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ABSTRACT

Recurrent xenophobic violence in South Africa highlights the strong undercurrent of popular opinion opposition to international immigrants. This article examines public attitudes towards the international immigrant community in South Africa and the factors influencing those attitudes. The author uses public opinion data from the 2014 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). The article will show that there is an asymmetry in the processes of opinion formation on immigrants in the country. The findings seemed to call into question the bipolarity of attitudinal measures used in public opinion studies of anti-immigrant sentiment. In addition, the author found that stereotypes about the harmful impact of international immigration were powerful drivers of public antipathy towards foreigners. Greater scrutiny of harmful stereotypes of foreign immigrants voiced by the media, politicians and national leaders is therefore needed.

Keywords: immigration; xenophobia; public opinion; service delivery; asymmetrical attitudes; information

Introduction

Violent anti-immigrant riots are a recurrent feature of contemporary South Africa. In the aftermath of such riots, the general public is often treated to what some have called "xenophobia denialism" by the country's political leaders. Let us consider one example. Responding to anti-immigrant riots in eThekwini and Johannesburg during April 2015, former South African President Jacob Zuma said in a public statement:

> We reiterate our view that South Africans are generally not xenophobic. If they were, we would not have such a high number of foreign nationals who have been successfully integrated into communities all over our country, in towns, cities and villages. (CNBC Africa 2015)

This type of "xenophobia denialism" often presents its audience with a purely binary distinction between "xenophobic" as opposed to "unxenophobic". South Africans can only be considered "xenophobic" if they engage actively in mass violence directed at international immigrants or shops owned by such immigrants.[1] Such binaries reveal a great deal about the contested interpretative frameworks (i.e. the "maps of meaning") used to talk about xenophobia in South Africa.

In any country there may be people who have rejected all international immigrants and some who have welcomed all immigrants. But there may also be a third option: those who have welcomed some international immigrants but rejected others. Rather than see the "reject all" and "reject none" options as opposite points on an attitudinal continuum, they can be imagined as nominal variables. If public opinion formation on welcoming international immigrants is envisioned in this way, then new avenues will open up in how people's attitudes towards international immigrants are understood. Taking this approach, the study reported on looked at what factors may best explain people's attitudes towards immigrants using public opinion data. In this article, I will outline two hypotheses and then test their validity using multivariate regression techniques. The first hypothesis is that animosity towards immigrants is driven by information about the consequence of immigration; and the second hypothesis is that antipathy is influenced by dissatisfaction with service delivery.

The article is structured in four parts. Firstly, the main literature relevant to the study is reviewed and the importance of research on attitudes towards immigrants is highlighted. Then, the data source is outlined and descriptive results are presented. This is followed by multivariate regression techniques used to test the two hypotheses presented above. In the latter section, I describe the quantitative research techniques employed to discern the relationships between attitudes towards immigrants and the different individual-level factors. I then present the results showing which factors are associated with public tolerance of international immigrants and which are correlated with intolerance. Finally, the findings are reviewed and their implications for understanding attitudes towards international immigrants in South Africa are discussed.

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1   The United Nations (UN) Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration has issued a definition of international migrant which is "any person who changes his or her country of usual residence". The UN also stipulates certain conditions around duration of stay in the country of destination and the duration of absence from the country of origin – about a year in each case (for a more in-depth discussion, see UN 2017, 5-9). There are, of course, different types of immigrants such as guest workers, refugees and asylum-seekers. The distinction between these types of international immigrants is essentially a legal one and the definitions of different types of immigrants can differ depending on the legal framework being used.

Literature Review

This section provides a review of the literature pertinent to the study of xenophobia in South Africa. In reading this review, it is important to be aware of two biases in the South African academic literature on xenophobia. First, for academics writing about xenophobia in South Africa, attention has tended to gravitate to the more visceral manifestations of prejudice. Violence, it would seem, makes a compelling subject of research and other, less intemperate, forms of xenophobia tend to be ignored by academics studying this issue in South Africa. Crush and Ramachandran (2014) provide a thoughtful review of some of the main arguments within the existing literature on xenophobic violence in South Africa. Second, there is a bias against positivist analysis in South African sociology. In a recent review of quantitative research, Mattes (2013) identified this bias and ascribed it to a general distrust of quantitative methodologies. He argued that it has prevented some sociologists in the country from exploring issues of importance using quantitative public opinion data (see, also, Basson and Prozesky 2015).

