



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Social Science Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/soscij

The role of social desirability bias and racial/ethnic composition on the relation between education and attitude toward immigration restrictionism

Brian P. An*

Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, University of Iowa, 493 Lindquist Center North, Iowa City, IA 52242, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 November 2012

Received in revised form

13 September 2014

Accepted 13 September 2014

Available online 3 October 2014

Keywords:

Racial attitudes

Race relations

Immigration

List experiment

Social desirability bias

Social tolerance

ABSTRACT

Social scientists note individuals tend to respond favorably to sensitive topics in surveys, but few consider factors triggering these responses. This study uses unique data to examine respondents' racial/ethnic attitude under direct and indirect modes of elicitation. In particular, the list experiment provides a cloak of anonymity to a random subsample of individuals that allows them to respond truthfully about their racial/ethnic attitudes. By comparing responses between administration modes, this study evaluates whether social desirability pressures mediate, and racial/ethnic composition moderate, the relation between education and racial/ethnic attitudes. Findings indicate an initial positive relation between education and racial/ethnic attitudes, but desirability bias mainly drives this relation. Furthermore, there is some support racial/ethnic composition moderates the influence of social desirability on education.

© 2014 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

U.S. policy makers and natives have placed immigration at the forefront of domestic policies. Although the United States has experienced immigrant flows from several parts of the world, immigration from Latin America has been the focus of anti-immigrant sentiments (Hero, 2010). Recently, anti-immigrant sentiment has resurged, where individuals supporting immigration restrictionism contend immigrants threaten the nation's health, economy, and national security (Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, & Kolody, 2009; Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010).

However, college-educated individuals are more likely to oppose immigration restrictionism than individuals without a college degree (Berg, 2009; Hainmueller &

Hiscox, 2007; Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002). This finding is consistent with previous research that shows college education serves as an important avenue for individuals to increase their tolerance toward other racial/ethnic groups (Bobo & Licari, 1989; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). Moreover, college-educated individuals are less likely threatened economically by an influx of immigrant labor than less-educated individuals (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Scheepers et al., 2002).

Despite these positive associations between education and social tolerance, prior studies generally overlook two factors potentially invalidating these findings. First, direct survey questions, which researchers often rely on to measure attitudes toward other racial/ethnic groups, may be biased because respondents—especially college-educated respondents—are under pressure to answer questions in a normative way (Janus, 2010; Krysan, 1998). College-educated individuals are likely to respond favorably toward other racial/ethnic groups in order to appear unprejudiced

* Tel.: +1 319 335 6390.

E-mail address: brian-an@uiowa.edu

and enlightened. If true, this finding calls into question the long-held belief the education system serves as the mechanism through which individuals develop their democratic principles (Nunn, Crockett, & Williams, 1978).

Second, studies examining the influence of a respondent's self-presentation on a survey tend to overlook the social mechanisms driving the relation. For instance, racial/ethnic composition tends to alter an individual's racial/ethnic attitudes (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Quillian, 1995). Furthermore, racial/ethnic resentment and stereotypes shape an individual's attitude toward immigrants, and these triggers are more likely to occur in areas with high racial/ethnic concentrations than in areas with low racial/ethnic concentrations (Ayers et al., 2009; Rocha et al., 2011). Although insightful, few researchers consider whether the interrelation between education and racial/ethnic composition are due to other racial/ethnic groups' presence or due to response differences to social desirability pressures. Social scientists tend to assume social desirability pressures are normative across the country regardless of the social context. Racial/ethnic composition, however, may affect individuals' attitude response because the degree to which individuals are exposed to other racial/ethnic groups may influence how strongly desirability pressures affect their response toward them.

This study tests whether individuals respond to normative pressures due to their social context. Certain individuals are prone to self-monitor their responses at locales with a large minority population (Weber, Lavine, Huddy, & Federico, 2014). College-educated whites residing in areas with a high minority concentration, for example, may mask their racial attitudes more so than similar individuals residing in areas with a low minority concentration. Therefore, greater incongruence may exist between direct and indirect attitude measures at high-minority areas than at low-minority areas.

This is one of the few studies that compares and contrasts direct and indirect measures of immigration attitudes, as well as examines the relations between racial/ethnic composition, education, and attitudes. Social scientists either focus on whether the influence of education on immigration attitudes occurs because individuals are pressured to respond in a favorable way or because they are exposed to other racial/ethnic groups. Surprisingly, few social scientists consider the interrelation between social desirability bias and racial/ethnic composition. If it is the former, then social scientists need to ask whether college-educated individuals alter their expressed immigration attitudes because of their social surroundings. If it is the latter, then few social scientists consider whether normative pressures bias survey responses of immigration attitudes.

The following section begins with a discussion of the self-monitoring concept and highlights the role of self-monitoring on attitudes toward other social groups. Next is a discussion on how racial/ethnic composition potentially moderates socially desirable responses. Two research questions motivate this study. First, does the relation between social desirability and education differ across levels of racial/ethnic composition? Second, does

accounting for social desirability bias alter the substantive conclusions in the interaction between education and racial/ethnic composition?

2. Literature review

2.1. Social context and self-monitoring

Self-monitoring theory describes how individuals differ in their expressed attitudes and behaviors based on their sensitivity to situational norms (Snyder, 1987). Some prejudices are more acceptable than others given an individual's group identification and social context. Normative behaviors for a particular social context therefore dictate prejudice expressions (Klein, Snyder, & Livingston, 2004). Due to normative changes in the United States, where overt prejudice and racism are increasingly socially undesirable, favorable attitudes from surveys may be upwardly biased because respondents want to appear unprejudiced (Krysan, 1998; Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens, 1997). Studies reveal direct questioning understates individual support toward immigration restrictionism and opposition toward racial neighborhood integration (Janus, 2010; Krysan, 1998). High self-monitors closely screen their self-image in social interactions and adjust their attitudes and behaviors accordingly so that it is aligned to situational norms (Snyder, 1987). Using social cues in their environment, high-self monitors cultivate their public appearance (Klein et al., 2004; Snyder, 1987). By contrast, low self-monitors are less concerned with how their attitudes and behaviors fit social situations and are instead guided by their inner dispositions (Snyder, 1987; Weber et al., 2014). Therefore, congruence between public and private attitudes and behaviors is greater for low self-monitors than for high self-monitors.

Social scientists examining mode effects, that is, response differences based on how investigators administer questions, assess whether attitude responses on surveys are biased because of desirability pressures (Heerwig & McCabe, 2009; Janus, 2010). Researchers typically use indirect questioning to account for social desirability pressures in responses. They often use these studies to confirm or deny prior conclusions about racial/ethnic attitudes from studies using direct questioning. Although studies examining mode effects consider whether the influence of education on racial/ethnic attitudes remain after accounting for social desirability bias, these studies do not consider factors that trigger individuals to respond in a socially desirable way.

2.2. Racial/ethnic composition as a trigger for self-monitoring and normative responses

An area's racial/ethnic and foreign-born composition tends to shape an individual's racial/ethnic attitudes. Group threat theory posits that group position influences intergroup attitudes where racial/ethnic out-group competition for resources, especially resources the dominant group has enjoyed, increases the out-group threat for dominant group members (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). This threat, whether real or perceived, raises the dominant group's

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات