

# Attitudes toward immigrants in European societies

International Journal of Comparative Sociology 2017, Vol. 58(5) 359-366
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Since the middle of the 20th century, immigrants, ex-colonials, labor migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees arrived in European societies in ever-increasing numbers, and the migration flows continue until today. Some even suggest that the flows, especially of refugees from the war zones in the Middle East and Africa, actually intensified dramatically in recent years. Consequently, the social composition and ethnic fabric of many European traditional nation states have changed. Alongside these changes, we find a marked increase in the number of societal actors who address the questions about the terms of inclusion or exclusion of immigrants and the types of immigrants in society. That is, with more immigrants making Europe their permanent home, Europeans citizens and politicians began raising questions about the social, political, economic, and legal rights of the immigrants and especially about the place of immigrants in European societies. They also raise questions about the social, cultural, and economic impact that immigrants exert on host societies. Indeed, the status of immigrants in European societies is now one of the major issues of the public debate in contemporary Europe.

The public and political debate regarding immigrants' place in society progressed in recent years from a labor market problem to a social, cultural, and political problem with greater emphasis on the issue of national identity. In this regard, it is important to note that the lion's share of the immigrants in Europe arrived as an initial response to the economic needs of the European countries in the middle of the previous century. Many European countries were (and some still are) in dire need of labor, especially cheap labor, due to a steady decline in the population and lack of native workforce (resulting from declining fertility and aging population). That is, immigrants, labor migrants, and 'guest workers' were invited and recruited to perform jobs that the local populations were unwilling or unable to take (mostly menial, low-skilled low-paying jobs in declining profit industries). Importation of immigrants appeared to be a simple, temporary solution to a domestic problem and market demand in Western European countries. The demand for workforce in Western Europe was met by the readily available supply of workers in poor countries outside Europe (and at times by the readily available supply of workers from poor countries in Eastern or Southern Europe). In other words, immigrants were attracted to Europe (push factors) from countries ravaged by high unemployment, poverty, and political instability and, at times, ravaged by war, to societies (pull factors) characterized by prosperous markets, high salaries, and political stability; to countries that offer a better quality of life and higher standard of living for themselves

and their children (for a detailed discussion of the topic see, for example, Castles, 1986; Castles and Miller, 1993; King, 2002; Massey et al., 1998; Stalker, 1994).

With the passage of time, many of the labor migrants or guest workers brought their family members to Europe, and many immigrants made Europe their permanent place of residence. Nevertheless, large portions of the immigrant population, even those belonging to the second generation, are not fully integrated in the host country. Lack of successful integration is quite evident in the social, economic, cultural, and spatial spheres. In other words, although many immigrants and the sons and daughters of immigrants have been living in European countries for many years, many still live in segregated ethnic communities and neighborhoods with limited daily interactions with native Europeans (e.g. Glikman and Semyonov, 2012; Musterd, 2005; Peach et al., 1981). Furthermore, immigrants, especially those of non-European ethnic origin, experience substantial disadvantages, even in the second generation. For example, immigrants face difficulties and experience disadvantages in the labor market of the host country. Their unemployment rate is higher than the rate among native Europeans, they are less able to attain high status occupations as compared to natives, their earnings are lower than the earnings of comparable Europeans (e.g. Algan et al., 2010; Büchel and Frick, 2004; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2017; Heath et al., 2007), and their homeownership rates are lower than those of the host society (e.g. Davidov and Weick, 2011). It is not surprising, thus, that considerable numbers of immigrants feel 'discriminated against' or experience some form of discrimination and that, at the same time, native Europeans view the immigrants as 'foreigners' and 'outsiders'.