The South African Context

Before 1994, South Africa was as a *settler colony* (or settler oligarchy) which relegated the black majority population to positions of inferiority in a racial hierarchy. Using coercion, the settler governments of this period built a racialised system of economic and social favouritism enforced through systematic prejudice. During the 19th century, recruitment networks were established to bring immigrants from elsewhere on the subcontinent to work in the country's mineral and (to a lesser extent) agricultural sectors. Acting as "labour reserves", South Africa's neighbours were exploited as sources of cheap labour (see Klotz 2013; Neocosmos 2010 discusses this system in detail). The system of immigrant labour began to breakdown in the 1980s as the apartheid regime unravelled and new immigration patterns emerged. Immigration moved from largely formal collective labour agreements to more individualised forms. Some of this new cross-border mobility was undocumented and, in the 1990s, fear of "illegal aliens" became a political talking point in the country (Mattes et al. 1999). In the years since, concerns about immigration have become a regular feature of popular debate.

International immigrants often face discrimination in South Africa as a recent study by Mitchell and Nel (2017) from the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG) made clear. During the 2013–2017 period, the HCWG examined cases on hate crime, hate speech, and intentional unfair discrimination in five South African provinces (i.e. Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Western Cape). Of the 945 cases reviewed by the HCWG, 45 per cent recorded "nationality" as the underlying motivations for the prejudicial act. The kind of discrimination reported ranged from violence to denial of service by police officers and healthcare providers. Moreover, less than 42 per cent

of victims of hate crime during this period were born in South Africa. The HCWG went on to note that foreigners who are victims of hate crime often do not report this form of abuse because of distrust of the police and fear of arrest by the authorities. Indeed, one of the findings of the HCWG report is that the hate crime element is almost entirely disregarded in court proceedings. This outcome shows how difficult it is to hold perpetrators accountable for this type of crime.

The general South African public seems ill-informed about the diverse international immigrant population living in the country. Popular discourse on this population is informed by myths and misinformation. Consider, for example, the myth that immigrants (especially black immigrants) are a major cause of crime in the country. Qualitative studies of the country's diverse immigrant population regularly find that research participants encounter this myth on a constant basis (see, e.g., Crush and Tawodzera 2014; Rugunanan and Smit 2011). Indeed, it could be claimed that the "foreigner label" itself invokes images of a "criminal outsider" in South Africa. In interviews with refugees, Tewolde (2017) found that such images can cause immigrants distress and prompt foreigners to hide their "nationality". Often such images are used to justify discrimination against members of this population. In addition to crime, a variety of other social ills (e.g. unemployment and disease) are rumoured to have immigrants as their major cause (see, also, Neocosmos 2010). There is, of course, no evidence to support the allegation that immigrants are a major source of crime in South Africa. In fact, there is little evidence that international immigrants are the source of any great social ills in the country.

Trends in Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

In an earlier study (Gordon 2016b), I provided an analysis of the patterns of change in attitudes towards foreigners for the period 2003–2012 using public opinion data.[2] I looked at attitudes to the following survey question: "Please indicate which one of the following statements applies to you: I generally welcome to South Africa … (i) All immigrants; (ii) Some immigrants; (iii) No immigrants; and (iv) Don't know." In 2003, about a third (33%) of the South African adult population said that they would welcome all immigrants, while a similar number (33%) would welcome some immigrants. The remainder (33%) indicated that they would welcome none. I found that the proportion of the adult public that would be prepared to welcome foreigners tended to fluctuate within a narrow band over the period. There was a notable dip in extreme anti-immigrant attitudes in the country in 2010, which may be related to the hosting of the FIFA World Cup by South Africa in the early part of that year.

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2   The study used nine rounds of data from the SASAS series. The sample size in each year was about
     3 000 and special weights were applied to the data to make it nationally representative of the adult
     population in South Africa. For more information on how the study utilised the data, see Gordon
     2016b.

From my previous analysis, it is clear that not all adult South Africans harbour animosity to international migrants. Indeed, it would appear that a significant minority is quite welcoming of foreigners and that there are signs of a certain softening of the attitudes of the general population. Since 2009, the share of the public who said that they would welcome "some immigrants" has grown appreciably. The time series presented here is backed up by public opinion studies completed by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) using their own public opinion surveys from 1997, 1999, 2006 and 2010 (Crush et al. 2008; Crush, Ramachandran and Pendleton 2013; Mattes et al. 1999). One of the key findings of the SAMP attitudinal research was the belief among the general public that immigrants were the cause of a variety of social problems (e.g. crime, poverty and unemployment) in the country (see, also, Gordon 2017). The salient concern is that the conditions for social reproduction amongst the accuser's community are in danger. In other words, the "outsider" is blamed for the rising individual and communal cost of caring for themselves, their children, and other dependents.

It could be argued that local community protests over conditions of social reproduction often lead to xenophobic attacks. In a published debate between Von Holdt and Alexander (2012), the former argued that the struggle over citizenship is directed both against the state as well as foreign nationals. Here violence is a mechanism of protecting social reproduction and an aggressive attempt to impose a particular order of citizenship on a locality. This seems to suggest that antipathy towards international immigrants and dissatisfaction with service delivery are correlated in South Africa. Indeed, interviews in communities affected by violence tend to find that people blame poor service delivery on international immigrants (for the case studies that inform this argument, see Von Holdt et al. 2011). Here immigrants become scapegoats for the failure of government management of basic services (e.g. electricity, water and sanitation). Of course, it could be argued that connecting xenophobic violence and community protests is difficult because the two phenomena are different in so many ways. It may be that there are no underlying relationships between public attitudes towards service delivery and their attitudes towards immigrants.

Hypotheses about Attitude Formation

Public service delivery evaluations may play a role in explaining individuals' attitudes towards international immigrants. In the study, I tested the hypothesis that negative service delivery evaluation drives animosity towards international immigrants in the country (#H1). I also provided an alternative to this "service delivery hypothesis", namely, the "perceived threat hypothesis". This alternative hypothesis states that individuals' willingness to welcome immigrants will be based on the information they have about immigrants. If individuals have information that immigrants are the cause of social ills in society, then they will be more likely to reject immigrants (#H2). This hypothesis follows rational choice theories which suggest that individuals' attitudes

towards a group will be determined by how threatening this group *appears* to be (for a review of these theories, see Sears and Funk 1991).

The hypotheses presented above should be viewed in the context of studies of public opinion on immigration in other parts of the world. In a number of countries, particularly in North America and Europe, researchers have used quantitative methods to better understand attitudes towards immigrants in the hope of better understanding xenophobia. Berg (2015) has produced an excellent review of this academic work. Most studies posit hypotheses that suggest a linear relationship between different factors (such as educational attainment) and attitudes. Existing quantitative research on public attitudes towards immigration has tended not to consider asymmetrical processes in opinion formation. But what do I mean by this? A linear attitudinal relationship can be said to consist of the following: if an increase in factor A will increase support for B, then a decrease in factor A will decrease support for B. In their research into the nature of ordinal variables, however, Cacioppo, Gardner and Berntson (1997) argued that the evaluative substrates of social processes (such as intergroup discrimination) and prejudice appear to occupy a bivariate space (rather than a bipolar continuum) conceptualisation.[3]

In setting out these two hypotheses, I am concerned about making an assumption about the bipolarity of attitudes towards immigrants. I believe that it would be a mistake to assume that the factors associated with welcoming *some* immigrants are the same as the factors associated with welcoming *no* immigrants. Studies utilising linear regression implicitly assume that the difference between opposition to proposition (e.g. welcoming immigrants) and a moderate view is identical to the difference between support for a proposition and the moderate view. But are responses to the question on welcoming international immigrants from earlier work uniform and single-peaked for every respondent? It is not clear that this is the case and as such I should not assume that it is so. This casts doubt on the assumption that attitudes towards welcoming only some immigrants have the same causal patterns as welcoming all or no immigrants.

Data

Data from the 2014 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) was used for the study. SASAS has been designed to yield a nationally representative sample of adults living in private households where adults are defined as individuals aged 16 years and older. The reason given for this definition is that individuals in South Africa can

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3 Consider the following example. In a study of immigration attitudes, Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) distinguish between subtle and blatant prejudice. For these authors, negative and positive attitudes towards immigration are not simply opposite ends of a continuum. If the attitudes captured in their study were measured on a bipolar scale, "subtle" prejudice would fall along the midpoint of the scale even though the motivational forces that drive "subtle" prejudice may differ from those that drive blatant prejudice.

obtain an Identity Document at the age of 16. The sampling frame used was based on Statistics South Africa's 2011 Population Census which was used to construct a set of small area layers (SALs). In the first sampling stage, 500 SALs were drawn with probability proportional to size, using the estimated number of dwelling units in an SAL as a measure of size.[4] The 2014 SASAS sample size was 3 124. Consistent with international best practices, carefully designed weights were then applied to the SASAS data. This application allows a sample of just a few thousand to be representative of a national population (for an overview of how weights are used in public opinion datasets, see Hahs-Vaughn 2005). All data displayed in the article was weighted unless otherwise specified.

Before the SASAS respondents were asked any questions about international immigration, fieldworkers informed them that they were going to be asked "some questions about *people from other countries* coming to live in South Africa". This is a form of priming which refers to a procedure in a survey that improves the ease with which a specific concept is recalled by the respondent (Tesler 2015). The aim of this statement was to avoid confusion over the word "immigrants" which could be applied to all groups the respondents believed are alien or unusual. However, it is important to note the limitations of this statement, which did not attempt to delineate different types of immigrants in South Africa. It could be argued that the texture of the responses would change if the statement had directed respondents to think about a specific type of immigrant (e.g. asylum-seekers or refugees).[5]

As the focus of my analysis, I used the "I generally welcome" question that I employed in an earlier study (i.e. Gordon 2016b). When asked whether they would welcome all, some, or no immigrants, about one quarter (26%) of the South African adult population sample surveyed said that they would welcome all immigrants, and around two fifths (41%) would welcome some immigrants. The remainder (33%) said that they would welcome none. This result was compatible with what was observed in earlier research covering the 2003–2012 period and suggests the durability of public attitudes towards international immigrants. In this article, I assume that respondents are *not* viewing the

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4   SALs are small geographic areas that were drawn by the SASAS statistical team, typically consisting of a few dozen households. The aim is to draw a total number of areas that would be representative of the national population. Using a random probability mechanism, fieldworkers selected seven different dwelling units (or visiting points) in each SAL. Dwelling units are defined as separate (non-vacant) residential dwellings. Fieldworkers then randomly selected one person aged 16 years and older from each dwelling unit to be interviewed.

5   It is worth asking the following question, if refugees or asylum-seekers were to feature explicitly in the phrasing of the survey question, would respondents have answered more positively? It is not clear that changing the question to focus on asylum-seekers or refugees would elicit a more positive response from the general public. A previous study, which mapped the attitudes of the South African population towards granting refugees protection using the fifth round of Afrobarometer Survey (Gordon 2016a), found that less than two fifths (38%) of the adult population in South Africa thought that individuals who are persecuted for political reasons in their own countries should be given protection.

options provided by this close-ended question as categories on a continuum. Rather, I assume that respondents treated these options as distinct and separate categories. To put it another way, I assume that the factors that influence respondents' answers to this question are asymmetrical. This assumption informs my analysis in the next section.

Multinomial (Polytomous) Logistic Regression

In order to understand what characteristics are associated with tolerance for international immigrants in South Africa, a multivariate regression was conducted. This regression analysis allowed the associations between tolerance for international immigrants and individual characteristics and attitudes to be predicted. Multinomial logistic regression was considered appropriate because the goal was to investigate which characteristics were associated with a selected nominal outcome variable. A multinomial regression was chosen as it is a less restrictive model (compared to, say, ordered logistical regression) and allows the complexities of attitudes towards welcoming immigrants to be better identified. This specification allows for the possibility that certain variables separately affect attitudes in each direction to be tested. A number of independent variables had to be created for the multivariate analysis, as is sketched out below.

Building Models

In order to account for service delivery attitudes, I created the Service Delivery Satisfaction Index. The respondents were asked seven questions about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way that the government is handling service delivery matters in their neighbourhood (see Table 1). It is worth noting that many of those interviewed were dissatisfied with government performance on important services (such as electricity, health care and waste management). The responses from the service delivery items were combined to produce a single index coded on a 0 to 10 scale (i.e. the Service Delivery Satisfaction Index). The higher the score on the index, the more satisfied the respondent was with basic service delivery in his/her neighbourhood. Statistical tests confirmed the validity and reliability of the index

Table 1:   Item-test correlation, average inter-item covariance and Cronbach's alpha for the Service Delivery Satisfaction Index

	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Average inter-item covariance	Cronbach's alpha
Service Delivery Dissatisfaction Index				
Supply of water and sanitation	0.726	0.572	0.450	0.719

