Psychometrically and qualitatively validating a cross-national cumulative measure of fear-based xenophobia

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Abstract   The article reports the results of a Mokken Scale Procedure (MSP) developing a hierarchical cross-national scale to measure xenophobia, and a qualitative validation of this scale. A pool of 30 xenophobic scale items were collected from several sources and edited according to established unidimensional criteria. The survey was administered to 608 undergraduate students in the USA, 193 undergraduate students in the Netherlands, and 303 undergraduate students in Norway. Fourteen scale statements measuring perceived threat or fear and meeting the criteria of the Stereotype Content Model (e.g., Fiske et al. in Trends Cogn Sci 11:77–83, 2006) were selected for further analysis. A separate item analysis and subsequently MSP analysis yielded a cumulative scale with the same five items for each of the three samples meeting criteria for homogeneity in all samples with H >.40. The result, a cross-national 5-item scale measuring fear-based xenophobia, was tested by means of the Three-Step Test-Interview (Hak et al. in Surv Res Methods 2:143–150, 2008) with 10 students in The Netherlands and 10 students in Norway. The analysis of these qualitative interviews shows that individual respondents' criteria for the ranking of the scale items strongly depend on the way immigrants are framed. Ranking according to different levels of fear turned out to be only one criterion out of several possible ones used by individual respondents.

Keywords   Xenophobia · Measurement · Mokken Scale Procedure ·
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1 Introduction

According to Putnam (2007) it is a safe guess that modern societies will become increasingly ethnically diverse because of immigration. Increased migration has often been followed by an upswing in xenophobia, defined as attitudinal, affective, and behavioural prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreign (Yakushko 2009). More specifically, Reynolds and Vine (1987) stated that xenophobia is a "psychological state of hostility or fear towards outsiders" (p. 28), "an intense dislike or fear" (Crowther 1995, p. 1385) or *distrust* (American Heritage Dictionary of Cultural Literacy 2005). However, xenophobia has also been seen to entail *contempt* or *loathing* of strangers (e.g. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2006). All definitions seem to include fear-like emotions, implying a feeling of *vulnerability* - that foreigners can harm you and is not to be trusted. Contempt and dislike on the other hand imply some kind of *dominance,* looking down upon strangers. Thus the term "xenophobia" refers to quite different sentiments that in the literature reflects a rather vague or fuzzy concept (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur 2003).

Hence the measurement of xenophobia has been inconsistent. Although numerous studies have examined attitudes toward immigrants and xenophobic attitudes through a wide range of approaches none have included a psychometrically developed instrument (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur 2003). The present study provides the description of the development of and cross-cultural validation of a new instrument.

In order to clarify the meaning of xenophobia the Stereotype Content Model by Fiske et al. (2002) is useful. Their research shows that people rate members of socio-cultural out-groups along two primary dimensions: "warmth," friendliness, and trustworthiness of the out-group in dealings with the in-group; and "competence", which refers to whether the out-group has power to implement their intentions toward the in-group (Fiske et al. 2006). Out-group members that are perceived as unfriendly, and able to harm in-group members produce distrust, insecurity, suspicion or fear among members of the in-group. On the other hand, out-group members may be perceived as uncooperative, nonconforming yet powerless which in turn may cause feelings of contempt, disgust and aversion among the in-group members (Cuddy et al. 2007).

It is noteworthy that a combination of the two dimensions of social cognition coincides with two emotional aspects found in definitions of xenophobia (i.e., fear, implying vulnerability and contempt, implying superiority). In the light of a multi-dimensional conception of xenophobia (e.g. Yakushko 2009) both emotional domains should ideally be reflected in a "broad-band" measure (see John and Benet-Martinez 2000, pp. 346–347).

Despite these suggestions by immigration scholars, current focus on xenophobia tends to exclude blatant hatred and contempt of out-groups such as reactions based on racist beliefs in congenital differences and the superiority of the in-group (e.g., Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur 2003; Halperin et al. 2007). Instead, the concept of xenophobia has been distinguished from other prejudices toward the immigrants, such as racism, and reframed to denote fear which is based on the perception of threat from foreigners (Stephan and Stephan 2000).

Moreover, a recent analysis by Moïsi (2009) concluded that when confronted with immigration, both the United States and Europe are dominated by a fear of the "other" as well as a fear of losing national identity and purpose. However, although the primacy of the fear-aspect of xenophobia has been highlighted, no measurement tool exists that focuses on assessing such reactions among the in-group individuals with "fidelity" to its concept (see John and Benet-Martinez 2000, pp. 346–347).

The aim of the present study is to develop such an instrument and to test both the psychometric validity and the content validity. Moreover, because xenophobia is an international

phenomenon this study aims at developing a cross-national instrument measuring xenophobia by applying the Mokken Scale Procedure (MSP) (Dunn-Rankin et al. 2004; Sijtsma and Molenaar 2002) with scale items from questionnaires distributed in the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States. The measure of xenophobia discussed below focuses on a single primary aspect of xenophobia, namely the fear that 'the other' (i.e., the immigrants) can cause personal and societal harm. The second part if this study aims at investigating the validity of this instrument by qualitatively interviewing a small sample from the same population by means of the Three-Step Test-Interview (TSTI) developed by Hak et al. (2008).

2 Method

2.1 Sample and procedure

Data for developing a cumulative measure, the first step, were collected in three countries with net immigration rates: Norway, the Netherlands, and the USA. According to Moïsi (2009) these are among the countries that risk rising xenophobia based on perception of threat from immigrants. Participants for this study were students recruited from universities in each of the three countries. Approval to conduct research involving human subjects was sought and granted.

The U.S. sample consisted of 608 undergraduate students (M age 18.8 years, SD = 1.34) enrolled at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The sample contained nearly an equal number of women (47%) and men. 19% of students indicated that they had a family member who was a first generation immigrant.

The Dutch sample included 193 undergraduate students in business administration, (M age = 22.9, SD = 7.21) enrolled at the VU University of Amsterdam. Again the sample yielded nearly equal numbers of women (51%) and men. 20% of students indicated that they had a family member who was a first generation immigrant.

The Norwegian sample consisted of 303 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology at four Norwegian universities (University of Oslo, University of Bergen, University of Tromsø, and Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim). In this sample there were unequal numbers of women (27%) and men, (M age = 25.2, SD = 9.4), and of the participants 17% indicated that they had a family member who was an immigrant. These students took part in an online survey.

2.2 Measures

An initial 30-item pool, developed by three researchers whose scholarship focused on the phenomenon of xenophobia, was included in each survey. The items were reviewed by six immigrant scholars as well as by eight advanced doctoral students in psychology for content validity and clarity. The initial pool of items contained questions regarding both positive and negative attitudes toward recent immigrants.

All of the items were listed in the same random order in each survey and were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree). Twelve items were keyed in the positive direction and eighteen were negatively keyed. Positively phrased items were subsequently reversed scored, and the overall attitude assessed by summing the item scores. Higher scores indicated a higher level of xenophobia.

Table 1 A summated rating scale with Likert-type items measuring fear–based xenophobia

1. Immigration in this country is out of control

2. Immigrants cause increase in crimes

3. Immigrants take jobs from people who are here already

4. Interacting with immigrants makes me uneasy

5. I worry that immigrants may spread unusual diseases

6. I am afraid that in case of war or political tension immigrants will be loyal to their country of origin

7. With increased immigration I fear that our way of life will change for the worse

8. I doubt that immigrants will put the interest of this country first

9. I am afraid that our own culture will be lost with increase in immigration

Answer format: (1) Disagree strongly; (2) Disagree somewhat, (3) Disagree slightly; (4) Agree slightly; (5) Agree somewhat; (6) Agree strongly
Alpha scores: US =.77; NO =.87; NL =.86
Scale score ranging form 9 (not xenophobic at all) to 54 (extremely xenophobic)

2.3 Development of the 9-item xenophobia scale

The present study is part of a larger project that eventually will seek to develop a multidimensional conception of xenophobia. Thus, the initial 30-item pool items assessed not only the fear aspect of xenophobia but also included items measuring hate and contempt. However, in line with the need for a more precise assessment the present study focussed exclusively on fear related emotional reactions to foreigners. Therefore, only those items that according to the researchers measured the concept of fear in a broad sense, including insecurity, threat, doubt, and concern, were selected for the analysis.

By way of item analysis of this list of 14 items, maximizing the Cronbach's Alpha score, an optimally reliable scale was derived, yielding the following 9-item scale (see Table 1).

The advantage of a Likert-type scale like that presented in Table 1 is that we can compare individuals and groups in terms of a more or less xenophobic attitude using different items measuring the same concept. However, with the exception of the lowest and the highest score (9 and 54 respectively, we do not know whether the individuals or groups with the same score agree or disagree on the same items. Thus, a better understanding of people's attitude toward xenophobia requires a cumulative scale in which items are ordered. Cumulative scales have a number of advantages over other measurement models by providing an "order of difficulty" of items (see Van Schuur 2003 for review). In the next section the MSP and the construction of a cumulative Fear-Based Measure of Xenophobia with cross-national validity will be described based on the 9-item summated rating scale presented in Table 1.

