis not supported. The behavioural effects of attitudes towards refugees was buffered by European identification, according to exploratory analyses: those with more negative attitudes towards refugees were less likely to support anti-refugee behaviour when they tend to identify more with Europe. Furthermore, the study's exploratory findings show that European identity can reduce the impact of personal prejudice on anti-refugee actions, leading to more consistent behavior across individuals. However, high identifiers may still act punitively if exclusionary norms dominate. Emotional reactions like shame and anger also depend on who commits the harm, suggesting that group identity shapes both behavior and emotion in intergroup conflict.

## **European Identity and Solidarity with Refugees: Emotional and Behavioral Reactions to Intergroup Transgressions**

In the context of increasing worldwide displacement, concerns of membership in a group and relations between groups have gained relevance. As of 2023's end, 13 million people were displaced across borders and hosted in European countries (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). Most of these states are members of the European Union (EU), established after the Second World War as a peacekeeping alliance and currently representing shared values such as freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law (Your Gateway to the EU, News, Highlights | European Union, 2025).

However, in recent years, the EU has faced great challenges, including the rise of populist radical right parties, which are, among other things, characterized by opposition or skepticism towards the current EU and by resistance to the further admission of refugees. This shift can be partially explained by the intensifying refugee crisis and its associated socio-political challenges (Aktas, 2024). In addition, Donald Trump's recent proposals to reduce military aid within the framework of NATO may also influence EU identity in many ways (Macro Research Team et al., 2025). Such occurrences increase the urgency of examining the superordinate role of the European identity in shaping individuals' reactions to contemporary social and political challenges.

This study shifts focus to the psychological mechanisms of how people respond to conflicts involving refugees, particularly how identification with the European Union might shape these responses. Specifically, this experimental research investigates how European identity affects individuals' emotional and behavioral reactions after learning about refugee-related transgressions by reading a fictional article. In one scenario, refugees are

mistreated by European citizens; in the other, European citizens are the ones harmed. These contrasting conditions allow us to examine how group-based dynamics, particularly the extent to which individuals see themselves as part of the European ingroup, shape expressions of solidarity with refugees. Given this context, it is unclear if European identity can foster solidarity by stabilising the situation or if it increases hostility towards refugees. Djaoedji (2024) found that attitudes towards refugees (prejudice) predicted how people respond to intergroup transgressions, with more negative attitudes toward refugees leading to stronger emotional reactions and greater support for exclusionary behavioral responses. In the current research we control for attitude towards refugees, but instead examine how identification with Europe moderates the effects of victim identity on emotions and anti-refugee actions about transgressions involving refugees.

By addressing this issue, the current study aims to highlight the psychological role of collective, transnational identity, the European identity, as a factor that influences moral emotions and guides behavioral tendencies in intergroup conflict.

### **Transgressions by European citizens against refugees and the role of European identity**

Belonging to a social group influences what causes people to adopt certain behaviours and attitudes. This occurs through social identification: the process of self-identifying with a particular social group and the sense of belonging to that group (Tajfel, 1979), which in this case is European identification.

Building on the process of group formation, research by Çakmak et al. (2024) provides further insights into how people react emotionally when their own group harms another group, which is particularly important for understanding the role of European identity in this context. The study showed that people who identify rather high with a group show feelings of guilt and shame when their group commits morally wrong actions against a low status outgroup. Çakmak et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of distinguishing between various moral emotions. Guilt

is typically linked to a feeling of individual or group responsibility for particular acts, while shame represents a poor assessment of the group as a whole. Both emotions may be relevant for solidarity-based behaviour and are important when analysing responses to transgressions perpetrated by members of the same group. Therefore, when European citizens commit crimes, the current study considers both guilt and shame as emotional outcomes, especially for those who highly identify with Europe.

A follow-up study by Çakmak et al. (2025) looked into the relationship between people's responses and the visibility of transgressions. Their findings suggest that when a transgression is highly visible, high identifiers are more inclined to protect the group's reputation. High identifiers worry more about their image and experience more guilt when their group's transgression is made public, which fosters greater solidarity. This supports that in cases where European citizens commit visible transgressions against refugees, high-identifiers may be more motivated by concerns over group reputation, leading to feelings of guilt.

However, people who did not identify strongly with their group were less concerned about their group's image and instead reacted with anger when their group committed transgressions. Individuals with low identification are more likely to view transgressions ethically and concentrate on the fairness of actions rather than the group image because of this justice aspect (Çakmak et al., 2024). Weak European identifiers would therefore react more likely with anger when a citizen commits the crime because their response is motivated by moral values rather than worry for the reputation of their group.

### **Transgressions by refugees against European citizens and the role of European identity**

The reverse circumstance where the refugees are perceived as being the perpetrators shapes reactions in other ways. In keeping with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979), individuals

who strongly identify with an ingroup are more sensitive to threats to their own group because, in such a circumstance, they perceive these as being attacks on them as a member of their ingroup. If the ingroup suffers from the actions of an outgroup member, highly identified people's affective response will be dominated by anger and demand for justice.. According to Mackie et al. (2000) and Smith et al. (2007) anger directed against the outgroup over injustices committed by this outgroup is particularly strong with high identifiers. They are more likely to interpret the wrongdoing as a symbolic assault on the ingroup's status or integrity and hence more likely to respond punitively. This is further supported by Lickel et al. (2006)'s findings which demonstrate that people with a strong group identity are more likely to commit collective blame, where a single misdeed committed by an outgroup member will be blamed upon the group altogether. High European identifiers will therefore experience more anger and lend support to exclusion-based responses, i.e., promoting anti-refugee protests or lower tendency to help the outgroup.

On the other hand, individuals with a weaker European Identity might be less likely to perceive such transgressions as general intergroup interactions, which would lead them to experience less emotions. They might be less upset and therefore less prone to act against refugees as they see the offence as a single occurrence rather than a general conflict between groups. This is supported in the research of Çakmak et al. (2024), where low identifiers were more focused on codes of morality as opposed to group-image concerns when they judged ingroup violations. In this reverse scenario, it is the strong identifiers who are focused on group-based justice, with weaker identifiers being less emotionally invested.

### **The current research**

Based on the above reasoning, the following is hypothesized:

**H1a:** Individuals with a strong European identity will experience more guilt and shame when the citizen is the perpetrator. **H1b:** Individuals with a weak European identity will experience more anger when the citizen is the perpetrator.

**H2:** Individuals with a strong European identity will experience more anger and engage in more anti-refugee action tendencies than those with a low EU identity when refugees are the perpetrator.

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Research Design**

427 European participants who were students were recruited through two sources: the University of Groningen's SONA system and the online platform Prolific. SONA is a university-based participant pool primarily consisting of students, while Prolific is a British online research platform that offers diverse participant recruitment. The participants recruited via Prolific were rewarded £1.20 pounds as a monetary compensation after completing the questionnaire. The participants from SONA were compensated with credits required to pass a bachelor psychology course after completing the questionnaire.

Based on pre-registered criteria (AsPredicted<sup>1</sup>), 10 participants who failed to complete at least 50% of the dependent measures, more than one attention check, who completed the survey in less than 120 seconds and/or who showed flatlining were excluded from the analysis. The final sample included 417 participants ( $n = 111$  (26%) SONA,  $n = 306$  (74%) Prolific), aged between 17 and 65 years, with  $n = 202$  identifying as female,  $n = 209$  as male, 5 as non-binary/third gender and 1 participant who preferred not to say. Based on Gpower, we needed 210 participants to test the predicted 2 way- interaction effects with a power of .95 ( $f = .25$ ). This suggests that the

---

<sup>1</sup>See <https://aspredicted.org/xnkd-9gmh.pdf>

current sample size of 417 participants provides sufficient power to test the expected interaction effects, as well as to explore additional moderation and mediation models.