Providing electricity	0.660	0.492	0.490	0.737
Removal of refuse	0.684	0.530	0.481	0.729
Affordable housing	0.694	0.548	0.478	0.725
Access to health care	0.650	0.487	0.498	0.738
Cutting crime	0.519	0.340	0.564	0.767
Creating jobs	0.578	0.432	0.547	0.750
Test Scale			0.501	0.767

Note: *The respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the way that the government is handling the following matters in their neighbourhood. The responses ranged from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied".*

In the 2014 SASAS, the respondents were asked seven questions on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that immigrants were a danger to South African communities (see Table 2). More than three quarters of the adult population agreed that immigrants increase crime rates; take jobs away from people who were born in the country; and spread disease. Despite government efforts to promote tolerance, most of the adult population did not see the value of immigration in 2014. Few agreed that immigrants are generally good for South Africa's economy or that they make the country more open to new ideas and cultures. Responses from these items about the possible outcomes of immigration were combined to produce the Immigration Consequence Index, coded on a 0 to 10 scale. Where necessary, response options on these questions were reversed so that larger scores signified a belief that immigration would damage the country. Standard statistical tests were conducted to confirm the validity and reliability of the Immigration Consequence Index.

Table 2:   Item-test correlation, average inter-item covariance and Cronbach's alpha for the Immigration Consequence Index

	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Average inter-item covariance	Cronbach's alpha
Immigration Consequence Index				
Immigrants increase crime rates[a]	0.706	0.559	0.409	0.718
Immigrants are generally good for South Africa's economy	0.639	0.478	0.440	0.735
Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in South Africa[a]	0.725	0.579	0.397	0.713

Immigrants make South Africa more open to new ideas and cultures	0.570	0.398	0.470	0.751
Immigrants bring disease to South Africa[a]	0.671	0.509	0.421	0.729
Immigrants bring skills that are needed in South Africa	0.632	0.468	0.442	0.737
Immigrants use up our country's resources[a]	0.546	0.375	0.481	0.755
Test scale			0.437	0.764

Note: *The respondents were asked if they disagreed or agreed with the statement. The responses ranged from 1 = "strongly agree" to 5 = "strongly disagree". The responses on those items marked [a] were reversed.*

In public opinion studies of anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa, economic status is an important unit of analysis. I used several measures that can be used as proxies for economic status (e.g. educational attainment or labour market status). Dummy variables were used to capture educational attainment level (less than completed secondary, completed secondary and tertiary) and labour market involvement (employed full-time, employed part-time, unemployed, discouraged work-seeker and labour market inactive). A number of studies employ income to measure economic status but income does not capture access to basic services or household assets and, as such, is a flawed indicator of economic status. The current study used access to services and asset ownership to measure social class. In order to provide an accurate representation of asset accumulation among adult South Africans, I used the Living Standards Measure (LSM) Index.[6]

Standardised structural demographic controls for gender, population group, marital status and age were used. Census classifications of the respondents' area of residence were used to construct province dummies. Popular media representations of xenophobia often present the problem as an urban phenomenon. As a result, a special attempt was made to provide specific urbanisation dummies (urban formal, urban informal, rural areas under traditional authority and commercial farms) to control for geographic location. Finally, I constructed a categorical variable to gauge political affiliation using a question on which political party the respondent feels most close to. This question is thought to be a more accurate indicator of political party preference than those questions that inquire about voting intention.

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6   Designed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation, the LSM Index requires respondents to answer more than 30 questions about their asset ownership and access to services, and divides the population into 10 groups (1 = lowest to 10 = highest).

Results

Two multinomial logit models were produced for the study – both models used the "I generally welcome" variable as the dependent. The first model includes the Service Delivery Satisfaction Index as well as all the socio-demographic and economic variables described in the previous subsection as independent variables (#H1). In the second model, the Immigration Consequence Index is introduced as an additional independent variable (#H2). In each of these models, log odds of the outcomes are modelled as a linear combination of the predictor variables. The outputs from these models are presented in Table 3 – each model is presented in two parts, labelled with the categories of the dependent variable. Table 3 shows the probability of choosing one outcome category over that of choosing the baseline category. The likelihood ratio chi-square of each model suggests that all models in Table 3 fit significantly better than an empty model.