Although most countries agreed to develop and implement a common immigration policy at the level of the European Union (EU), countries do vary considerably in the immigration policies they develop, adopt, and implement. In recent years, mostly as a response to the heated public debates regarding the future of immigration in Europe and in light of the influx of refugees to European countries in recent decades, national immigration policies are being reevaluated and reformulated. The European immigration policies not only deal with the different types of immigrants that can be admitted to the country and with the conditions and regulations under which immigrants can reside permanently in the country, but also with programs and plans that can lead to a successful integration of immigrants in society. It is important to note, however, that European countries vary considerably in the application of migrant integration policies as evidenced by the scores of the 'migration integration policy index' (MIPEX) published by Niessen et al. (2007). Whereas some countries provide very supportive conditions for the successful integration of immigrants, others do very little to facilitate the integration and assimilation of the immigrants into the mainstream society.

Countries not only vary in their integration policy, but they also vary in the public level of support (or opposition) to immigration and immigrants (Raijman et al., 2003). Whereas anti-immigrant sentiment and opposition to immigration in some countries are relatively low, in others anti-immigrant sentiment is rather high. In fact, the ever-growing body of research on public attitudes toward immigrants reveals that anti-immigrant sentiment is widespread across Europe (e.g. Davidov et al., 2008; Semyonov et al., 2008). According to this literature, immigrants are viewed as a threat to society, economy, and the culture. Many Europeans believe that immigrants exert a negative impact on various aspects of the social system, including the economy, social resources, values, crime, living conditions, social welfare, and culture, just to name a few examples (e.g. Ceobanu, 2011; Semyonov et al., 2008)). Consequently, opposition to immigration and support for the exclusion of immigrants from society are also widely spread (e.g. Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2009; Scheepers et al., 2002). Furthermore, studies reveal an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe during the last decades of the 20th century (e.g. Semyonov et al., 2006), although it remained rather stable on average, yet quite high, during the first decade of the new millennium (e.g. Meuleman et al., 2009, 2014).

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Attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are shaped by both the attributes of the country and the characteristics of individuals residing in the country (for a comprehensive review of cross-national comparative literature on the subject see Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). The literature focusing on this topic underscores a series of country-level attributes that account for cross-country variations in attitudes toward immigrants. They include the size of the immigrant population (e.g. Quillian, 1995; Schlueter and Wagner, 2008; Semyonov et al., 2006), economic conditions (Kunovich, 2004; Quillian, 1995), the political climate in the country (Semyonov et al., 2006, 2008; Wilkes et al., 2007), welfare, social, and immigration integration policies (Hjerm and Nagayoshi, 2015; Hooghe and De Vroome, 2015; Schlueter et al., 2013), state support of religious practices (Helbling and Traunmüller, 2016), frequency of terrorist attacks (Legewie, 2013), or (negative) media coverage on immigration-related news (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Schlueter and Davidov, 2013). An increase in the actual or perceived size of the immigrant population is often viewed as a potential source of increase in threat of competition over scarce resources as well as threat to cultural values and homogeneity of the population. The existing literature considers declining economic conditions as a potential source of increase in threat of competition over economic resources, which in turn, is likely to increase negative attitudes toward immigrants. The political climate and especially the popularity and prevalence of extreme right-wing nationalistic parties in a country are conducive to the mobilization of antiimmigrant sentiments and incitement against immigrants. Less restrictive and more supportive immigrant integration policies are often found to account for more positive attitudes toward immigrants. By way of contrast, prevalence of terrorist attacks as well as extensive negative coverage of immigration-related issues in the news are conducive to the emergence of negative attitudes toward immigration.