This study employed an experimental design to investigate the effects of group identity on responses to an intergroup transgression. Participants were randomly assigned to read a fabricated news article, styled after EuroNews, that described a conflict between a group of local citizens and a group of refugees, with the victim–aggressor roles manipulated across conditions.

Our primary predictor variables were attitudes towards refugees and personal experiences with refugees. In addition, societal discontent, governmental trust, media trust and European identity were included as potential moderators. Our dependent variables were pro-refugee action tendencies, anti-refugee action tendencies, emotions (e.g. anger, compassion, etc.), empathy with the victims, support for the victims, empathy with refugees, punishment of the perpetrators, and policy support.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Groningen. Participants were provided with informed consent prior to participation, and data were collected anonymously. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were debriefed at the end of the procedure.

### **Procedure and Independent Variables**

The study was conducted, using an online questionnaire (see appendix A-C) in English. After reading information about the study and providing informed consent, participants completed demographic questions about age, gender and political orientation (e.g. ‘What is your age?’, and ‘Please indicate your gender’).

#### ***Governmental Trust***



The first part of the survey included five items assessing trust in government adapted from Awwad and Awwad (2023). They were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely disagree) to 7 (Absolutely agree). Two example items are: ‘The government is truthful in its dealings with me’, and ‘If I needed help, the government would do its best to help me’ (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$ ,  $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ).

### ***Media Trust***

Next, media trust was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) by using four items based on research from Kohring and Matthes (2007). Two example items: ‘The media provides all important faces on covered topics’, and ‘The media pays necessary attention to important topics’ (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .828$ ;  $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ).

### ***Societal Discontent***

Following this, participants completed a measure of societal discontent, adapted from Gootjes et al. (2022). Items included statements such as ‘I feel concerned when I think about the future of society’ and ‘I am satisfied about society’. (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .846$ ,  $M = 5.06$ ,  $SD = .567$ ). These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree)

### ***Prejudice***

Then, a single item of the prejudice scale by Lin et al. (2004) ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) was used to measure the attitude of participants towards refugees, (e.g., ‘With respect to refugees, I feel...’). The item was answered on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely negative) to 6 (Absolutely positive). This item was mixed with filler items asking about people’s feelings concerning several groups.

### ***European Identification***

Next, we measured participants' identification with Europe (Leach et al., 2008) using items such as 'Being European is an important part of who I am' and 'I feel a strong sense of belonging in Europe' (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.872$ ,  $M = 4.85$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree).

### ***Personal Experience***

After this, personal experience with refugees was measured with two items assessing the frequency of positive and negative interactions with refugees, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Frequently). Positive experience was measured with the following item: 'How often have you had a positive experience with refugees?' ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). Negative experience was measured with the item: 'How often have you had a negative experience with refugees?' ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ).

### ***Manipulation***

After these measures, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which they read a fictional EuroNews article describing a violent incident involving either refugees or local citizens as the victims. In the condition where refugees were the victims in the article, the perpetrators were local citizens. Conversely, when local citizens were the victims, the perpetrators were refugees in the transgression. Both articles were constructed to be equal in length, tone, and structure. For example, in the *Refugee-victim condition*, the article included the quote: "‘We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning,’ recounted Ahmed S., a refugee recovering in the hospital from stab wounds." In the *Citizen-victim condition*, the quote was identical except for the identity of the speaker: "‘We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning,’ recounted Lukas M., a local citizen recovering in the hospital from stab wounds."

After this, dependent measures were taken. Further, at the end of the questionnaire, participants answered two manipulation check questions to verify their understanding of the scenario: ‘Who were the perpetrators in the article you just read?’ and ‘who were the victims in the article?’. This was measured to make sure the participants understand the identity of the victim and the aggressor in the article. We also included three attention checks (e.g., ‘To check if you are still there, can you solve this calculation: three plus three is?’) in the questionnaire to assess whether participants were paying attention. At the conclusion of the study, participants received a debriefing statement that explained the fictitious nature of the article and the purpose of the research, after which they were thanked for their participation.

## **Dependent Measures**

### ***Emotions***

Participants were asked to report their emotional responses after reading the fictional EuroNews article. The prompt read: “After reading the EuroNews article about the people who were attacked, I felt...”. Responses for each emotion were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 6 (Very strongly).

Anger was assessed using two items: anger and outraged), with ( $r = .791, p < .001, M = 4.05, SD = 1.30$ ), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Compassion was measured using the items moved and touched, ( $r = .764, p < .001, M = 3.44, SD = 1.29$ ), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Distress was assessed with the items concerned and distressed), ( $r = .647, p < .001, M = 4.00, SD = 1.15$ ), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Sadness (Zentner et al., 2008) was measured using the items unhappy and sad, ( $r = .621, p < .001, M = 3.96, SD = 1.22$ ), based on research from Zentner et al. (2008).

Indifference was assessed with two items: indifferent and nothing ( $r = .569, p < .001, M = 2.36, SD = 1.22$ ), adapted from Djaoedji (2024).

### ***Empathy With the Victims***

Empathy was assessed with one item “ I empathise with the victims in the article” on 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ( $M = 5.52, SD = 1.36$ ).

### ***Support for the Victims***

Support for the victims was assessed with two items: ‘I think that the victims in the article should receive an apology’ and ‘I think that the victims in the article need to be compensated by receiving help and/or money’, on 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ( $r = .357, p < .001, M = 5.37, SD = 1.21$ ).

### ***Punishment of the Perpetrators***

Punishment of the perpetrators was also measured with two items: ‘I think the perpetrators need to be imprisoned’ and ‘I think that the perpetrators in the article need to pay the victims’. Both items were measured on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ( $r = .506, p < .001, M = 5.03, SD = 1.44$ ).

### ***Empathy with Refugees***

Empathy with refugees was measured with six items (e.g. ‘When I see refugees suffering, I want to help them’ and ‘I often imagine how difficult it must be to flee one’s home country’) on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree), with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .913$ ; ( $M = 4.71, SD = .61$ ).

### ***Action Intentions Towards Refugees***

To distinguish between different types of behavioral intentions, we used items developed by Gootjes et al. (2021), reflecting divergent aims. Anti-refugee intentions were assessed using

four items (e.g., ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to avoid contact with refugees’ and ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to protest against refugees’) with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .85$ ;  $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ . Pro-refugee intentions were measured with three items (e.g., ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to donate money or clothes to refugees’ and ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to help refugees by teaching the language or personal coaching’) (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .86$ ;  $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ). All action intention items were rated on the same 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree).

### ***Policy Support***

To see if support for left- or rightwing policy statements increased after reading the article. For the statements we chose statements regarding refugees from a VoteMatch (StemWijzer | Europees Parlementsverkiezing 2024, 2024), after that the items were categorised as left- or rightwing by looking if the party that agrees or disagrees is left- or rightwing (Links en Rechts, z.d.) Agreement on leftwing policies was measured with three items (e.g. ‘European countries should respect and accommodate the cultural diversity of incoming refugees’ and ‘Europe should create welcoming environments for refugees’). Agreement on rightwing policies was also measured with three items (e.g. Refugees arriving in Europe should not receive governmental support, such as housing and integration programs’ and ‘Refugees who come to Europe should discard their own culture and adopt European culture’). All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree). To check if the items intended to measure agreement with leftwing and rightwing policy statements were internally consistent, the reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. Left- and rightwing policy agreement scales

showed high internal consistency among the items (Leftwing: Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.904$ ,  $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ; Rightwing:  $\alpha = 0.814$ ,  $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ).

