Attitudes towards immigrants and refugees
A comparison of settlement and non-settlement countries

Arno Van Hootegem, Bart Meuleman & Koen Abts
Structure presentation

• Introduction
• Research questions
• Theoretical background
• Data & methods
• Descriptives
• Explanation models
• Conclusion
Introduction: refugee crisis?

Number of asylum applicants per year (in thousands)

- EU27
- EU28

Graph showing the number of asylum applicants from 1998 to 2016.
Research questions

• European public opinion towards refugees

1. Individual factors driving attitudes towards refugees?
2. To what extent are attitudes towards refugees specific (i.e. different from attitudes towards other immigrant groups)?
3. Cross-country differences in attitudes towards refugees (settlement vs. non-settlement countries)?
Theoretical background

• Group conflict theory
  o Negative attitudes towards outgroups are driven by actual competition and perceptions of realistic or symbolic threat (Meuleman et al. 2009)
  
  o More negative attitudes
    • …among socio-economically weaker groups
    • …in economically unfavourable contexts
    • …when large immigrant groups are present
Theoretical background

• Basic human values (Schwartz 1994):
  o “desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity”.

• Values will influence the attitude toward a certain object if this object has relevant consequences for the attainment of the motivational goals that are associated with these respective values.

• Universalism has a positive impact on attitudes towards refugees, tradition/conformity a negative one
Conceptual model

- Socio-economic status
  - Perceived safety
  - Political ideology
  - Satisfaction economy
  - Conformity-tradition

- Universalism
  - Perceived safety
  - Political ideology
  - Satisfaction economy
  - Conformity-tradition

- Anti-refugee
  - Realistic threat
    - Perceived safety
    - Political ideology
    - Satisfaction economy
    - Conformity-tradition
  - Symbolic threat
    - Perceived safety
    - Political ideology
    - Satisfaction economy
    - Conformity-tradition

- Anti-immigration
  - Realistic threat
    - Perceived safety
    - Political ideology
    - Satisfaction economy
    - Conformity-tradition
  - Symbolic threat
    - Perceived safety
    - Political ideology
    - Satisfaction economy
    - Conformity-tradition

Data & methods

- ESS wave 8 (2016)
- 23 countries, first release 18 countries
- 3 items attitudes towards refugees (1: agree strongly- 5: disagree strongly):
  - The government should be generous in judging people’s applications for refugee status
  - Most applicants for refugee status aren’t in real fear of persecution in their own countries
  - Refugees whose applications are granted should be entitled to bring in their close family members

- (also fielded in 2002)
Data & methods

- Socio-economic predictors
  - Gender, age, education, occupation, income, urbanization
- Ideological dispositions
  - Basic human values: universalism & conformity / tradition
  - Realistic & symbolic threat
    - ‘Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?’ (0 – bad to 10 – good)
    - ‘Would you say that [country]’s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?’ (0 – undermined to 10 – enriched)
  - Left-right, satisfaction with economy, personal safety
- Comparison with anti-immigration attitudes
  - To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group to come and live here?
  - … people of a different race or ethnic group…
  - … from the poorer countries outside Europe…
Data & methods

• Design: comparison of…
  o Settlement countries (BE DE NL SE)
  o Transit countries (PL SI)

• Multigroup Structural Equation Modeling
  o Estimates of causal structure per country
  o Direct, indirect and total effects
  o Measurement equivalence (metric) for the latent constructs
  o Model Fit: \( \chi^2 = 45112.408 \) Df = 2214 RMSEA = 0.034 CFI = 0.932
Descriptives: Change in attitudes vs. refugees

- Anti-refugee attitudes, 2016 (range: 1-5)
Descriptives: Change in attitudes vs. refugees

- Anti-refugee attitudes, 2002 vs. 2016 (range: 1-5)
**Explanation model: socio-demographics**

**Standardized total effects of socio-demographic variables on anti-refugee attitudes**

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**Notes:** *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
Explanation models: subjective factors

*Standardized total effects of subjective factors on anti-refugee attitudes*

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Comparison with anti-immigration attitudes

- Strong correlations between attitudes towards refugees and immigrants (between 0.40 and 0.61)

- Same pattern of predictors (small differences in strength of effects)
Conclusions

• Similarly as in the case of anti-immigration attitudes, anti-refugee attitudes are rooted in…
  o Symbolic as well as realistic threats
  o Conformity/tradition and a rejection of universalism
  o Right-wing ideology, concerns about the economy and personal safety

• Small differences between settlement & transit countries
  o In transit countries, stronger effects conformity-tradition
  o In settlement countries, stronger effects of safety concerns and political ideology
Arno Van Hootegem  
Arno.vanhootegem@kuleuven.be

Bart Meuleman  
Bart.meuleman@kuleuven.be

Koen Abts  
K.Abts@uvt.nl