Regardless of the impact of contextual factors at the country level, studies repeatedly reveal that attitudes toward immigrants are systematically associated with a series of individual-level characteristics as well. First, studies reveal that socio-economically vulnerable populations are more threatened by the detrimental consequences of competition with immigrants. Hence, vulnerable individuals are more likely to express negative attitudes toward immigrants. Specifically, those with lower education, the unemployed, those with low earnings, and those who perceive the size of the immigrant population to be large (and hence more threatening) are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g. Esses et al., 2001; Kunovich, 2004; Raijman and Semyonov, 2004; Scheepers et al., 2002; Semyonov et al., 2004). Second, recent studies reveal that not only fear of competition but also nationalism (Blank and Schmidt, 2003; Coenders and Scheepers, 2004; Raijman et al., 2008; Wagner et al., 2010) and fraternal relative deprivation affect opposition to immigration (Schmidt et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2012). Third, it is suggested that in addition to these factors, also racial prejudice increases negative attitudes toward immigrants ((Blumer, 1958; Gorodzeisky et al., 2016; Ramos et al., 2016). Fourth, conservative ideologies are likely to increase anti-immigrant sentiment. For example, placement on the right side of the political orientation scale may result in increased anti-immigrant attitudes while left-side political orientation decreases anti-immigrant sentiment (e.g. (Bohman, 2011; Wilkes et al., 2007; Wimmer, 1997). Likewise, older persons, who are likely to be more conservative than young people, are more likely to oppose immigration. Fifth, basic human values (Schwartz, 1992) have also played a major role in the explanation of individual variations in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Analysis on a large set of European countries demonstrated that individuals with strong conservation values, which are conceptually very close to authoritarianism (Schmidt and Heyder, 2000), are much more likely to reject minorities in general and immigrants in particular, while universalistic individuals are more likely to welcome and support immigration into the country (Davidov et al., 2008, 2014b; Davidov and Meuleman, 2012). On the other hand, studies suggested that contact with immigrants

may mitigate negative sentiment and prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998; Schlueter and Wagner, 2008; Semyonov and Glikman, 2009).

Before discussing the specific papers included in this volume and their contribution to understanding immigration in the context of European societies from a cross-national comparative perspective, a methodological note seems in order. Researchers are increasingly paying considerable attention to the comparability of the object of investigation, attitudes toward immigration (Davidov et al., 2014a, 2015; Meuleman and Billiet, 2012; Davidov, Cieciuch, Algesheimer, et al., 2016). Indeed, a different understanding of the questions inquiring about respondents' opinions on or attitudes toward immigrants and immigration may vary considerably across countries. Immigration may entail a different meaning for people in diverse countries, or questions may use culture- and country-specific nuances that may deem them non-comparable across the countries under investigation. Furthermore, response patterns may also be quite different in different countries and among respondents speaking different languages. Thus, the comparability of the questions must be guaranteed before a meaningful and valid comparative analysis across countries of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration can be performed. Only then can we better understand cross-cultural differences and similarities in the processes underlying the formation of anti-foreigner sentiments.

Authors of the articles in the Special Issue focus on determinants of public attitudes toward immigration and immigrants from a cross-national comparative perspective using contextual variables (such as economic conditions and social policies) but also individual-level predictors (such as interpersonal contacts, economic status, or threat) as sources of attitudes or attitudes change. The first article authored by Bart Meuleman and Marie-Sophie Callens, 'Contextual determinants of perceived threat in Europe. Do integration policies matter?' explores the role played by public policies in shaping attitudes toward immigrants. The paper provides an analysis of the relationship between integration policies and perceived intergroup threat across 27 European countries. The authors scrutinized the different types of integration policies and distinguished between economic and symbolic threat. They find that when integration policies in a country were less restrictive in terms of labor market access and political participation, economic threat in a country is lower. However, they do not find any association between how restrictive a country's integration policies are and the level of symbolic threat.

The second article, authored by Anabel Kuntz, Eldad Davidov, and Moshe Semyonov, entitled 'The dynamic relations between economic conditions and anti-immigrant sentiment: A natural experiment in times of the European economic crisis', explores whether worsening economic conditions resulted in heightened threat in 14 West European immigration countries during the economic crisis in 2008. It examines whether changes in economic conditions may lead to change in anti-immigrant sentiment. The study takes the European context and the recent economic crisis as a natural experiment to investigate the relations between change in economic conditions and change in anti-foreigner sentiment. The results suggested that anti-immigrant sentiments increased in countries where perceptions of economic insecurity also increased due to the crisis. However, changes in objective economic conditions, like unemployment rates during the same period of time, did not result in any change in attitudes toward immigrants.