## Results

### Preliminary analysis

A preliminary analysis was conducted in order to create a general overview of the data. All important assumptions (Linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, normality, and no multicollinearity) for the dependent variables guilt, shame, anger, and anti-refugee actions are met. To confirm that the random assignment to the conditions was successful we conducted an independent-sample t-test on 'European identity' and 'Attitudes towards refugees'. No significant differences were found between the refugee-victim group ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) and the citizen-victim group ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) in European identity,  $t(415) = -1.93$ ,  $p = .054$ . Similarly, there was no significant difference in attitudes toward refugees,  $t(415) = -0.39$ ,  $p = .700$ . These results suggest that random assignment to conditions was successful.

As shown in **Table 1**, participants who were more positive about refugees supported less anti-refugee action ( $r = -.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and positively associated with European identity ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and anger ( $r = .15$ ,  $p = .002$ ). European identity was weakly positively correlated with anger and shame, but not with guilt or anti-refugee actions. Guilt and shame were strongly interrelated ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as were shame and anger ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There is a small but statistically significant positive correlation between European identity and positive attitudes toward refugees ( $r = .205$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 1** also presents the descriptive statistics for all the relevant variables for the entire sample ( $N = 417$ ). Participants reported relatively high levels of European identity on average ( $M$

= 4.85,  $SD = 1.23$ ), and relatively low anti-refugee action tendencies on average ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Attitude towards Refugees	4.85	1.23						
2 EU Identification	3.94	1.36	.205**					
3 Anger	4.05	1.30	.151**	.141**				
4 Guilt	1.92	1.21	.094	.010	.191**			
5 Shame	2.65	1.55	.094	.103*	.394**	.548**		
6 Anti-Ref. Action Tendencies	2.67	1.46	-.537**	-.081	-.088	.040	-.058	

*Note.*  $N = 417$ . \*\*  $p < .01$  level (2-tailed), \* $p < .05$  (2-tailed).

### **Manipulation check**

We checked whether participants were accurately identifying the intended condition from the article they had read. A majority of participants were accurately identifying the intended condition: 94.3% of the refugee-victim condition correctly identified refugees as victims, and 94.2% of the citizen-victim condition correctly identified citizens as victims. A chi-square test of independence also confirmed that this association between assigned condition and self-report victim was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 417) = 326.51$ ,  $p < .001$ . These results confirm that the manipulation worked and that participants actually perceived the experimental condition appropriately.

### **Testing the hypotheses**

To test the study hypotheses, a series of moderated multiple regression analyses were conducted. In all models, victim/perpetrator identity (0 = citizen victim, 1 = refugee victim) was entered as the independent variable, European identity (centered) as the moderator, and their interaction term (Victim/perpetrator condition  $\times$  European identity) as the key predictor of

interest. 'Attitudes toward refugees' were entered as a covariate in each analysis to control for general anti-refugee sentiment. For reasons of clarity, the results are organized according to the dependent variables.

### ***Guilt***

For guilt, the model was significant,  $F(4, 412) = 6.06, p < .001$ , and explained 5.6% of the variance ( $R^2 = .056$ ). There was a main effect of victim/perpetrator identity ( $B = -0.522, p < .001$ ), indicating that participants felt more guilt when citizens were the perpetrators rather than when refugees were the perpetrator. However, the interaction between victim/perpetrator condition and European identity was not significant ( $B = -0.001, p = .992$ ). There was also no significant main effect of European identity on guilt,  $B = 0.011, SE = 0.064, t(412) = 0.17, p = .863$ , indicating that overall levels of European identification were not associated with guilt across victim/perpetrator condition. According to Hypothesis **1a**, high identifiers should feel more guilt than low identifiers in the citizen-perpetrator condition. To test this specific prediction, we checked the simple main effect in the citizen-perpetrator condition (even though the interaction was not significant). This effect was not significant,  $B = 0.011, SE = 0.064, t(412) = 0.17, p = .863$ , suggesting that European identity did not predict levels of guilt even when citizens were the perpetrators. Therefore, Hypothesis **1a** for guilt is not supported.

### ***Shame***

For shame, the regression model was significant,  $F(4, 412) = 9.49, p < .001, R^2 = .084$ . The interaction between victim/perpetrator condition and European identity was not significant ( $B = -0.156, p = .197$ ). The main effect of the victim/perpetrator condition was significant ( $B = -0.787, p < .001$ ), indicating that participants felt more shame when citizens were the perpetrators rather than when refugees were the perpetrators. There was also a significant main



effect of European identity ( $B = 0.210$ ,  $p = .010$ ), indicating that participants who identified more with Europe felt more shame in general. To specifically test Hypothesis **1a** we examined the simple main effect of European identity within the citizen-perpetrator condition. This effect was significant ( $B = 0.210$ ,  $SE = 0.081$ ,  $t = 2.5919$ ,  $p = .0099$ ), supporting the prediction of Hypothesis **1a** for shame.

### ***Anger***

The overall model predicting anger was significant,  $F(4, 412) = 4.70$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $R^2 = .044$ . The interaction between victim/perpetrator condition and European identity was not significant ( $B = 0.030$ ,  $p = .791$ ), and the main effect of victim/perpetrator condition was also not significant ( $B = 0.177$ ,  $p = .195$ ). However, there was a significant main effect of European identity ( $B = 0.121$ ,  $p = .035$ ) and of attitudes toward refugees ( $B = 0.113$ ,  $p = .027$ ), indicating that participants who identified more strongly with Europe and who had more positive attitudes toward refugees reported greater anger in general. The simple effects analysis showed a non-significant effect of European identity on anger in the refugee-perpetrator condition ( $B = 0.106$ ,  $p = .212$ ), and a marginally significant trend in the citizen-perpetrator condition ( $B = 0.136$ ,  $p = .073$ ), where higher identification was associated with slightly more anger. This tendency is opposite to the prediction of Hypothesis **1b**, which expected more anger from low identifiers in the citizen-perpetrator condition. No significant effect was found in the refugee-perpetrator condition, which does not support Hypothesis **2**. Therefore, neither hypothesis was supported for anger.

### ***Anti-refugee action tendencies***

The model predicting anti-refugee action tendencies was highly significant,  $F(4, 412) = 41.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .289$ . However, the interaction term was not significant ( $B = 0.016$ ,  $p =$

.870). The strongest predictor in this model was attitudes toward refugees ( $B = -0.585$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that general anti-refugee sentiment, rather than the experimental manipulation or identity factors, primarily drove behavioral intentions. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 2, which predicted that high European identifiers would show more anti-refugee tendencies in the refugee-perpetrator condition. The hypothesis was not supported for anti-refugee action tendencies.

In summary, the manipulations and controls worked and the models were statistically significant. We found support for shame in **H1a**, while the other hypotheses were not supported. Interestingly, positive attitudes toward refugees predicted more emotional and behavioral reactions. Moreover, participants felt more guilt, shame, and anger when refugees were the victim rather than the perpetrator. In addition, participants who identified more with Europe felt more shame overall, regardless of victim/perpetrator condition, as is also visible in the simple effects.

### **Exploratory Analysis**

In light of the finding that attitudes toward refugees were the strongest predictor in all main models, a number of exploratory analyses were conducted. These were aimed at examining whether and how the relationship between participants' attitudes toward refugees and their anti-refugee action tendencies differed as a function of European identity, independent of the experimental manipulation.