2.4 The Mokken scaling procedure

The MSP is a method of constructing cumulative attitude scales from Likert-type summated rating scales, and is essentially a probabilistic version of Guttman scale analysis (Dunn-Rankin et al. 2004; Sijtsma and Molenaar 2002). The aim of the MSP is to order subjects along a certain latent trait T. The probability P to give a positive answer on an item i is dependent on the amount of T a subject S possesses.

The aim in using the MSP in constructing a measure of fear-based xenophobia was to investigate whether the ordering of subjects along the trait xenophobia forms the same pattern in student samples from three different countries.

3 Results

3.1 Statistical analyses

The MSP was completed separately for the three samples. The dichotomous procedure was employed because Hak et al. (2006) showed that respondents find it difficult to differentiate between the response categories "strongly agree", "agree" and "slightly agree", and also between "strongly disagree", "disagree" and "slightly disagree". The data were therefore transferred into xenophobic category versus a not-xenophobic category, by collapsing the response classes "strongly agree", "agree" and "slightly agree" versus the response classes "strongly disagree", "disagree" and "slightly disagree".

The analysis was done using the software program MSPWIN5.0 (Molenaar et al. 2000). This computer program calculates the best scale after the criteria are entered. The MSP, using the "search" option to let the computer program autonomously select the best items, yielded a 5-item scale in each sample (see Table 2).

3.2 Cross-cultural cumulative scales

The MSP yielded nearly identical 5-item scales in each sample (see Table 2).

The 5-item Mokken scales imply a hierarchical order of items, ranging from 'easy' items to 'difficult' items. The first item in the measure of fear-based xenophobia for the U.S. Sample for example ("Interacting with immigrants makes me uneasy.") is a 'difficult' one meaning that a high amount of the 'trait' (xenophobia) is needed for respondents to have a high probability to answer positive on that item. In contrast, the last item ("Immigration in this country is out of control") is a comparatively 'easy' one; people can respond positively to that item when they possess only a small amount of this 'trait'.

Table 2 Measure of fear-based xenophobia for three national samples

Item	Netherlands (valid* $n = 175$)			Norway (valid* $n = 287$)			United States (valid* $n = 573$)		
	Mean	ItemH	Z	Mean	ItemH	Z	Mean	ItemH	Z
1. Interacting with immigrants makes me uneasy	.12	.45	5.08	.06	.49	7.08	.30	.36	10.81
2. With increased immigration I fear that our way of life will change for the worse	.36	.50	10.59	.18	.63	15.52	.41	.50	17.83
3. I am afraid that our own culture will be lost with increase in immigration	.36	.49	10.42	.20	.64	15.71	.44	.47	15.76
4. Immigration in this country is out of control	.37	.43	9.00	.25	.52	12.64	.71	.43	11.12
5. I doubt that immigrants will put the interest of this country first	.56	.57	9.15	.37	.56	11.79	.54	.46	15.56
Scale coefficient H	.49			.57			.48		
Overall Scale Z-score	14.25			20.10			22.59		
Reliability (RHO)	.76			.77			.70		

* The valid n is lower than the sample size due to listwise deletion of respondents during the analysis

Because of their cumulative pattern the items in the measure of fear-based xenophobia are strongly interconnected. If, for instance, a respondent agrees with item 1 (Interaction with immigrants makes me uneasy), it is likely that he or she also agrees with the preceding ('easier') items. In other words, knowing someone's score means knowing with a high probability with which items he or she agrees. Because a Mokken scale is of a probabilistic nature respondents can act discordant with the cumulative pattern. This pattern indicates that the measure of fear-based xenophobia also includes a certain degree of 'error'. The proportion of this 'error' in relation to the cases that fit the model is one of the indicators of the degree of reliability of the model.

The new 5-item hierarchical xenophobia scale assessing fear-based reactions to immigrants and foreigners shows acceptable reliability and validity, and can be considered a useful measuring instrument with cross-national utility. The order of the items, from most 'difficult' to 'easiest' in the total sample could be interpreted as reflecting different levels of perceived threat that people experience regarding foreigners, as follows:

Item 1. Personal fear;
Item 2. Fear of cultural change;
Item 3. Fear of cultural change/ loosing identity;
Item 4. Fear of disloyalty;
Item 5. Political fear.

According to this empirical model those who experience personal threat were also very likely to experience cultural threat, threat for loosing identity, fear for disloyalty of foreigners, and fear for loosing control by the political system.

Limitations of this study are related to the sample selection (i.e., undergraduate students) as well as the challenges of creating items that accurately represent personal and cultural variations in reactions to immigrants. Although student samples can be good starting points for scale construction (Pernice et al. 2008) further validation and possible improvement of the measure of fear-based xenophobia is needed. In the next section the results are reported of a qualitative assessment of the developed Xenophobia measure to establish the contextual and meaning-based differences in responding (see Hak et al. 2006).

4 Qualitatively validating the fear-based measure of xenophobia

Data were collected by interviewing 10 Dutch bachelor or premaster class students in social sciences in Amsterdam, and 10 bachelor or premaster students from various programs (social-economic-, humanistic-natural sciences) in Oslo, Norway. The students participated on a voluntary basis, and belonged to the same populations from which the Dutch and Norwegian sample that participated in the quantitative part of the current study were drawn. Participants were told that the study is about attitudes towards immigrants and foreigners in general, and also that the interview would take about 30–45 min. As a pilot one of the graduate junior researchers of the same faculty in Amsterdam was interviewed. Since the study is carried out among students, and most of them in the social sciences it is to be expected that they are probably more aware of the role media, politics and peer pressure play in day-to-day life than others.

5 Method

The method employed in this part of the research is the Three-Step Test-Interview (TSTI) (Hak et al. 2008). Although this method is primarily designed for pretesting, in this study

Table 3 Items used in TSTI

I enjoy interacting with immigrants[a]
With increased immigration I fear that our way of life will change for the worse
It is okay for immigrants to stay close to their cultural roots[a]
Interacting with immigrants makes me uneasy
Immigration in this country is out of control
I would welcome interaction with immigrants[a]
I am afraid that our own culture will be lost with increased immigration
I trust immigrants will support my country in times of crises[a]
Immigration enriches our culture[a]
I doubt that immigrants will put the interest of this country first

Answer format: (1) Disagree strongly; (2) Disagree somewhat, (3) Disagree slightly; (4) Agree slightly; (5) Agree somewhat; (6) Agree strongly

[a] These items are not part of the fear-based cumulative measure of Xenophobia as presented in Table 2

the method is used in order to gain a further insight in how questions are interpreted, and in what way different scores on these likert-type items are to be interpreted.

The three steps in this method include:

1. Concurrent think aloud aimed at collecting observational data
   This step is strictly observational; the questionnaire is filled in while the respondent is thinking aloud. The argumentation of a certain answer to the questions, and other observational data, such as skipping questions, hesitating or correcting the chosen response category will also be part of the observational data. The interviewer makes notes to be used in the second step.
2. Focused interview aimed at remedying gaps in observational data
   This step is concerned with filling in gaps raised out of step one, such as incomplete answers, and questions about why someone stopped for a moment. This requires full concentration by the interviewer. (The interviewer computes the total score of the respondent on the 9 items.)
3. Semi-structured interview aimed at eliciting experiences and opinions.
   In this step, the respondent is asked to express and explain his/her response behaviour, reflect on his/her own position on xenophobia, give definitions that play a crucial role in answering the questionnaire.

For this interview a list with 10 items was created (see Table 3).

The respondents were asked to fill in this list. In addition to the five items belonging to the fear-based Xenophobia scale 5 other items that expressed a positive attitude towards immigrants were included. This addition was made in order to balance the statements for the respondents. Although our focus was on the 5 scale items, also the information that was given about the positive items is used in the analysis. In the instruction for the students the subject of the interview and the questions were presented in a neutral way, by using the term immigrants consistently, corresponding with the way the questions were presented in the questionnaire in the quantitative study.

The advantage of such a presentation in this qualitative part is that respondents will use their own interpretation to this phenomenon, so we can distract their opinions and attitudes towards the subject from their answers and their way of talking about immigrants. The

disadvantage of this presentation is that the subject matter lacks clarity, different respondents may use different conceptualizations of 'immigrants'.

In the introduction to the interview the respondents were told, "the purpose of the interview is to design a questionnaire concerning attitudes toward immigrants and foreigners in general. Because there is much discussion about them and about their position in our society in political debate, in media and among people nowadays we would like to know your opinion about these questions and statements."

