The Perception of Immigrants in Europe after the Refugee Crisis

Lisa-Marie Kraus, MA. & Tim van Meurs, MA., MSc.

6th ESS Workshop, 16th of March 2018
Introduction

• The refugee/migrant crisis has received exceptional media coverage

• In 2015, the media recorded the biggest movement of people across boarders
• Stories were reported on a daily basis
• Media’s function as a trusted resource to make sense about the event
• Media played a central role in providing information about the new arrivals and in framing these events as a ”crisis”
Introduction

“We use the two concepts (‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’) together, as they have become widely and interchangeably adopted by the media and policy makers to refer to the recent arrivals of almost a million people in Europe. At the same time, we remain aware that the conflation of terms carries profound and dangerous consequences for the quality of press coverage.”

(Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 4)
Introduction

Refugee or Migrant?
Word choice matters.
Theoretical Framework

- Diversity-turn
- European cities have become majority-minority cities (Crul, 2015, p. 59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amsterdam population</th>
<th>Dutch descent</th>
<th>Moroccan descent</th>
<th>Turkish descent</th>
<th>Surinamese descent</th>
<th>Antillean descent</th>
<th>Other non-European descent</th>
<th>European and US descent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>Under the age of 15</td>
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- Media coverage as a reminder of the diversity-turn:

To what extent has the refugee crisis affected the perception of immigrants and the role of socio-cultural and economical predictors?
Hypotheses

• H1: The perception of immigrants has become more negative than in previous years

• H2: The perception of immigrants has become more polarized
  (Bohman and Hjem, 2015, Hopkins, 2011)

• H3a: The effect of socio-cultural predictors has increased over time
• H3b: The effect of economical predictors has not increased over time
  (Van der Waal & De Koster, 2015)
"Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland"

Deutschland geprägt durch Christentum
Methodology – Datasets

• ESS 7 & ESS 8
  • ESS 7: 2014/2015 – before the refugee crisis
  • ESS 8: 2016/2017 – after the refugee crisis
• Fifteen countries
  • Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
Methodology – Dependent variable

- Perception of immigrants
  - “To what extent do you think your country should allow people of a different race or ethnic group?”
  - “To what extent do you think your country should allow people from the poorer countries outside Europe?”
  - “Would you say immigrants are generally bad or good for your country’s economy?”
  - “Would you say that your country’s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by immigrants?”
  - “Do immigrants make your country a worse or better place to live?”
- Recoded to a 0-10 scale
  - Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.881 & 0.876
Methodology – Independent variables

• Individual level variables
  • Religion
  • Political attitude
  • Institutional trust
  • Education
  • Employment status
  • Age
  • Gender

• Country level variables
  • Right wing seats
  • Percentage of immigrants
  • GDP
  • Unemployment

• Cross-level interactions
  • Political attitude * Right wing seats
  • Political attitude * Percentage of immigrants
Results - Overall

• ‘Neutral’ average perception of immigrants

• Immigrant perception significantly affected by:
  • Religion: Christian denominations more negative than atheists and non-Christian religions (Islamic, Jewish, Eastern religions)
  • Employment status: Only in 2014; unemployed people more negative
  • Trust in institutions: More trustworthy people are more positive
  • Education: the more highly educated, the more positive
  • Political attitude: Right-wing voters are more negative than left-wing voters

• No effect of country-level variables

• The effect of political attitude differs significantly over countries
  • Right-wing voters are more negative in countries with a higher percentage of immigrants
Results – Change over time

• Perception of immigrants got slightly more positive after the refugee crisis
  • $\mu_{2014} = 5.68; \mu_{2016} = 5.73; t = 4.971, p < 0.000$

• Perception of immigrants got slightly more polarized
  • $SD_{2014} = 1.89; SD_{2016} = 1.92$
Results – Change over time

Z-scores

• Comparing regression coefficients (b) over time
  \[ Z = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{SE\ b_1^2 - SE\ b_2^2}} \] (Paternoster et al., 1998)

• Applicable to large sample studies

• Significant changes in
  • Religion: Roman Catholics more negative (p < 0.01)
  • Political attitude: More polarization (p < 0.01)
  • Unemployed less negative (p < 0.05) - BUT no longer significant predictor in 2016
Conclusion

• RQ: To what extent has the refugee crisis affected the perception of immigrants and the role of socio-cultural and economical predictors?

• More polarization in the perception of immigrants

• ‘Standard’ influencers of immigrant perception remain; only employment status loses significance

• Effect of political attitude (left-right scale) varies over countries
  - Higher percentage of immigrants leads to stronger effect; more polarization

• Effect of refugee crisis:
  - More positive opinion overall
  - Stronger disdain by Catholics
  - Increased effect political attitude; more polarization again.
  - Increased importance of socio-cultural characteristics, decreased importance of economic characteristics


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Tim van Meurs  vanmeurs@eshcc.eur.nl

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
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<td>% unemployed</td>
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<td>Political attitude (lr) * Radical Right Wing seats</td>
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