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Free movement, EU-citizenship, and national bureaucracy: differentiated patterns of discrimination against mobile EU citizens

Adam et al. (2020)

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Puzzle

Unlikely scenario

1. Presumed formalistic personality of bureaucrats, 'sine ira et studio' (Grohs et al. 2016, Albrow 1992, Frederickson 1990)
2. Shared EU citizenship, equal rights (Bauböck 2019, Bellamy 2019, Soysal 1994)

Yet:

- Obstacles towards EU mobility in public opinion and politics (e.g. BREXIT)
- Restricted interpretation of the rights associated with EU citizenship (Heindlmaier and Blauburger 2017, Martinsen et al. 2019, Sampson Thierry and Martinsen 2018)
- Rich evidence on bureaucratic discretion (Lipsky 1980) and discrimination:
 - Public administration (e.g., Adam et al. 2020, Christensen et al. 2012, Grohs et al. 2016, Hemker and Rink 2017, Thomann and Rapp 2018)
 - Legal and ethnographic research, e.g. in the field of migration policy (Borelli 2019, Eule et al. 2019, Kalir, Achermann, and Rosset 2019)

Research questions

1. Do bureaucrats discriminate against certain groups of EU citizens?
2. Are patterns of bureaucratic discrimination distinct or representative of patterns of discrimination within society at large?
3. Can accountability reduce discriminatory behaviour?

Theoretical background

1. **Social identity, ethnic hierarchies and welfare chauvinism**

(Allport 1954, Kleinpenning and Hagendorn 1991, Schneider and Ingram 1993, Tajfel and Turner, Hjorth et al. 2016):

- Discrimination is a result of stereotyping
- If resources are scarce, individuals tend to adhere to ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation

2. **Formalistic bureaucrat personality** (Albrow 1992, Frederickson 1990, Grohs et al. 2016, Romzek and Dubnick 1998).

- Motivation: Self-selection in the public sector, common-good orientation

3. **Debiasing bureaucrats** (Cohen and Gershgoren 2016, Dobbs and Crano 2001, Epp et al. 2017, Paolini et al. 2009).

- Accountability mechanisms: effortful information processing and self-critical awareness of one's judgment processes