All the interviews were recorded on tape. For the purpose of the analysis the interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using procedures of discourse analysis. In discourse analysis the objects of study are patterns of the way in which language is used. From this point of view language is not seen as just a neutral tool that is used to represent the object reality, but language is considered a social construction. It plays an important role in creating and changing social reality (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, p. 1). By analyzing and categorizing the way the respondents talk about immigrants, one gets insight in the way respondents look at this specific group of people, how they are categorized and what qualities are attributed to them.

6 Results

6.1 Framing immigrants

Since the concept of immigrants that constituted the subject matter of each item was deliberately not explained to the respondents by the interviewers, multiple definitions and interpretations of the word "immigrants" were given during the interviews. In other words: the respondents framed immigrants in different ways. A frame can be described as a coherent whole of related terms and expressions that are used to describe and categorize events, actions and situations (Tannen and Wallat 1993; Van den Berg 2003). During the interviews different respondents talked about a variety of social categories when they referred to immigrants. Moreover during one single interview a respondent even talked about different categories or subcategories of immigrants, depending on the question to be answered.

Although there is much variety in the way respondents frame the concept "immigrants", there are some images that are frequently used. Most of the Dutch and Norwegian respondents make a distinction between economic immigrants and immigrants that come to their respective countries for political reasons. It may seem remarkable that some of the Dutch respondents are more positive about economic immigrants ("they help the country by working hard") while others are more positive about political immigrants ("our country should help them, because they had to leave their own country"). Norwegian respondents also tended to evaluate immigrants positively when framed as "asylum seekers" or as persons seeking a safe haven for other humanitarian reasons (e.g. famine, natural disasters). In the Norwegian interviews economic immigrants were sometimes also evaluated negatively when sub-grouped as "fortune seekers" ("lykkejegere") and evaluated negatively because they were seen to sponge on a generous welfare system.

In general Norwegian and Dutch respondents tended to frame immigrants as coming from non-European cultures. There is a difference between the immigrant population in Norway and in the Netherlands. Because of that there are differences in the Dutch and Norwegian situation; the respondents refer to different groups of immigrants. In particular, people from Somalia were frequently mentioned by the Norwegian respondents as examples

of immigrants and how different they can be from Norwegians in terms of religion, looks, dress, and behavior:

> the burka creates a big distance from Norwegians.

> they look rejecting…when I see them – they often go together in groups – they are babbling in Arabic…keeping a distance…alien.

In the Norwegian interviews, almost without exception Somalians were mentioned in negative contexts. On the other hand immigrants were also often associated with being Pakistanis. Some respondents framed this group positively as a highly needed resource on the Norwegian labor market along with Swedes and Poles, while other respondents framed Pakistanis negatively, as people who would fiddle their income tax.

In the Dutch interviews immigrants are also associated with different ethnic non-European groups. The respondents use the term "allochtones" frequently. Turkish and Moroccan immigrants and their descendants are most frequently named, just like people from African and Middle East countries (Somalia, Iraq, Iran) who are here because of political reasons. Immigrants are also frequently associated with the Islam. Only a few interviewees said during the interview that they were thinking about all people that were not born in the Netherlands.

A frequently mentioned term by Dutch respondents is "second" or "third generation immigrants" in relation to for example Turkish people or people from the Moluccas. This is remarkable, because these are by no definition immigrants since nearly all of them and their parents are born in the Netherlands and possess a Dutch passport.

When Dutch respondents speak about immigrants and about certain categories among them, they (unconsciously) characterize them in a certain way. Immigrants (especially Turkish and Moroccan immigrants) are associated with nationalism and are seen as people who are proud of the country they or their parents came from:

> I think that they are always, eh, that we can learn from them from the honor en pride they feel for their own country and also from the strength of their community. And also that they are hospitable, that's how I experienced it. Yes, that was hospitable.

They are also seen as hospitable, and family is important in their lives. Some Dutch respondents say that we can learn from immigrants, because they are often more relaxed then we are. The respondents who take a positive stance toward immigrants often see advantages of multiculturalism. They see it as a cultural enrichment (for example in culinary diversity).

> because I think it's a good thing to have a look at different points of view, different cultural backgrounds because it gives you a richer view on the society.

From a negative point of view immigrants are associated with less good jobs, low competence, having difficulties with integration and adaptation, and some respondents associate them with criminal activities.

> A lot of immigrants are not very well educated, the rates of crime are high and a part of group doesn't speak the Dutch language. Part of them are not working, there are problems with women for example with a Muslim background that are repressed and who are not, like their husbands, stick to the Dutch law, maybe that's a bit too strong, but that is the problem over here.