In order to test this, we conducted a moderation analysis using PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2017), with attitudes toward refugees as the independent variable, European identity as the moderator, and anti-refugee action tendencies as the dependent variable. The overall model was significant,  $F(3, 413) = 56.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .317$ .

There was a significant main effect of prejudice ( $B = -0.6217$ ,  $SE = 0.0537$ ,  $t = -11.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that participants with more negative attitudes toward refugees were more likely to report anti-refugee behavioral intentions. There was no significant main effect of European identity ( $B = 0.0204$ ,  $SE = 0.0562$ ,  $t = 0.363$ ,  $p = .716$ ), but the interaction between attitudes towards refugees and European identity was significant ( $B = 0.1104$ ,  $SE = 0.0387$ ,  $t = 2.85$ ,  $p = .0046$ ), indicating that the strength of the association between attitudes and behavioral intentions varied by each participants' level of European identity.

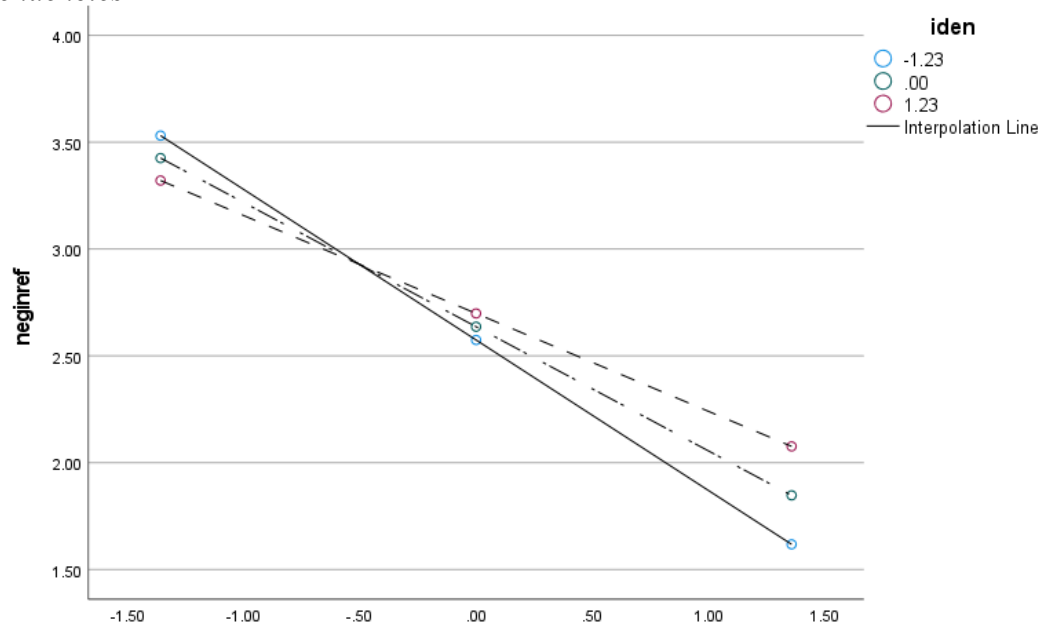
Simple slopes analysis showed that this effect was strongest among low identifiers ( $-1.23$  SD),  $B = -0.7571$ ,  $SE = 0.0640$ ,  $t = -11.83$ ,  $p < .001$ . Among high identifiers ( $+1.23$  SD), the effect of attitudes was still significant but weaker,  $B = -0.4863$ ,  $SE = 0.0786$ ,  $t = -6.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . The graph (**Figure 1**) illustrates this interaction pattern, with the line slope for low identifiers being steeper than that for high identifiers. These results demonstrate that European identity moderated the association between attitudes and anti-refugee behavioral intentions.

Parallel analyses for guilt, shame, and anger revealed no significant interaction effects, showing that European identity did not moderate the emotional expression of refugee attitudes.

**Figure 1**

*Interaction between Attitudes Toward Refugees and European Identity on Anti-Refugee Action*

*Tendencies*



*Note.* Anti-refugee action intentions are plotted against attitudes toward refugees at low (−1.23 SD), mean, and high (+1.23 SD) levels of European identity.

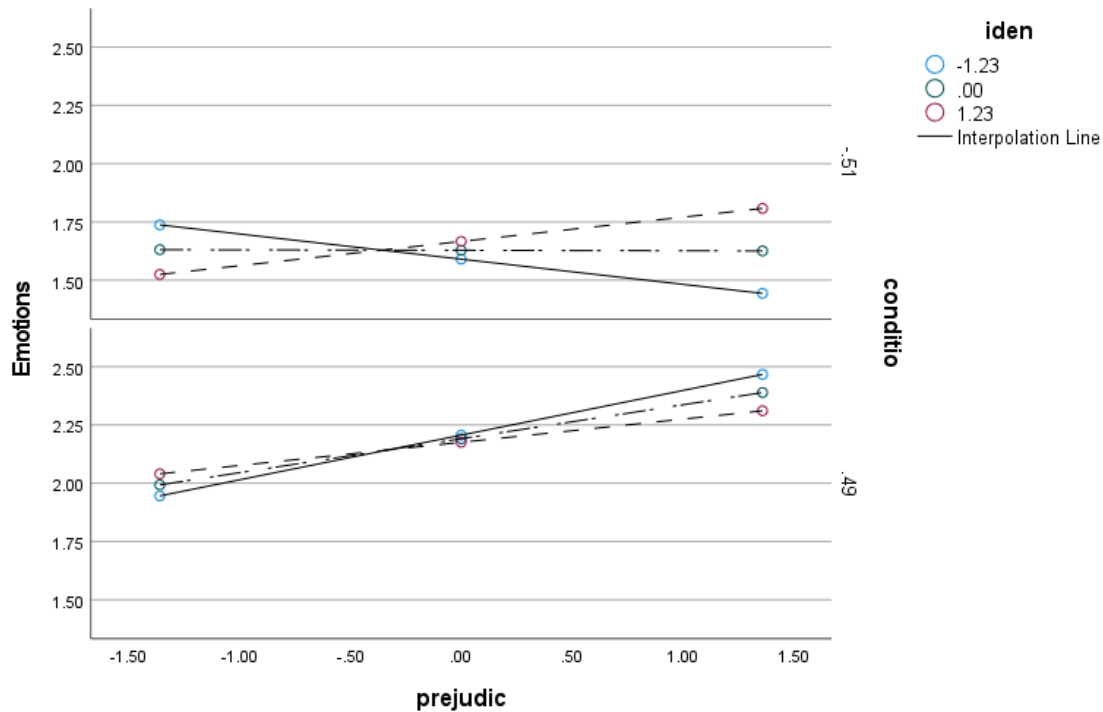
To explore whether the emotional responses of anger, shame, and guilt were shaped by a complex interplay of prejudice (attitudes toward refugees), European identity, and victim/perpetrator condition, three separate analyses were conducted using PROCESS Model 3. For all three emotions, the overall models were statistically significant, indicating that the predictors together explained a meaningful amount of variance (e.g.,  $R^2 = .1531$  for anger,  $.1084$  for shame,  $.0704$  for guilt). However, the three-way interaction between victim/perpetrator condition, European identity, and attitudes toward refugees did not reach statistical significance in any of the models ( $ps > .05$ ).

To visualize potential trends, **Figure 2** displays the interaction patterns for each condition separately: the top panel represents the citizen-perpetrator condition and the bottom panel the refugee-perpetrator condition. Emotional reactions are plotted against attitudes toward refugees, at low, mean, and high levels of European identity for each condition. According to the graph, people with low European identity exhibit a stronger increase in emotional responses as negative attitudes toward refugees rise, particularly in the citizen-perpetrator condition. In the refugee-perpetrator condition, emotional responses rise more consistently across identity levels.