While the two first papers focus on the impact of contextual factors such as social policies and economic conditions on attitudes toward immigrants (with immigrants defined in general generic terms) across a large number of countries, the third article, authored by Adi Hercowitz-Amir, Rebeca Raijman, and Eldad Davidov, compares attitudes toward asylum seekers in two countries. 'Host or hostile? Attitudes towards asylum seekers in Israel and in Denmark' investigates public sentiment of host populations in Israel and Denmark (two countries with markedly different national contexts for asylum seekers in particular). Indeed, the continuous increase in the number

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of asylum seekers in European countries has given rise to heated debates about the extent to which a country should open its gates to newcomers, and welcome and try to integrate them. The study focuses on the role of three major individual-level factors in the explanation of respondents' willingness to share their national benefits with asylum seekers: social contact, support for humanitarian policies, and perceptions of legitimacy of the asylum seekers' claims. The findings reveal that the three factors play a similar role in the formation of attitudes toward asylum seekers in the two countries, and that perceptions of threat mediate the relation between these factors and individuals' willingness to share their national benefits with asylum seekers.

The fourth article, authored by Maureen A. Eger and Nate Breznau: "Immigration and the welfare state: A cross-regional analysis of European welfare attitudes", shifts the focus of the analysis from attitudes toward immigrants at the national level to the impact of immigration on attitudes toward distribution of welfare rewards at the regional level. In other words, whereas the previous articles provide cross-national analysis of anti-immigrant attitudes, the authors of the fourth article study contextual determinants of anti-welfare attitudes across regions in Europe. In particular, the researchers address the question whether and to what extent the size of foreignborn population in the region reduces support for national welfare state programs. The empirical examination is carried out on data for 114 regions in 13 European countries by combining the European Social Survey with data from national censuses, the Eurostat, and the European Election Database. The findings suggest that the share of foreign-born population in the region is associated with both lower level of support for redistribution and for a comprehensive welfare state policy. Although share of immigrants in the region decreases support for generous welfare state policy, the analysis reveals that immigration per se does not increase opposition to immigrants' social rights. Apparently, immigration in the European context exerts stronger impact on anti-immigrant sentiment and on attitudes toward welfare policy than on attitudes toward allocation of equal rights.

We are thankful to the contributors to this special issue on the formation on public views toward immigrants in Europe. We are also indebted to the Collegium Helveticum ETH and the University of Zurich, and the Department of Sociology at the University of Zurich for supporting the project. The idea of this special issue resulted from the workshop 'Current Issues in Immigration Research with focus on European Societies' hosted by Collegium Helveticum ETH in May 2015. The workshop was organized by the guest editors when Moshe Semyonov was a Senior Fellow at the European Institute of Advanced Studies (EURAS). We would also like to thank the journal editor, Professor David A. Smith, for his enthusiasm about the topic and his continuous efforts and support to get the special issue published. The articles accepted for this themed issue were rigorously reviewed and we also appreciate the effort of many anonymous International Journal of Comparative Sociology (IJCS) referees. We hope that the Special Issue will offer researchers impetus for extensive research on this important and timely topic of immigration in general, and the public's attitudes toward immigration and immigrants in particular. It is our hope that the four papers included in this volume shed new light and provide a better understanding of the impact of contextual factors (such as social policies, economic conditions, or the social-political/ideological context) and individual-level attributes (such as contact, support for humanitarian policies, or threat) on attitudes toward immigrants.

#### Acknowledgements

The work of Eldad Davidov was supported by the University Research Priority Program Social Networks of the University of Zurich. Both guest editors would like to thank Lisa Trierweiler for English proofreading of the manuscript.

## **Funding**

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Eldad Davidov received support from the University Research Priority Program Social Networks of the University of Zurich.

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