Important notice is that the respondents often refer to images that are common in society. According to them the image that is spread by the media, influences their own images. At

the same time nearly all respondents admitted their lack of contacts with immigrants. Geert Wilders, the right wing Dutch politician and party leader of the Freedom Party (PVV), and his ideas about Islam are often negatively referred to in the interviews. But, without conscious notice, respondents themselves sometimes talk the same way about immigrants, often followed by what Bloor and Bloor (2007) call 'hedges', constructions of language that are used by the speaker to reduce his or her commitment to the things he or she just said. An example is a hesitation or a remark to reduce the impact of what is said, like in the following examples.

> Sometimes you perhaps need to get used to the fact you have some problems, well… not exactly problems, but that you're not familiar with the way they live their lives

> One rather often notices that … erm.. yes allochtones, often take the jobs that we don't like to take ourselves. That is sad in a way, but it is reality erm … So in that respect they are very valuable people, and of course not only because of that, but real support, no I don't really believe that our country economically or so really benefits from that...

An important finding is thus that the assumption that all respondents filled in the questionnaire with one single immigrant group in mind cannot be maintained. For that reason the answers given by the respondents in the quantitative part of this research cannot be argued to focus on a single group of people. In her research on the validity of measurements in relation to attitudes Carabain states that this can influence the validity of research (2007, p. 114), in the following way.

One respondent can keep in mind different groups of immigrants when he or she is answering the questions. That means that this respondent can change between these different groups, depending on the question he or she is answering. On the other hand: a respondent can answer a question and think differently about two social groups (both immigrant groups). He or she can be very positive about one group and very negative about the other one. That can make him or her decide to choose the moderate answer category. These two processes influence the way respondents answer the questions and influence the validity of the research. So people can have different references for one object and there's also a big variety between respondents. This has implications for the way the questions should be presented. We will come back on this later.

6.2 Responding to the items

The cumulative Xenophobia Scale took as point of departure that such a scale should cover different aspects of fear and doubt regarding foreigners. Therefore the scale was named a fear-based Xenophobia Scale. In this and the following sections we refer to the five items presented in Table 2.

One result of the interviews is, that fear or feelings of fear are less often mentioned by the respondents than expected. Some Norwegian respondents for example found it difficult to associate themselves with statements containing the words "*afraid*" and "*fear*" resulting in difficulties with answering "agree" or "agree strongly":

> It is a very extreme feeling to be afraid..a feeling you seldom experience;
> the question is if I'm afraid….ha..ha - no I'm not afraid..I moderately disagree.. the way this question is formulated

Statements containing less strong negative reactions or sentiments like "concerned" or "doubtful" did not cause comparable problems.

During the interview both Norwegian and Dutch respondents expressed their opinions instead of feelings and emotions. When they use terms like threat or fear they refer to threats of terrorism and Muslim fundamentalists.

Hence respondents have a variety of opinions about immigrants and they notice negative attitudes towards immigrants in society as a whole. They distance themselves from those negative attitudes by describing general feelings. But their opinions and ideas are hardly based upon personal experiences or personal contact with immigrants.

The answer-scores yielded by some items are difficult to interpret. Agreeing with item 5 (I doubt that immigrants will put the interest of this country first) was meant to tap doubts about immigrant loyalty. However, it turned out that agreeing with this item does not necessarily imply a negative evaluation of immigrants. Instead the statement is in several cases interpreted by both Dutch and Norwegian respondents as one that reflects a more neutral and "rational" consideration; that it is logical and therefore not to be judged negatively that people will prioritize themselves and their families before anything else, and that some loyalty to the country of origin is more healthy than disloyalty.

> I think, yes, that whether you are Norwegian or an immigrant, that…people in general will do that, therefore I agree.

A "disagree slightly" or "agree slightly" position on item 1 "interacting with immigrants makes me uneasy" can indicate that the (in this case Dutch) respondent does not have any contact or whatsoever with immigrants, meaning that his/her position is not neutral, but that the item is simply not applicable. Where both Dutch and Norwegian respondents speak of feelings of uneasiness, this is often associated with problems in communication because of different languages or because of negative stereotypes of immigrants as potentially dangerous.

Item 4 "Immigration in this country is out of control" prompted two different types of framing in the Norwegian sample of *what* was out of control, immigration or integration:

> too little control, too many immigrants open borders.. free flow of criminals... not knowing who get in

However item 4 was also perceived by some Norwegian respondents as a critique directed at the authorities for not being able to integrate immigrants, and doing a lousy job in taking care of immigrants, for example:

> Immigrants get settled in ghettos.

