

Who deserves to be British? An experimental design

Context and research questions

Citizenship has been considered the basis of not only political and legal, but also social rights (Marshall 1950). Marshall regarded citizenship as the fundamental basis on which welfare rights could be allocated and claimed. At the same time, a strong common identity at the national level is regarded as necessary to safeguard commitment, loyalty and willingness to contribute to the greater good of society, for example to pay taxes to the benefit of strangers (Habermas, 1998; Miller, 2000; Mouritsen, 2008; Sindic, 2011). Citizenship is typically gained at birth, but can also be acquired, giving the holders the access to the same rights, including access to the welfare state, as those born into the country.

Since the second half of the 20th century many Western societies have experienced high immigration flows and have later found themselves with established communities of non-autochthone ancestry. These developments have resulted in various debates around the policies for inclusion of these new members of society, including their access to citizenship. In the last two decades, for instance, many Western societies have adapted their citizenship policies to introduce civic integration policies, whereby the knowledge of civic skills is assessed and becomes a requirement to naturalise or acquire permanent residence (Goodman and Wright 2015).

The criteria for the acquisition of citizenship are established by existing citizens via their governments. However, the extent to which existing paths to citizenship reflect popular judgements about legitimate criteria for inclusion in the polity have not been extensively studied. This is despite the fact that the rise of nationalist political movements and recent referendum votes across Europe, like Brexit in the UK, testify to the relevance citizens attribute to national belonging.

This paper aims to answer the following research question:

- What do current British citizens regard as the legitimate criteria for assigning citizenship to settled immigrants?

Existing evidence on attitudes towards immigrants comes mostly from public opinion surveys, which limit the inferences we can draw due to social desirability bias (Berinsky, 1999; Kuklinski, Cobb & Gilens, 1997). In addition, it is not clear that attitudes towards immigrants translate into preferences for citizenship acquisition. If the former relate to immigrants entering the country, the latter is about granting immigrants rights as full members of society. Finally, the conceptual difficulty of the topic does not favour direct answers. We therefore make use of a choice-based conjoint-analysis experiment to gauge respondents' preferences. Inferring from their responses to specific scenarios is more likely to reveal true preferences (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

Theory and Literature

Acquisition of citizenship in the UK takes the form of either naturalisation or registration as British. The former entails the fulfilment of a number of requirements, including five years of residency, and language and knowledge tests on British culture. The latter, on the other hand, typically has the only requirement of having close British relations, aka a British parent.

The extent to which these criteria reflect what the majority population believes are the traits that make someone fully British is unknown. The research on the beliefs of the native population about the legitimate criteria for the entitlement to citizenship is limited to two studies. A natural experiment in Switzerland where municipalities used to independently decide on the naturalisation applications of their foreign residents who sought Swiss citizenship (Hainmueller and Hangartner,

2013) found that better economic credentials, having been born in Switzerland and having resided in the country for longer increased the probability of being approved as a citizen. Surprisingly, language skills did not however influence the probability of naturalisation success. These effects are small in comparison to that of country of origin. Depending on where applicants come from they are more or less likely to be assigned citizenship. Kobayashi, Collet, Iyengar and Hahn (2015) apply a similar approach to Hainmueller et al.'s (2013) to Japan and reach the same conclusions. The authors claim, in line with other literature, the existence of a person-positivity bias. That is, individual immigrants are perceived more favourably than the groups they belong to. This suggests that personalised individual information counteracts the prejudice held based on stereotypes (Krueger & Rothbart 1988; Fiske, Lin, & Neuberg 1999).

Given the lack of research on native citizens' beliefs about naturalisation, I will also draw on the literature on attitudes towards immigrants. I would expect these more general attitudes to affect those concerning naturalisation specifically and therefore for the two to show similar patterns. The literature often uses the idea of competition, socio-economic or cultural, to explain negative attitudes towards immigrants (Hopkins, 2010). Group-threat theory holds that negative attitudes towards immigrants emerge when group-outsiders are perceived as a threat to the group's privileges as a result of scarcity of resources. The grounds for this resulting competition concern not only economic resources, such as access to jobs, but also cultural ones, such as national cultural identity. In contrast, according to contact theory, meaningful interactions between immigrants and the native group help decrease the force of stereotyping and therefore mitigate hostile attitudes (Allport, 1954). Allport (1954) highlights how optimal contextual conditions are necessary for the relationship between contact and intergroup harmony to hold. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006)'s meta-analysis of the empirical studies on the topic confirms that the relationship holds on average and is highly dependent on the initial conditions identified by Allport (1954). Although these studies assume that the direction of causality is the one described, others have found evidence of a bidirectional relationship (Binder, Zagefka, Brown, Funke, Kessler & Mummendey, 2009; Swart, Hewstone, Christ & Voci, 2011). It is plausible that the relationship is the consequence of selection, i.e. prejudiced people are less likely to seek contact with outside-group members.

Although we expect these mechanisms to underlie preferences of naturalisation criteria, it is likely that there will be considerable differences. If attitudes towards immigrants usually relate to the mere presence or lack thereof of immigrants in the country, preferences for naturalisation criteria go a step further and pose the more difficult question of who can fully join the national club.