## **Figure 2**

*Emotional Responses as a Function of Attitudes Toward Refugees and European Identity,*

*Separated by victim/perpetrator Condition*



## Discussion

We conducted this study to look into the moderating effect of European identity on emotional and behavioral reactions to intergroup transgressions. We posited that individuals scoring high on European identity would have greater levels of guilt and shame when a group of Europeans perpetrated a transgression against refugees, while those scoring low on European identity would have greater levels of anger (**H1a** and **H1b**). Conversely, when the perpetrator was the refugee, high identifiers were predicted to have greater levels of anger and anti-refugee behavior tendencies (**H2**).

Our results did provide support for shame in **H1a**, while no support for the rest of the Hypothesis. Attitudes towards Refugees, on the other hand, was the most stable and strongest predictor in all the models. People with less positive refugee attitudes were significantly more likely to feel angry and endorse punitive behavioral outcomes, regardless of victim/perpetrator condition. Of special note, European identity did accompany less prejudice toward refugees,

which accords with several prior research suggesting that supranational identity can promote inclusion (Konings et al., 2023).

In the exploratory analysis, we examined potential effects on participants' behavioral and emotional responses beyond the hypothesis. The interaction pattern in **Figure 1** shows that anti-refugee actions are strongly predicted by prejudice among people low in European identification. People with high prejudice do report the most behavioral tendencies, while people with low prejudice do report the least. However, this difference is flattened for people who do highly identify with Europe as both low- and high-prejudiced people have a tendency to act likewise with elevated anti-refugee actions. This suggests that European identity does not buffer uniformly against negative attitudes enacted; rather, high identifiers may respond more consistently across prejudice levels, potentially aligning with normative group behaviors perceived. European identification does therefore seem to dampen behavioral response variability, but negative action tendencies may not necessarily be so reduced overall.

Furthermore, the patterns in **Figure 2** suggest that emotions might serve a regulatory role in emotional reactions to transgressions, especially when citizens are the perpetrators. However, this effect diminishes when refugees are the perpetrator, which is likely due to already elevated levels of prejudice among those participants.

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

The confirmation of shame in **H1a** has important theoretical implications. It makes the argument that strong group identification can lead individuals to feel personally responsible for the actions of their group. It aligns with previous research, which established that moral emotions like shame or guilt are especially likely to be experienced when individuals genuinely care about the group causing the harm. In this case, high European identifiers seemed to feel more

responsible for their European ingroup causing the refugees harm. Theoretically, this suggests that European identity can increase sensitivity to ingroup moral wrongdoing, so that shame at the ingroup level can promote moral reflection and accountability. It places European identity, a highly inclusive group affiliation, in a position of being able to bear morally relevant emotions that are relevant in provoking people's responses towards intergroup conflicts (Çakmak et al., 2024).

Practically, this means that citizens high on European identity and who feel that their fellow citizens are taking part in something wrong will be more inclined to support the appropriate responses to it: For example humanitarian aid, public apologies or policy changes. This can be beneficial for political actors and institutions in order to maintain trust and legitimacy. European identity can therefore be used to initiate pro social responses, follow shared norms, and facilitate repair initiatives.

The interaction pattern in **Figure 1**, which showed that prejudice strongly predicted anti-refugee action among low identifiers but less so among high identifiers, has clear theoretical implications. It suggests that European identity moderates the way attitudes towards refugees are translated into behavior. Meaning that European identity can act as a kind of social buffer, influencing behavior beyond personal feelings and making reactions more consistent with perceived group norms or loyalty. It also shows that identity can sometimes override or dampen the effect of individual prejudice, which is important for understanding how group dynamics shape intergroup relations (Konings et al., 2023).

In practice, this finding suggests possibilities and challenges for public communication and policymaking. On the positive side, a robust European identity can reduce the effect of

extreme individual bias, leading to more stable and therefore more predictable group behavior. This may limit the effects of rising far-right issues proposing stronger anti-refugee sentiments. On the contrary, these findings suggest that strong European identification can result in behavior aligned with perceived group norms, even independently of individual attitudes. This illustrates how European identity is socially constructed and transmitted. If values of refugees' exclusion or suspicion would be part of the European ingroup, even those low in prejudice may support anti-refugee policies. Therefore, EU institutions must work not only to promote identification but also to maintain the shared values of Europe such as freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law (Your Gateway to the EU, News, Highlights | European Union, 2025).

**Figure 2** showed that emotional reactions varied depending on whether the transgression was committed by a group of refugees or citizens. Theoretically, this reflects the differing functions that emotions like anger and shame serve to play in intergroup conflict. When the citizens had committed the transgression, strongly identified participants felt more shame, possibly because they viewed it as their group's failure and values. But when the perpetrator was a refugee, that moral emotional response was weaker, and anger predominated. This is in line with the idea that group-based emotions are not only about the act itself, but about who commits it. People are more likely to feel shame or guilt when their own group does something bad and more likely to feel anger when they are harmed by an outsider. This reproduces traditional intergroup psychology dynamics, in which emotions are congruent with group roles and perceived threat (Smith et al., 2007).

In terms of practical implications, these affective dynamics both explain public reaction to news events and prescribe how to act in turn. For example, when a refugee commits a crime or is otherwise portrayed negatively in the media, people who have existing prejudice are likely to



react with strong anger and extend the behavior to all refugees. This puts a specific requirement on public institutions and leaders to ensure that the actions of a few individuals do not define entire groups. Leaders must also be careful not to fuel fear through their communication. By contrast, when harm is committed by Europeans against refugees, leaders have the chance to mobilize constructive emotions by naming wrongdoing and associating it with European values. By doing this, they are capable of engaging citizens in a shared sense of responsibility and encouraging support for humane and fair treatment. In both cases, understanding of the emotional responses that different group roles generate can underpin more effective communication, policy response, and long-term social cohesion initiatives.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although the present research provides some worthwhile insights, there are certain limitations to be noted. First, the study measured a lot of different variables, which might have an overall confusing and distracting effect on participants. The length and number of different factors could have had a significant impact on the subjective report of the emotional and behavioral variables.

Second, we did not control for a measure of national identity, which potentially might have been a more effective or more relevant frame for participants. At this point it is important to examine the interplay between national identity and European identity, since they can coexist and influence each other in significant ways. It has been found that whereas national identity has usually been framed on cultural and historical narratives, European identity could be associated with civic and political dimensions, such as common values and democratic principles. Others see European identity as complementary to their national identity, which supports their EU support, but others see it as conflicting with their national identity, and they are doubtful or

opposed (König P., 2024). Beyond this, national identity has also been found to be associated with anti-immigrant attitudes and heightened defensive responses in intergroup contexts. This indicates a possible key variable of national identity which would be beneficial to hold constant in studies.

Together, these limitations highlight the imperative to refine both the design and focus of future research within this arena. Shortening the questionnaire and adding in measures of national identity, such as those explored by Leyens et al., future research can construct a finer-grained and more accurate comprehension of how European identity intersects with prejudice in shaping intergroup response.

## **Conclusion**

This research aimed to look at how the concept of European identity determines emotional and behavioral reactions to intergroup transgressions by refugees and European citizens. It particularly investigated whether one would identify with Europe in order to determine feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and anti-refugee behavior based on who caused the harm. The results provided support for one part of the central hypotheses: high European identifiers reported greater shame when European citizens had perpetrated harm on refugees. The remaining hypotheses were not supported, but exploratory analyses indicated that European identity moderated prejudice translation into action and that affective response was a function of the offending group.