Some interviewees expressed that a negative (disagree strongly) answer to item 3 ("I am afraid that our own culture will be lost with increase in immigration") is motivated by the idea that immigrants do not come in such large numbers to form a real threat for Dutch and Norwegian culture. This indicates that this seemingly positive answer actually entails a very negative perception of the potential detrimental cultural influence of immigrants.

6.3 Ranking the items

In the third step of the interview respondents were asked to order the ten items. They were asked to put the item that in their opinion represents the most negative attitude towards immigrants on top, ending with the item that represents the less negative attitude towards

immigrants. The aim of this part of the interview was to get a more thorough understanding of the reason why certain items in the cumulative scale (Table 2) come out more 'difficult' (negative) than others. In other words: do individual respondents rank the items the same way as the ordering of the scale items that resulted from the quantitative study, and what argumentation leads to this ranking? Several types of argumentation were found. In this section only the results for ordering the five items of the cumulative scale (Table 3) are presented.

6.3.1 'Facts' versus opinions

In the Norwegian sample the most salient rationale was ranking the items according to whether they were seen to represent a "fact", versus a personal evaluation. Items were often considered factual if they, according to respondents, were repeatedly presented in media, or if they were supposed to be supported by intellectual arguments, by statistics and/or appealing to common sense.

> I feel they (the least negative) are taken from headlines in the newspaper, or quotations from somebody the journalist has interviewed. Maybe a politician…saying "The immigration to Norway is out of control" – because the statistics about increase in crimes proves that is the case, so it is true.

There was, however, not an overall agreement amongst the respondents about which of the items represent 'facts'. In both the Norwegian and Dutch sample respondents stressed that doubt about whether immigrants would put the interest of this country first is quite "logical" and therefore cannot be seen as very negative. On the other hand, items perceived as statements representing personal opinions or feelings, were particularly amongst Norwegian respondents often evaluated more negatively than 'factual' statements, and "therefore" difficult to agree with:

> Interaction with immigrants makes me uneasy (item 1). That one I have ranked as most negative because it is very personal. It takes a lot to say that you don't like contact with immigrants on a personal level…like not wanting to have a doctor or bus driver who is an immigrant. You have nothing to hide behind on this item, it's very exposing. And it is contact with immigrant in general…it takes a lot to agree with that.

Apparently there were seen no "facts" to support this statement, and persons agreeing with it expose a very negative attitude toward immigrants, according to this respondent.

6.3.2 Variable versus conclusive opinions

However the results of some Dutch interviews show another picture. Some of those gave a textual explanation for ranking the items, focusing on the words used and whether the items were formulated as categorical opinions. They argued that, in their opinion the most negative statement express the most conclusive opinions, while the comparatively most positive items (items 5 and 1 in Table 2) are the ones with statements expressing feelings and doubts. Emotional feelings such as uneasiness, fear and doubt towards immigrants were in these cases considered to be less negative than statement 4 that evaluates immigration to be out of control without "expressing any doubts". In this reasoning doubt is considered not necessarily meaning that a person holds negative opinions towards immigrants, and that feelings can easily change and are not deeply rooted. This argumentation is contrary to the one described

in the previous section where statements representing personal feelings were ranked as most negative.

6.3.3 Political correctness and threat to self-image

The previous quotation, *"you have nothing to hide behind on this item"* also illustrates an aspect that many other Norwegian respondents took into consideration when ranking the items. Respondents reported thoughts on how political correctness can be decisive even when respondents are anonymous. Some argued that the most negative statements were the ones that could threaten your self-image; when agreeing means assigning yourself attributes you don't want to associate yourself with. It was argued that many people like to feel strong and adaptable, and that agreeing with "contact with immigrants makes me uneasy" can represent own weakness. Other respondents meant that many people probably essentially feel that immigrants make them uneasy, but don't admit it to themselves. It was argued that people avoid these feelings of discomfort because it is threatening for their own self-image to admit it.

In the Dutch situation these arguments of political correctness were not mentioned during the ranking process during the interview.

6.3.4 Threat and fear

The first two and 'most difficult' (negative) items in the cumulative scale expressing personal fear-like reactions: "Interaction with immigrants makes me uneasy", and "With increased immigration I fear that our way of life will change for the worse", were not ranked as most negative by all the respondents. In both the Dutch and Norwegian sample personal fear was argued to express very negative feelings, while item 4 (see Table 2), a statement including more political implications, is more distant from the individual, generating less threat, and therefore easier to agree with. However, no consensus existed among the respondents. Other respondents argued that personal feelings are more likely to change over time and thus do not indicate a strong xenophobic attitude, or that the implications of the statements regarding culture had a much bigger impact on the national level and therefore expressed a more negative attitude. In sum, some respondents found items expressing personal threat the most negative, others items expressing political or cultural treat.

