Unmasking public attitudes towards immigration

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International Metropolis Conference
Ottawa, June 24-28, 2019
Spain justifies migrant pushback in wake of large-scale jump at Ceuta

Government admits that its reception system has reached the saturation point after spike in arrivals

European countries should face legal consequences for ‘criminalising’ migrant solidarity, says new report

Following openDemocracy revelations, a new EU-funded study of criminalised solidarity and anti-smuggling laws

‘Mass immigration of people who use tl’

Majority of Canadians think immigration should be limited: poll

By Teresa Wright, The Canadian Press
Migrants and the media: what shapes the narratives on immigration in different countries

April 26, 2019 8.54am EDT

Key words: ‘narratives’ and ‘attitudes’

Immigration worries drove the Brexit vote. Then attitudes changed.
Who are ‘immigrants’?

- People who come and live here from other countries.

- ‘Here’ refers to a country, but in fact individuals interviewed react to the narratives they know, and their immediate context e.g. neighbourhood.
What is an attitude?

- Attitudes are defined as a combination of three elements (Krech et al. 1962):
  - a cognitive component,
  - a feeling component,
  - an action tendency component
What is an attitude?

Attitudes towards immigration

Cognitions about immigrants
I know individuals who migrated or narratives about them

Feelings about immigrants
I accept or reject that people come to live here from other countries

Action tendency
Brexit vote

e1

e2

e3
How do we measure attitudes?

- We typically measure attitudes through surveys or polls.

- Self-reported measures in a standardised interview
  - With and without interviewers
  - Different degrees of anonymity
Survey questions

- To what extent do you think the Netherlands should **allow people** of the **same race or ethnic group** as most Dutch people **to come and live here**?
- How about people of a **different race or ethnic group** from most Dutch people?
- And how about people from the **poorer countries** outside Europe?
  - Allow many to come and live here
    - Allow some
    - Allow a few
    - Allow none
- LISS Panel (2014)
  - Allow to come and live here
  - Do not allow to come and live here
European Social Survey (2004-2014) – Overt estimates

Source: European Social Survey 2004, 2014
How reliable are self-reported measures?

- Three sources of measurement error:
  - Characteristics of the survey
  - Response style
  - Social desirability
Unmasking attitudes in the Netherlands (1)

Source: Creighton, Schmidt, & Zavala-Rojas, D., 2018
Unmasking attitudes in the Netherlands (2)

- The difference between covert and overt measures is interpretable as the extent to which anonymity, provided via the list experiment, differs from response patterns observed via direct questioning: $$B_j = O_j - C_{j+3}$$

Source: Creighton, Schmidt, & Zavala-Rojas, D., 2018
Conclusions (I)

- Are negative attitudes towards immigration growing in Europe?
- Likely yes…
- Likely not because:

  - Bias of self-reported measures is huge and is a function of anonymity in the survey context
  - It can be the case that in some countries it became more acceptable to be openly against immigration, whereas some countries may still be reporting socially acceptable answers in favour of it.
  - In the absence of high levels of anonymity, attitudes towards immigrants show significant bias and a willingness to overstate tolerance.
Implications for policy makers

- Race-based preferences are masked, it calls into question the broad interpretation that religion is more relevant than race for shaping societal reception in Europe.
- Policy makers need to target non-immigrant preferences acknowledging that changes in the context of reception might not be openly articulated.
- Policy-makers might do well considering how immigrant perception of hostility differs in contexts with distinct levels of social desirability bias.
- The masking and relatively high antipathy towards immigrants identified as similar racially suggests that narratives rooting preferences in religion or labour-market competition should be revised.
Bibliography
Bibliography

  Github repository: https://github.com/dianazr/MigrationListExpUnmaskTrueOpinions


Thank you

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