

Abstract for SOEP User Conference, June 2016:

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Title:

Context Effects on Attitudes Towards Immigration - Evidence from German Panel Data

Abstract:

This contribution deals with the question whether long term exposure to immigrants in the immediate residential environment affects German natives' concerns towards immigration using German Socio Economic Panel data from 2000 to 2013. It posits that changes in concerns about immigration through the social environment occur slowly and thus takes a longitudinal perspective. Based on intergroup contact theory, I hypothesize that Germans get less worried about immigration through ongoing exposure to immigrants in their residential environment.

It extends previous research in two ways. First, by measuring proximity to immigrants in small contextual units (building blocks), I am able to analyze the effects of direct social experiences in residential contexts. Second, this contribution will focus on long-term effects of residential exposure to immigrants whereas the majority of studies in the context of the research question is cross-sectional.

I make use of a relatively new type of statistical models (Marginal Structural Models, Robins et al., 2000), which is useful for the research question at hand. Preliminary effect estimates indicate a decline in concerns about immigration of about 10 percentage points after 10 years of residential exposure to immigrants. They showed to be similar over several model specifications and an alternative set of statistical models (fixed effects models). I will discuss advantages of Marginal Structural Models for the research question at hand, their underlying assumptions and whether these assumptions are likely to hold. Finally, problems with generalizing the results, interpreting the estimated parameters as causal, as well as data limitations are discussed.

Literature:

*Robins, James M., Miguel Angel Hernán, and Babette Brumback. "Marginal structural models and causal inference in epidemiology." *Epidemiology* (2000): 550-560.*