6.3.5 Cultural versus multicultural identity

In both the Dutch and Norwegian samples it also appeared that the ranking of the items was modulated by whether the person had a strong national identity and showed pride towards their own culture, or the person embraced a multicultural society, and was welcoming to changes. Those who were resistant to changes had a tendency to evaluate item 4 ("Immigration in this country is out of control"), and item 3 (I am afraid that our own culture will be lost with increase in immigration") as less negative than those who saw other cultures as a potential threat to our society. An example of the last comes from a Norwegian respondent.

> This statement (3) about losing our culture, I see that as most negative. I am not interested in keeping our culture the way it is anyway. If you agree with this statement, you only see the possible negative impact, while immigration actually can lead to so many positive changes.

Others who identified themselves more with the Norwegian or Dutch culture seemed to rank this statement as less negative because they see their culture of fundamental value worth protecting, and

> "…that you don't need very strong negative attitudes towards immigrants to worry that our Dutch culture will be altered, diluted or deteriorated by immigration."

So, depending on the weight assigned to 'national identity' and the 'national culture' or, on the contrary, the importance assigned to the multicultural society, different statements were perceived to express different degrees of negativity.

Thus different respondents gave different rankings of the fear-based Xenophobia scale-items, often not corresponding with the pattern found by statistical analysis. There are some differences between the ranking of the Dutch en the Norwegian respondents and there seem to be different criteria that individual respondents use when requested to 'thoroughly evaluate' separate statements as more or less 'negative', compared to the task to 'just to respond' to items in a self-completion questionnaire.

7 Discussion and conclusion

The qualitative part of this research has deepened our understanding of the way the respondents interpret the questions. In this specific study we used the TSTI not as a pre-test method, but as a tool to gain insight afterwards in order to find explanations for the order of the items in the cumulative measure of fear-based xenophobia as developed in the first part if this study. Its value for pre-testing has become evident in our study. The differences in interpretation of the items, the variety in framing of the category 'immigrants' and the differences in criteria used for ranking the items may lead to doubts about the validity of the scale.

First, the assumption that this scale assesses the amount of xenophobia in the strict sense of 'fear for foreigners' is hardly supported by the findings of the TSTI, as feelings of fear are not frequently expressed in the interviews. However, in support of content validity it can be argued that feelings of insecurity, threat, doubt, and concern are sentiments that express fear-like emotions.

Secondly, the qualitative study offers no satisfactory support for a common Dutch and Norwegian cumulative ordering of the scale items in the TSTI situation. To what extent does this finding cast doubt on the interesting fact that a three-nation study revealed an almost identical hierarchical ordering of the attitude statements? The question arises whether regular self-completion situations, and the TSTI method invite different levels of cognitive processing. One may speculate that self-completion (e.g. by circling an answering category) may allow processing marked by spontaneous or 'snap' evaluation, while the TSTI method may prompt more deliberate 'thinking twice' (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2007; Evans 2010). There is no methodological arbiter to tell which approach reveals the 'best' scale. However, if the Mokken scale proves to relate meaningfully to other established predictors of prejudice (e.g. Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation) one might reasonably conclude that the psychometric Mokken scale taps meaningfully into xenophobia on an aggregate level, but at the same time blurs the finer nuances on the level of individual respondents. Applying the TSTI method can be used to question any unfounded assumption that a statistically developed scale is streamlined and unproblematic when it comes to unidimensionality as well as what it measures. However discarding the scale for not being perfect on the individual level would be like throwing out the child with the bath water.

Thus the results demonstrate the necessary for thoroughly pretesting items, that means before the psychometric properties of scale items are tested. The results also show that the attitude object, in this case 'immigrants', should be defined clearly prior to the data collection, unless the variety of the attitude object itself is the object of research.

Our study confirms the study of Carabain in the sense that it cannot be taken for granted that the respondents use the same attitude object as the designers of the questionnaire. This has consequences for the comparability of the answers the respondents give (Carabain 2007, p. 114) and for the reliability and validity of attitude measurements.

The main question in every research is: do we measure what we think we measure? The outcome of this study shows that we often think we know what we measure, but in fact it is not the case. Pretesting can bring us further to this goal.

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