These results indicate that European identity can elicit moral feelings such as shame as a reaction to ingroup transgressions, and influence behavioral inclinations independent of personal bias. They highlight the contribution of group-based emotions to individuals' management of complex intergroup relationships. Implications are that one can appeal to an inclusive, shared

European identity to promote moral responsibility and reduce the impact of extremist attitudes if this identity rests on the values of equality and solidarity. While the research yields important results, it was plagued by design complexity and the absence of control for national identity. Future research must simplify the design and explore how national and European identities interact in shaping intergroup feelings and conduct.

In general, the findings tell us about the interplay of prejudice and group identification in shaping reactions to social conflict. They indicate the potential of supranational identity bridging or consolidating divisions depending upon the definition and conduct of the supranational identity.

## References

- Aktas, M. (2024). The rise of populist radical right parties in Europe. *International Sociology*, 39(6), 591–605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02685809241297547>
- Awwad, M. S., Awwad, R. M., & Awwad, R. M. (2023). The role of trust in government in crisis management: Fear of COVID-19 and compliance with social distancing. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12455>
- Batson, C. D., Kennedy, C. L., Nord, L., Stocks, E. L., Fleming, D. A., Marzette, C. M., Lishner, D. A., Hayes, R. E., Kolchinsky, L. M., & Zerger, T. (2007). Anger at unfairness: is it moral outrage? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(6), 1272–1285. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.434>
- Çakmak, H., Gordijn, E. H., Koc, Y., & Stroebe, K. E. (2024). Unraveling Image and Justice Concerns: A social identity account on appraisals and emotional drivers of High-Status Transgressor Group members' solidarity with Low-Status groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672241252871>
- Djaoedji, D. (2024). When refugees are either the perpetrator of the victim of a transgression: Positive and negative action tendencies as a function of attitudes towards refugees [Master Scriptie]. *Rijksuniversiteit Groningen*.
- Çakmak, H., Gordijn, E. H., Koc, Y., & Van Der Ham, M. (2025). Who sees our mistreatments? The impact of ingroup transgression visibility on solidarity with outgroup victims. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 35(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.70090>

Hayes, A. F. (2017). Partial, conditional, and moderated moderated mediation: Quantification, inference, and interpretation. *Communication Monographs*, 85(1), 4–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1352100>

*Instant paraphrasing, for free.* (n.d.). Grammarly.

[https://www.grammarly.com/a/paraphrasing?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=20153838869&utm\\_content=698928182295&utm\\_term=paraphrasing%20tool&target=&targetid=kwd-5045832943&adgroup=150646261633&device=c&matchtype=b&placement=&network=g&extension=&clickid=Cj0KCQjwgvnCBhCqARIsADBLZoIOvSU1mvAAeUj-L5c5aEND8msU-iBsJnpOE65r7sAt5Qw1CdajmV8aArAiEALw\\_wcB&gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=20153838869&gbraid=0AAAAADkCr8QMIOxC0CnhGt4G1\\_48mv0c&gclid=Cj0KCQjwgvnCBhCqARIsADBLZoIOvSU1mvAAeUj-L5c5aEND8msU-iBsJnpOE65r7sAt5Qw1CdajmV8aArAiEALw\\_wcB&gclid=aw.ds](https://www.grammarly.com/a/paraphrasing?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=20153838869&utm_content=698928182295&utm_term=paraphrasing%20tool&target=&targetid=kwd-5045832943&adgroup=150646261633&device=c&matchtype=b&placement=&network=g&extension=&clickid=Cj0KCQjwgvnCBhCqARIsADBLZoIOvSU1mvAAeUj-L5c5aEND8msU-iBsJnpOE65r7sAt5Qw1CdajmV8aArAiEALw_wcB&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=20153838869&gbraid=0AAAAADkCr8QMIOxC0CnhGt4G1_48mv0c&gclid=Cj0KCQjwgvnCBhCqARIsADBLZoIOvSU1mvAAeUj-L5c5aEND8msU-iBsJnpOE65r7sAt5Qw1CdajmV8aArAiEALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds)

König, P. (2023). Forms of National and European Identity: A Research Note reviewing Literature of Cross-National Studies. *Nationalities Papers*, 52(4), 707–734.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2023.66>

Kohring, M., & Matthes, J. (2007). Trust in news media. *Communication Research*, 34(2), 231–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071>

Konings, R., De Coninck, D., & D’Haenens, L. (2021). The role of European and national identity and threat perceptions in attitudes towards immigrants. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 31(2), 446–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.2007058>

Leach, C. W., Van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L. W., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment:

- A hierarchical (multicomponent) model of in-group identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(1), 144–165. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.144>
- Lickel, B., Miller, N., Stenstrom, D. M., Denson, T. F., & Schmader, T. (2006). Vicarious retribution: The role of collective blame in intergroup aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(4), 372–390. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1004\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1004_6)
- Lin, M. H., Kwan, V. S. Y., Cheung, A., & Fiske, S. T. (2004). Stereotype Content Model explains prejudice for an envied outgroup: Scale of Anti-Asian American stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(1), 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167204271320>
- Links en rechts*. (2023). Geraadpleegd op 18 maart 2025, van [https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsy/links\\_en\\_rechts](https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsy/links_en_rechts)  
*StemWijzer | Europees*
- Links en rechts*. (n.d.). Parlement.com. [https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsy/links\\_en\\_rechts](https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsy/links_en_rechts)
- Mackie, D. M., Devos, T., & Smith, E. R. (2000). Intergroup emotions: Explaining offensive action tendencies in an intergroup context. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(4), 602–616. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.4.602>
- Macro Research Team, Diviney, B., Renoult, S., & Teerhuis, J. (2025). Cracks emerge amid tectonic shifts. In *Global Monthly*. [https://assets.ctfassets.net/1u811bvgvthc/1WsYHqNODqf6YY7wJa2OVh/0b9fead359233ee0ebe6dcdf698683dd/2025-02\\_-\\_Global\\_Monthly\\_-\\_Cracks\\_emerge\\_amid\\_tectonic\\_shifts.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/1u811bvgvthc/1WsYHqNODqf6YY7wJa2OVh/0b9fead359233ee0ebe6dcdf698683dd/2025-02_-_Global_Monthly_-_Cracks_emerge_amid_tectonic_shifts.pdf)

- Smith, E. R., Seger, C. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2007). Can emotions be truly group level? Evidence regarding four conceptual criteria. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93(3), 431–446. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.3.431>
- Tajfel, H. (1979). Individuals and groups in social psychology\*. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18(2), 183–190. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1979.tb00324.x>
- UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency. (2025). UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. *Your gateway to the EU, News, Highlights | European Union*. (2025, May 22). European Union. [https://european-union.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en)
- Zentner, M., Grandjean, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2008). Emotions evoked by the sound of music: Characterization, classification, and measurement. *Emotion*, 8(4), 494–521. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.8.4.494>

#### **AI-statement**

**Some stages of this research used artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT. For example, ChatGPT helped in removing typing and spelling errors, inspiring other spellings, and doing the statistical analysis in SPSS. Appendix B shows prompts used while writing this thesis. It is important to note that ChatGPT only served as a tool, the content ideas and analysis were all created by the writer himself.**

## Appendix A

### Questionnaire Used in Experiment

#### Informed Consent

##### “VIEWS ON SOCIETAL ISSUES”

Why do I receive this information?