Table 3: Multinomial (polytomous) logistic estimates predicting tolerance for international immigrants in South Africa

	Model I						Model II					
	All			Some			All			Some		
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.
Female (ref. male)	-0.154	0.159		-0.147	0.145		-0.163	0.173		-0.166	0.150	
Age	-0.013	0.006	*	-0.010	0.006		-0.010	0.007		-0.009	0.007	
Marital (ref. not married)	0.133	0.161		0.441	0.158	**	0.100	0.180		0.421	0.162	**
Racial Group (ref. Black African)												
Coloured	-0.069	0.281		0.001	0.247		0.137	0.285		0.095	0.253	
Indian	0.123	0.387		-0.272	0.343		0.388	0.441		-0.103	0.387	
White	-0.257	0.339		-0.541	0.288		0.194	0.378		-0.293	0.316	
Educational attainment (ref. tertiary)												
Completed secondary	-0.694	0.324	*	-0.794	0.272	**	-0.623	0.360		-0.776	0.284	***
Less than completed secondary	-0.817	0.344	*	-1.062	0.292	***	-0.798	0.383	**	-1.090	0.304	**
Living Standard Measurement	0.068	0.059		0.056	0.054		0.047	0.066		0.047	0.059	
Labour market status (ref. employed full-time)												
Employed part time	-0.128	0.292		0.049	0.266		0.057	0.299		0.103	0.264	

Discouraged work seeker	0.321	0.326		0.410	0.321		0.363	0.390		0.461	0.348	
Unemployed	-0.033	0.210		0.225	0.202		0.130	0.231		0.295	0.200	
Labour market inactive	0.592	0.233	*	0.162	0.229		0.705	0.259	**	0.227	0.231	
Geographic type (ref. formal urban)												
Urban informal	0.304	0.320		-0.162	0.315		0.432	0.356		-0.074	0.337	
Rural, traditional authority areas	0.178	0.226		-0.137	0.206		0.034	0.249		-0.218	0.220	
Commercial farms	0.730	0.322	*	0.263	0.356		0.708	0.373		0.278	0.389	
Service Delivery Dissatisfaction Index	0.038	0.039		0.028	0.035		-0.039	0.044		-0.018	0.036	
Immigration Consequence Index							-0.708	0.056	***	-0.389	0.048	***
Number of obs.	2 795						2 794					
Pseudo R2	0.060						0.135					

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001*

Notes:

Data is weighted to be nationally representative of adult South Africans.

The base outcome is "None".

Regression models control for province and political affiliation.

I could not find any evidence for the first hypothesis in the first mode – the Service Delivery Satisfaction Index was not significantly associated with attitudes towards international immigrants in Model I. However, I was able to provide evidence for the second hypothesis in Model II. In that model, a one-unit increase in the Immigration Consequence Index will result in a 0.708 (SE=0.056) descrease in the relative log odds of selecting "wecome all" and a 0.389 decrease in the relative log odds of selecting "welcome some". To put it differently, an individual belief that immigration will bring new skills, economic growth and new ideas (rather than crime and unemployment) is correlated with tolerance for international immigrants. Comparing the coefficients of the independent variables in Model II, it is clear that this index had the most explanatory power of all the independent variables in the model. This finding showed that attitudes towards the object (i.e. immigrants) are informed more by the subjective beliefs about the object rather than the individual's objective characteristics (i.e. gender, age and population group).

As a robustness check, I tested whether the study findings held if I controlled for individual contact with international immigrants. Here, I distinguished between friendship and

acquaintanceship contact[7] as it is generally accepted that certain conditions should be fulfilled if contact is going to have a positive effect on intergroup attitudes (see Pettigrew and Tropp 2005 for a discussion of this debate). I found that the findings remained true even after taking individual contact with immigrants into account. As regards the effects of contact on attitudes, I found that intimate (friendship) contact with a large number of international immigrants was associated with tolerance. Acquaintance (non-intimate) contact had little or no influence on anti-immigrant sentiment. This finding is consistent with what has been found in other studies in South Africa (e.g. Gordon and Maharaj 2015).