Hypotheses

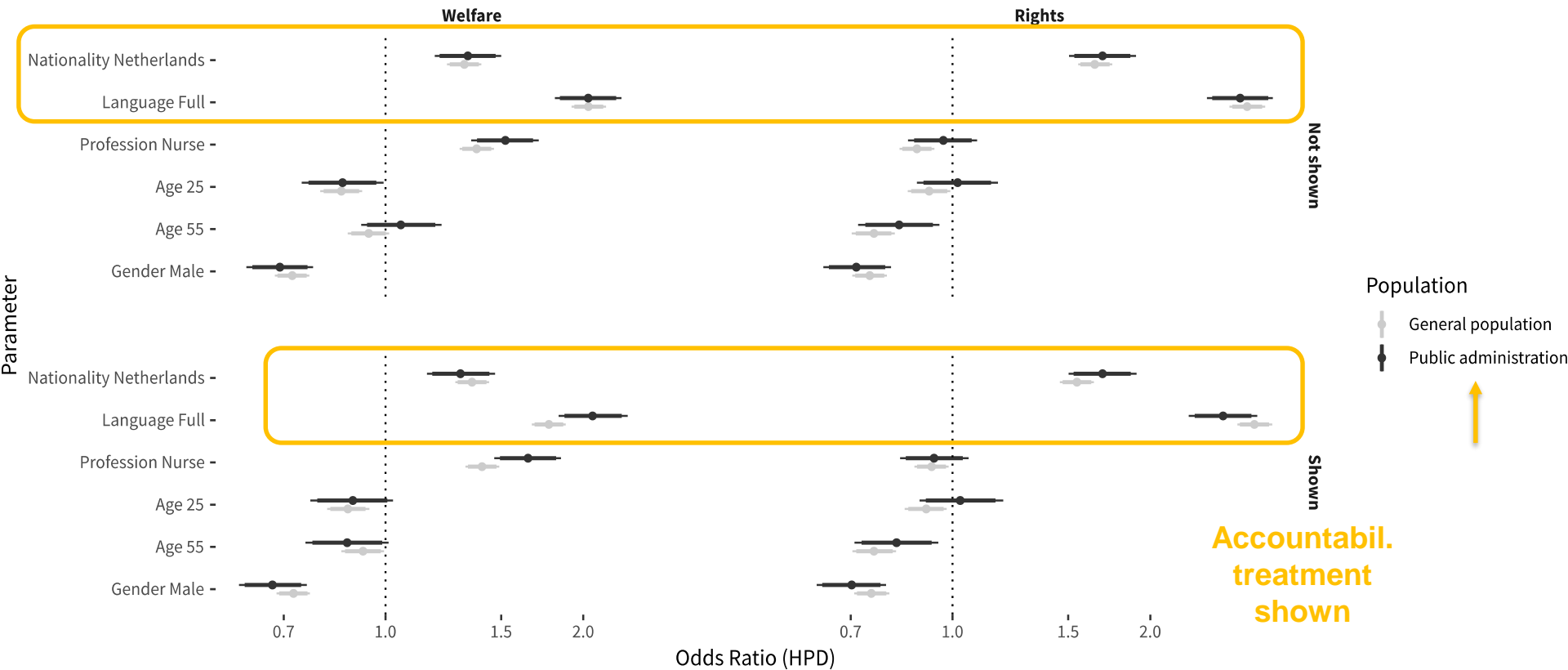
- H1: Mobile EU citizens of countries that are more similar to the in-taking country are treated more favourably than EU citizens of countries that are different from the country of destination.*
- H2: Treatment of mobile EU citizens will be more favourable, when they are more proficient in their host country's language.*
- H3: Street-level bureaucrats are less likely to discriminate against mobile EU citizens compared to the general population.*
- H4: The presence of a managerial accountability mechanism reduces discrimination.*

Data and methods

- Data collection: Conjoint experiment conducted in Germany in March 2020 (pre-Covid 19 lockdown)
 - Capture multidimensionality of discrimination
 - Advantages of experimental approaches
 - Compliant with ethical standards
- N = 2974 general population respondents, 779 public administration workers (oversampling)
- Method of analysis: Bayesian hierarchical models to estimate Average Marginal Component Effects

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Results



Reference profile.: 40 year old Romanian female with broken German and working as a doctor

Conclusion

Summing up,...

- 1) Bureaucrats discriminate against EU citizens based on nationality and language skills (preferential treatment of Dutch and fluent speakers)
- 2) Similar discriminating behavior among public administration and general public
- 3) Simple accountability mechanism is not enough to counter discrimination

→ transformation of the unique idea of free movement of persons in the EU to just another form of “immigration” which can be subject to selectivity and exclusion (Barbulescu and Favell 2020)

Open questions and follow up projects

- Refine conjoint: Explore intersections with ethnicity/race
- Targeting frontline bureaucrats only
- Stronger accountability measures?
- Covid-19: impact on discrimination?
- Patterns across country contexts? (close vs. loose ties to the EU, e.g. DE, DK vs. UK, CH)