- You are being invited to participate in this study, because we are looking for Europeans to answer this questionnaire about how people in Europe think about societal issues. You will be asked about different political and societal issues, such as trust in government and media and the position of refugees in Europe.
- This research is part of the Bachelor's thesis project by S. Akbari, T. Dumas, S.W. Hoogcarspel, Y. Lippold, M.C. Osterwald and S.F. Willegers, from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, and is supervised by E. Gordijn. Contact information: [Y.lippold@student.rug.nl](mailto:Y.lippold@student.rug.nl)
- The start date of the research will be April 3 2025 and the end date of the research will be June 20 2025.

Do I have to participate in this research?

- Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. You can withdraw from participation at every moment without explanation, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, also after you have given consent for participation.

Why this research?

- In this research, we want to study how people from different backgrounds in Europe think and feel about societal and political issues in Europe. For this research, we are looking for participants who are at least 16 years old and who are European.

What do we ask of you during the research?

- First, we will ask you for your consent to participate.
- When you agree to participate, you will be guided to the online questionnaire. In the questionnaire, you first answer some demographic questions, namely your age and gender. Moreover, we will ask you about your political orientation. Next, you will be asked several questions concerning issues in Europe. Furthermore you will read a short news article regarding refugees in Europe, and we will ask several questions about that article.
- If you decided to withdraw from the study but would like to receive more information, you can always ask for this by sending an email to [y.lippold@student.rug.nl](mailto:y.lippold@student.rug.nl).
- The questionnaire will take approximately 9 minutes to complete.



- You will receive compensation for your participation.

What are the consequences of participation?

- With our research, we hope to gain more understanding of how European citizens react to societal and political issues. Your participation will also help Bachelor students with their thesis.
- We believe that there are no major risks associated with participating in this study. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study and/or skip questions you may not wish to answer, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

How will we treat your data?

- The data consists of your responses to the questions which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes.
- Your data will be used to write a Bachelor's thesis, and possibly to write an empirical article in a scientific peer-reviewed journal.
- Your data is confidential. Some information may act as identifiers when combined (i.e., gender, age range, and political orientation). Only the researchers of this study will have access to it. Also, Prolific ID codes can be deemed as identifiers. We use them only to compensate for your participation. Once we compensate you, we will delete them.
- If the data is published, we will remove information that could be used to identify individual participants.
- Data processing takes place in Europe.
- When the study is finished, the data will be stored at a safe University of Groningen server and will be stored for 10 years, which is in line with the university's data storage protocol.

What else do you need to know?

- You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an e-mail to the researchers via Prolific.
- Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: [ec-bss@rug.nl](mailto:ec-bss@rug.nl).
- Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: [privacy@rug.nl](mailto:privacy@rug.nl).
- As a research participant, you have the right to a copy of this research information.

By consenting to participate in this study you understand the following:

1. I have the right to receive a copy of this informed consent form by taking a screenshot of this page or asking the researcher for a copy (send an email to [y.lippold@student.rug.nl](mailto:y.lippold@student.rug.nl))
2. My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from this study at any moment without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences.
3. I am allowed to refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer. I do not have to provide any reason for this, and this does not have any negative consequences.
4. My responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone besides the research team.
5. All my responses will be securely stored and are only accessible to the researchers.
6. After completing the questionnaire, I will receive more information on the purpose of this research.
7. I approve that researchers can handle my personal data.

### **Participation**

1. Do you agree to participate in this study (if you don't want to participate, click no and you will leave the questionnaire)?
  - Yes, I want to participate.
  - No

### **Data Collection**

2. Do you give permission for your data to be collected during your participation in this study, to be analyzed and used for the purposes of the study outlined above (if you do not consent, click no and you will leave the questionnaire)?
  - Yes, I consent to the processing of my data as mentioned in the study information.
  - No, I do not consent to participate.

### **Demographics**

First, we ask you to provide some demographic information below before starting the main survey.

3. European: Are you European?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say
4. Age: What is your age?
5. Gender: Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

6. Nationality: Are you European?

- Yes, I am European
- No

7. Ethnicity: Which of these best describes your ethnic background? Please select one answer.

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other ethnic group

8. Political orientation: Please indicate where on the scale you see yourself regarding your own political orientation.

- Extremely left
- Left
- Slightly left
- Moderate
- Slightly right
- Right
- Extremely right

### **Perception Institution**

Next, we would like to know how you perceive institutions such as the government and the media. To what extent do you agree with each statement (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree)?

#### ***Governmental Trust***

9. If I needed help, the government would do its best to help me.
10. I believe that the government would act in my best interest.
11. The government is interested in my well-being, not just its own.
12. The government is truthful in its dealings with me.
13. I would describe the government as honest.

#### ***Media Trust***

14. The media pays necessary attention to important topics.
15. The media provides all important facts on covered topics.
16. Please select six (attention check).
17. The information in the news is always truthful.
18. Journalists express fair and reasonable opinions.

### **Societal Discontent**

How do you feel about and perceive society? Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

19. I feel shocked about the way things are going in society.
20. I feel concerned when I think about the future of society.
21. I am satisfied about society.
22. I am frustrated because society is not as it should be.
23. I am afraid that things will go wrong in society.

### **Prejudice**

How do you feel about the following groups of people in society? Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 6 = absolutely agree).

24. With respect to POOR people, I feel ...
25. With respect to HIGHLY EDUCATED people, I feel ...
26. With respect to REFUGEES, I feel ...
27. With respect to RICH people, I feel ...
28. With respect to LOWER EDUCATED people, I feel ...

### **Attention Check**

29. To check if you are still there, can you solve this calculation:  $3 + 3 = ?$

### **Refugees in Europe**

In this part of the questionnaire we want to focus on refugees in Europe. We first want to know more about how you feel about being European.

30. Are you European?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other, namely.....

### ***European Identity***

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about being European (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 31. I see myself as an European
- 32. Being European is an important part of who I am.
- 33. I feel a strong sense of belonging to Europe.
- 34. I feel good about being part of Europe.
- 35. In my current daily life, I often think about being European.

### **Personal Contact With Refugees**

We now would like to know to what extent you have had positive or negative experiences with refugees (1 = never; 5 = frequently).

- 36. How often have you had a positive experience with refugees?
- 37. How often have you had a negative experience with refugees?

### **Manipulation (See Appendix B and C)**

For the second part of the questionnaire we would like you to read an article that was published a while ago. Please read it carefully as we will ask some questions about it.

### **Emotions**

How do you feel about the situation described in the article? Please answer this for each item.

After reading the article about the people who were attacked, I felt ... (1 = not at all; 6 = very strongly).

- 38. Outraged
- 39. Touched
- 40. Distressed
- 41. Unhappy
- 42. Moved
- 43. Angry
- 44. Indifferent
- 45. Concerned
- 46. Nothing
- 47. Sad
- 48. Guilty
- 49. Ashamed

### **Victims and Perpetrators**

Next we would like to know how you think about the victims and the perpetrators of the article. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 50. I think that the victims in the article need to be compensated by receiving help and/or money.
- 51. I think that the perpetrators in the article need to be imprisoned.
- 52. I empathize with the victims in the article.
- 53. I can understand why the perpetrators in the article behaved in the way they did.
- 54. I think that the victims in the article are at least partly responsible for how they were treated.
- 55. I think that the perpetrators in the article need to pay the victims.
- 56. I think that the victims in the article should receive an apology.

### **Empathy With the Refugees**

Now we would like to know how you feel, think and want to behave with respect to refugees in general. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 57. I feel compassion for refugees when I hear about their struggles.
- 58. When I see refugees suffering, I want to help them.
- 59. I can easily put myself in the shoes of a refugee.
- 60. Please select absolutely disagree (check)
- 61. I feel emotionally moved when I hear about the hardships refugees face.
- 62. I often imagine how difficult it must be to flee one's home country.