Design and methods

The experiment will be run through the YouGov Omnibus Survey, a high quality multipurpose online panel. Each respondent will be presented with the following introduction:

"I will now show you sequences of pairs of profile vignettes of people who were not born in the UK and could submit applications to naturalise as British citizens. There is no minimum or maximum number of accepted applications. In each pair, to whom would you grant citizenship? You may choose ONE, BOTH or NEITHER."

The respondent will then be presented with five pair-wise comparisons. Each profile vignette will be characterised by 11 attributes with several possible levels each (e.g. Christian/Muslim/Jewish/No religion) derived from the literature (Ivarsflaten, 2005; McLaren, Lauren & Johnson, 2007; Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2004).

Below is an example of an individual profile vignette:

Profile vignette A: Profile A: [Ms. J.] is a [woman], who has lived in the UK for [20] years. [She] is originally from [Germany] [and is a practicing Christian]. [She] speaks [fluent] English. [She] has been educated to the equivalent of [GCSE levels] in [the UK] {and earns an income of [£ 18,000] a year as a [cleaner]}. [She] has [no] British parent or grandparent.¹

The experiment will go in the field at the beginning of October to a sample of 1,500 nationally representative adult respondents. The whole sample would provide us with 1,500 (individuals) x 5 (choice tasks) x 2 (profile vignettes) = 15,000 observations. However, at the point of analysis we will also reduce our sample to existing citizens only.

The innovative experimental design has two important features. First, it can provide estimates for which potentially salient characteristics are regarded as meriting citizenship, relative to others (Green & Srinivasan, 1978). Each individual profile vignette is designed as part of a fractional factorial experimental design that evenly matches the occurrence of each attribute with all other attributes. By controlling the attribute pairings, we can estimate individual and aggregate utility functions for each level of each attribute tested.

Second, it allows for the inclusion of explanatory variables to examine how the response varies among particular population subgroups. This will make it possible to explore how preferred criteria for assigning citizenship are associated with: a) socio-demographic (such as age and education) and socio-economic factors (such as income); b) contextual factors, such as local unemployment rates and local share of immigrants; and c) voting behaviour.

Analysis plan

This analysis method is the new leading approach to these sort of models and data, of which Heinmuller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) is the best example. The design allows us to manipulate the experiment so that we can infer which components of the manipulation caused the observed effects (Hainmueller, Hopkins & Yamamoto, 2014). Each respondent N is presented with j choice tasks and k profile vignette alternatives. Each profile vignette is characterised by S attributes and D^s is the total number of levels for each attribute. The treatment given to each respondent N as her k^{th} profile vignette in her j^{th} choice task is a vector $T_{nj,k}$, whose S^{th} component $T_{nj,ks}$ corresponds to the S^{th} attribute of the profile vignette. The vector $T_{nj,k}$ can take on any value given by the product of all possible values of the attributes. However, we can also restrict the values to the combinations of values that are plausible (Hainmueller, Hopkins & Yamamoto, 2014). For instance, we shall limit the combination of refugee status to a limited number of countries of origin.

We will estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE), the marginal effect of attribute S averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes, on the probability of granting citizenship. We are also interested in whether the effect of the attribute changes relative to other attributes, the average component interaction effect (ACIE). For instance, we are interested in whether respondents are more likely to choose female candidates, but also whether the gender effect varies conditional on other attributes, such as religion. Finally, interaction terms will allow us to estimate whether the effect of attributes varies with the respondent's characteristics. For instance, we hypothesise that the effect of country of origin on the probability of being granted citizenship will vary between Brexit and non-Brexit voters.

Contribution

A range of literature has identified the extent and correlates of anti- and pro-immigrant attitudes. Much of this literature has failed to differentiate with any sophistication between immigrants with different characteristics. Moreover, the factors that shape attitudes may differ from those that

¹ Words in brackets are levels of attributes that will be randomised for each profile vignette. The list of attributes can be found in Appendix 1.

shape access to citizenship, especially if they are premised on presumed illegality of immigrants. This analysis, will make it possible to identify which (if any) characteristics populations consider relevant in according citizenship, enhancing our understanding of what factors are considered central to national belonging, as well as how they vary with respondents' own positions. Our research study also provide evidence of whether people's attitudes are in line with current policies.

Appendix: Details of the Experiment

Table 1- profile attributes

Attribute	Categories
Candidate ID	'Mr.'/ 'Ms.'/- + random letter
Gender and age	Woman/man/boy/girl
Length of residency	Random number between 1 year and 30
Country of origin	Poland, Germany, Italy, India, Pakistan , Nigeria Ireland, Australia, Syria, Somalia
religion	and is a practicing Christian/and is a practicing Muslim/and is a practicing Jewish/-
English language proficiency	'no', 'basic', 'reasonably good', 'fluent'
Education	No formal education/ GCSE levels/ A levels/ a higher education degree
Country where educated	The UK/'outside the UK'
Income level and occupation	'100,000' and 'corporate manager'/'60,000' and 'doctor'/'39,000' and 'IT professional'/'25,000' and 'teacher'/'23,000' and 'admin worker'/'19,000' and 'farm worker'/'18,000' and 'cleaner'/and is unemployed/and is a stay at home parent/-
Refugee status	'is a refugee'/-

With at least one British parent or grandparent	'a' / 'no'
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