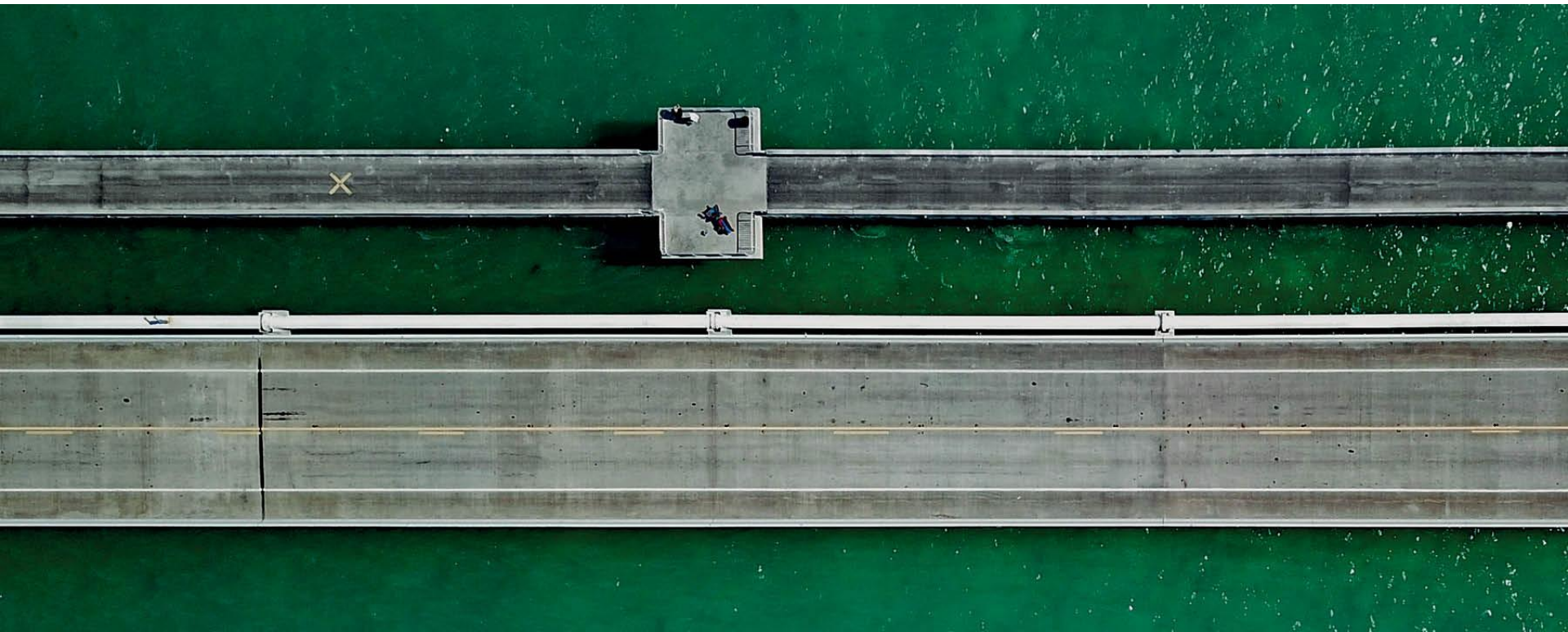
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Conjoint scenario

Social benefits example

‘Please consider a scenario in which you have a job working for the local government in your municipality. You receive two applications for a social benefit, the so-called Hartz IV. As EU-citizens, both applicants are eligible to apply for this social benefit. Due to personal time constraints, you are required to make a choice of which applicant you process first, which will lead to a delay in the payment to the other applicant.’

Voting rights example

‘Please consider a scenario in which you have a job working for the local government in your municipality. You receive two requests concerning missing vote documents for the upcoming local election. As EU-citizens, both persons are eligible to vote in this election. However, without the necessary documents, they will not be able to cast their vote. Due to personal time constraints, you are required to make a choice of which request you process first, which will lead to the other person cannot vote in the upcoming election.’

	Applicant (Request) 1	Applicant (Request) 2
Nationality	Dutch	Romanian
Gender	female	male
Language proficiency	broken German	fluent German
Profession	nurse	medical doctor
Age	25 years old	40 years old
Which of the two applications (requests) will you process first?		
<1> Applicant (Request) 1		
<2> Applicant (Request) 2		

Accountability treatment (half of respondents): «you will have to justify your decision towards your putative manager»