It would be instructive to look at how the economic independent variables used here affect the dependent. Economic status (measured using the LSM variable) was not a significant determinant in any of the models in Table 3. Labour market status was also not a robust determinant of the dependent although I did note that being outside the labour market increased the log odds of welcoming "all immigrants" (versus "no immigrants"). Interestingly, I found that educational attainment made individuals significantly more likely to welcome immigrants. Remarkably, the observed relationship between educational attainment and pro-immigrant sentiment did not work in a symmetrical manner. Comparing the coefficients of educational attainment's effect on choosing one outcome category over choosing the baseline, it was clear that education makes an individual more likely to select "welcome some" rather than "welcome all". Even when controlling for attitudes towards immigration and immigrants (see Model II), these results held.

Discussion

The study findings revealed that anti-immigrant sentiment cuts across the South African economic class spectrum, which is unsurprising. Evidence from other public opinion surveys in the country has also shown that anti-immigrant sentiment cuts across economic class categories (see, e.g., Crush et al. 2008; Crush, Ramachandran, and Pendleton 2013; Mattes et al. 1999). Scholars, like Facchini, Mayda and Mendola (2013), have also tested the relationship between objective economic status and anti-immigrant sentiments using quantitative public opinion data and have failed to find an association (see, also, Gordon 2016a; 2017; Gordon and Maharaj 2015). Obviously there are factors other than socio-economic status that play a role in predicting attitudes towards international immigrants in South Africa. One factor that these previous studies

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7   To measure contact between South African citizens and foreigners, I constructed a categorical variable using two SASAS questions: (i) How many acquaintances do you know who have come to live in South Africa from another country? and (ii) Of the people you know who have come to live in South Africa from another country, how many would you consider to be friends? The categorical variable was ordinal and had four categories: (i) no contact; (ii) foreign acquaintances but no foreign friends; (iii) a few foreign friends; and (iv) some or many foreign friends.

have not addressed is service delivery evaluations. The current study disproved the first hypothesis that public evaluations of service delivery were a statistically significant predictor of whether an individual would welcome immigrants. This could, perhaps, indicate that the issue of service delivery and xenophobia must be considered separately.

I was able to validate the second hypothesis put forward in the article. One of the most powerful predictors of attitudes in my analysis was the Immigration Consequence Index. In other words, false information about international immigration leads individuals to make judgements about whether to accept immigrants. In this way, attitudes towards immigrants in South Africa are similar to what has been observed in the Global North (Berg 2015). It could be argued that South African adults' decisions to welcome immigrants are rational in so far as rationality is based on an internal logic. Based on this finding, I would posit that individual attitudes towards international immigrants would be decidedly altered if the public were more well-informed about immigration. It is clear that there needs to be a concerted effort to fight the stereotypes of the harmful impact of international immigration in local South African communities. Consequently, it is important to understand how negative stereotypes about immigrants are disseminated in these communities.[8]

The news media can play an important role in influencing the attitudes of the general public. A recent study by De Poli, Jakobsson and Schüller (2017), for instance, showed how different types of media coverage can shape attitudes towards international migrants. The diffusion of stereotypes through the media (e.g. in newspapers as well as through other sources) in South Africa, therefore, deserves further and continued examination. Past analyses of print media coverage of immigration in Southern African countries has noted that many publications regularly refer to immigrants as "job-stealers", "carriers of disease", or other pejorative terms (for a review of past analyses, see Smith 2011). Thus, further evidence-based research is required on how the media impacts attitudes on international immigrants in South Africa. Such research must also examine news media production and the context within which such production occurs in order to better the recurrence of xenophobic messaging in the post-apartheid media. Moreover, an inclusive collaborative programme of research work is needed to continuously monitor the media for xenophobic messaging.

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8   A number of studies have partially attributed the dissemination of anti-immigrant stereotypes in Africa to scapegoating by the police and government officials. Whitaker and Giersch (2015), for instance, argue that the role of political competition is driving attitudes towards immigration in African contexts. They contend that as political competition grows, political and civil leaders employ nativist discourses to mobilise public support and scapegoat immigrants for a wide range of problems (see, also, Klotz 2013; Neocosmos 2010). This suggests the importance of studying the effect of political competition on attitudes towards international immigrants in South Africa.

The study findings seem to call into question the bipolarity of attitudinal measures used in public opinion studies of anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa (and perhaps elsewhere). I found that, for example, educational attainment did not have a linear effect on whether an individual would welcome immigrants. Other quantitative public opinion studies attitudes (e.g. Crush, Ramachandran and Pendleton 2013; Gordon 2017; Gordon and Maharaj 2015) on immigration attitudes in South Africa have also struggled to find a linear correlation between education and immigration (see, also, Whitaker and Giersch 2015 who looked at a subset of African countries). North American and European studies have tended to find that educational attainment is dependably correlated with progressive attitudes towards immigrants (Berg 2015). The relationship between educational attainment and anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa, therefore, seems to be more complex than the international literature would suggest. Further research is needed to understand the complex relationship between education and anti-immigrant sentiment in the country.