### **Action Tendencies Towards Refugees**

Now we would like to know how you feel, think and want to behave with respect to refugees in general. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 63. I would like to demonstrate for rights for refugees.
- 64. I would like to protect my neighborhood from refugees.
- 65. I would like to help refugees by teaching the language of personal coaching.
- 66. I would like to avoid contact with refugees.
- 67. I would like to correct refugees firmly, even with violence, when they break the law.
- 68. I would like to donate money or clothes to refugees.
- 69. I would like to protest against refugees.

### **Policy Support**

Next we would like to know how you think Europe should deal with refugees. To what extent do you agree with the following measures (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 70. Europe should create welcoming environments for refugees.
- 71. Refugees arriving in Europe should not receive government support, such as housing and integration programs.
- 72. European countries should respect and accommodate the cultural diversity of incoming refugees.
- 73. Refugees who come to Europe should discard their own culture and adopt European culture.
- 74. The government should aid refugees that come into Europe, for example with housing or other initiatives.
- 75. All refugees should be refused at the borders of Europe.

### **Manipulation Check**

- 76. Finally, please think back about the article that you just read. Who were the perpetrators in the article?
  - The refugees
  - The local citizens
- 77. Who were the victims in the article?
  - The refugees
  - The local citizens

### **Feedback**

You are about to come to the end of the study. We would like to hear your thoughts and feedback about the study. If any, please report them in the box below.

### **Debrief**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

Please read the following information about this study carefully: We have withheld some information about the study.

At the beginning, you were informed that this research was focused on people's perception about societal issues in Europe. To investigate this, you were asked several questions about how you perceive yourself and others in society, and your response about a EuroNews article about refugees.

However, the actual aim was to investigate whether a newspaper article describing a transgression involving refugees and local citizens influences how people perceive and act towards refugees. Depending on the condition you were assigned to, you either read an article

about refugees being the victims or refugees being the perpetrator of a transgression. This is why you were asked about your emotions and action tendencies towards refugees.

However, please note that the EuroNews article you read was fictional and created by the researchers. The article was not based on any specific real-world events or situations. Study participants were shown a hypothetical article in which either refugees or local citizens were the perpetrators of a transgression involving both groups. It was designed as an experiment to explore the attitudes and actions that people might take in response to such a scenario.

We want to emphasize that the article was not real and did not appear on the EuroNews website. The transgression and crime scene described in the article were created solely for the purpose of this research, all the statements in the article are fictional.

We understand that the article may have elicited negative emotions. However, we believe it is important to examine these types of situations, as news stories about similar events are often published, and it is crucial to investigate how people respond to them.

We want to emphasize that this study was purely academic in nature, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation was completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Thank you once again for your valuable participation, we appreciate your help in furthering our understanding on these important issues.

### **Renewed consent**

78. Now that you have read all the information about the purposes of the study, do you still agree with the use and processing of your data?

- Yes, I consent to the use and processing of my personal data.
- No, I do not consent to the use and processing of my data, and my personal data should be permanently deleted.


### **Thanks**



Thank you for your time. If you click on the red arrow you will return to Prolific to get compensated for your participation.



## Appendix B



### Fake Euronews Article Used: Refugees are the Perpetrators, Locals are the Victims




Latest Europe World EU Policy Business Travel Next Culture Green Health Euroviews More  Log In 

Copyright Canva/Euronews

By [Romane Armangau](#)  
Published on 17/03/2025 - 11:03 GMT+1

 Share this article  Comments



#### Local citizens left afraid after being caught by surprise with a violent attack by a group of refugees

*Graz, Austria – March 17 2025*

A disturbing incident unfolded this morning in the city center of Graz, Austria. A group of refugees viciously attacked a group of local residents near a tram station. The unprovoked assault left several civilians injured and traumatized, deepening concerns among citizens about public safety.


Witnesses described the attack as chaotic and terrifying. "I heard shouting, and then suddenly one of them pulled out a knife," recalled Marie Hoffner, a witness who was standing nearby. "At first, it seemed like an argument, but then it turned violent very quickly. There was panic—people screamed and ran in different directions."

According to reports, several of the attacked local citizens sustained injuries before bystanders and police intervened. "We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning," recounted Lukas M., a local citizen recovering in the hospital from stab wounds. "I don't understand why this happened." Several other victims suffered cuts and bruises. Emergency services provided immediate medical attention at the scene.

Police arrived swiftly, detaining multiple individuals involved in the fight. Some of those arrested reportedly showed signs of erratic behavior. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive for the altercation and are continuing their investigation.

Similar violent incidents between refugees and civilians have been reported across European cities in recent months. The attacks have reignited debates over migration policies, with many locals expressing growing frustration over security concerns. "We need to do more to protect our citizens from violence and hate", we can't allow this kind of behavior," said a local community leader.

Bekijk nu >




**Nieuwe Laptop deals Megekko**  
Vandaag voor 22.30u besteld morgen in huis!


Shop nu >

TRG AD


#### Top stories




**Trump says Putin ceasefire talks to discuss 'land and power plants'**




**Canada's PM Carney visits Paris and London to rally European allies**



**Lithuania says Russian military intelligence behind Ikea arson attack**



**Rwanda cuts diplomatic ties with Belgium over DRC conflict**



**Telegram's CEO Durov returns to Dubai amid French criminal probe**

## Appendix C

### Fake Euronews Article Used: Refugees are the Victims, Locals are the Perpetrators

euro news.

Latest Europe World EU Policy Business Travel Next Culture Green Health Euroviews More

Log In Live

Copyright Canva/Euronews

By [Romane Armangau](#)

Published on 17/03/2025 - 11:03 GMT+1

Share this article

Comments

## Refugees left afraid after being caught by surprise with a violent attack by a group of local citizens

Graz, Austria – March 17 2025

A disturbing incident unfolded this morning in the city center of Graz, Austria. A group of local citizens viciously attacked a group of refugees near a tram station. The unprovoked assault left several refugees injured and traumatized, deepening concerns among refugees about public safety.


Witnesses described the attack as chaotic and terrifying. "I heard shouting, and then suddenly one of them pulled out a knife," recalled Marie Hoffner, a witness who was standing nearby. "At first, it seemed like an argument, but then it turned violent very quickly. There was panic—people screamed and ran in different directions."

According to reports, several of the attacked refugees sustained injuries before bystanders and police intervened. "We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning," recounted Ahmed S., a refugee recovering in the hospital from stab wounds. "I don't understand why this happened." Several other victims suffered cuts and bruises. Emergency services provided immediate medical attention at the scene.

Police arrived swiftly, detaining multiple individuals involved in the assault. Some of those arrested reportedly showed signs of erratic behavior. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive for the attack and are continuing their investigation.

Similar violent incidents between civilians and refugees have been reported across European cities in recent months. These attacks have reignited debates over the treatment of refugees in Europe with many locals expressing frustration. "We need to do more to protect refugees from violence and hate, we can't allow this kind of behavior to continue," said a local community leader

Bekijk nu




### Nieuwe Laptop deals Megekko

Vandaag voor 22.30u besteld morgen in huis!


Shop nu

TRG AD


## Top stories




Trump says Putin ceasefire talks to discuss 'land and power plants'




Canada's PM Carney visits Paris and London to rally European allies



Lithuania says Russian military intelligence behind Ikea arson attack



Rwanda cuts diplomatic ties with Belgium over DRC conflict



Telegram's CEO Durov returns to Dubai amid French criminal probe