It is important to consider the limitations of the findings presented here. The study used data on public attitudes towards immigrants in general rather than specific types of immigrants. Consider, for instance, how the results might be different if SASAS respondents had been asked whether they welcomed immigrants from Nigeria? In a previous study, I looked at which foreign group South African citizens would least want to come and live in the country (Gordon 2016b).[9] The most mentioned foreign group was Nigerians with a significant portion of the general public selecting this group. The groups that were selected the least were predominately from the Northern Hemisphere (e.g. Western Europeans, Japanese and North Americans). These results clearly revealed the hierarchy of preference between immigrant groups in South Africa. Although the hierarchy itself is unique, the fact that individuals would have hierarchies of concern is not exclusive to South Africa and is noted in the literature on xenophobia in the Global North (Berg 2015). Consequently, the results presented here hide a significant degree of diversity in how people might feel about immigrants. A final limitation concerns the sample size used for the study. Although the study used specially designed weights to achieve national representative results, a larger sample size may produce more robust and nuanced findings on public attitudes towards international migrants in South Africa. The limitations mentioned here should be borne in mind when considering the study results.

The findings revealed here are interesting and thought-provoking, but there certainly is a need for more finely grained attitudinal research, looking at more nuanced opinions on international immigration in South Africa. Writing about Western Europe, Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) argue that some countries in the region have developed a norm against blatant prejudice. A number of people in their study complied with the norm but

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9   The respondents were not prompted by fieldworkers with predetermined options and the question did
     not refer to a specific type of group, that is, the respondents could choose any group.

expressed their negative intergroup opinions only in superficially non-prejudiced ways that managed to "slip under the radar" of the norm. Existing research in South Africa has primarily focused on extreme bigotry and has often ignored what Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) call "subtles", that is, those who adopt intermediate positions between complete rejection and acceptance of immigrants. There is a need to examine more "subtle" forms of prejudice in South Africa using quantitative public opinion research.

The study results can be used to better understand incidents of discrimination against international migrants in South Africa. As the literature on attitudes makes clear, there is a relationship between attitudes and behaviour although there are important conditionalities attached to this relationship (for a review of the literature, see Fishbein and Ajzen 2011). Attitudes are also related to behaviour that does not directly involve the attitude object –negative attitudes towards a group may impact on the behaviour that occurs within groups of individuals who share the prejudice. Although there is no clear linear relationship between anti-immigrant attitudes and violence towards immigrants, I would argue that it is still vital that attitudes towards immigrants be studied. The quantitative analysis of attitudes towards immigrants is valuable to understanding (and consequently preventing) xenophobia in South Africa.

Conclusion

In order to better understand, and therefore confront, prejudice against international immigrants in a country like South Africa, it is necessary to distinguish between different types of public tolerance for international immigration. Although blatant expressions of xenophobia – particularly if they involve violence such as occurred during the April 2015 riots – may be striking in their brutality, this should not lead people to think that xenophobia should be measured only in terms of violence. There should be a focus on attitude formation and there is a small but growing academic literature on how anti-immigrant attitudes form in South Africa. The study results challenge the assumed symmetrical formation of immigration opinions in many existing studies in the extant literature. My work shows that prejudice against immigrants in South Africa appears not to follow a bipolar conceptualisation. Future studies of xenophobia in South Africa must take this finding into account when considering research on public attitudes towards international immigrants.

The South African government has sponsored initiatives in recent years to build social cohesion and create spaces for positive societal integration of international migrants living in the country. Given these efforts, the study results are disquieting as they call into question the success of current efforts to combat intolerance and xenophobia in South African society. These concerns are echoed by the Human Rights Watch (2018) who describe the government's lacklustre response to xenophobia and lament the fact that the authorities appear reluctant to acknowledge the reality of the problem in their latest report. Leaders in government and civil society should be applauded for their

condemnation of attacks against international immigrants. However, the study results suggest that the underlying problem of widespread anti-immigrant attitudes is not being addressed with the necessary effort required.

Acknowledgement

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