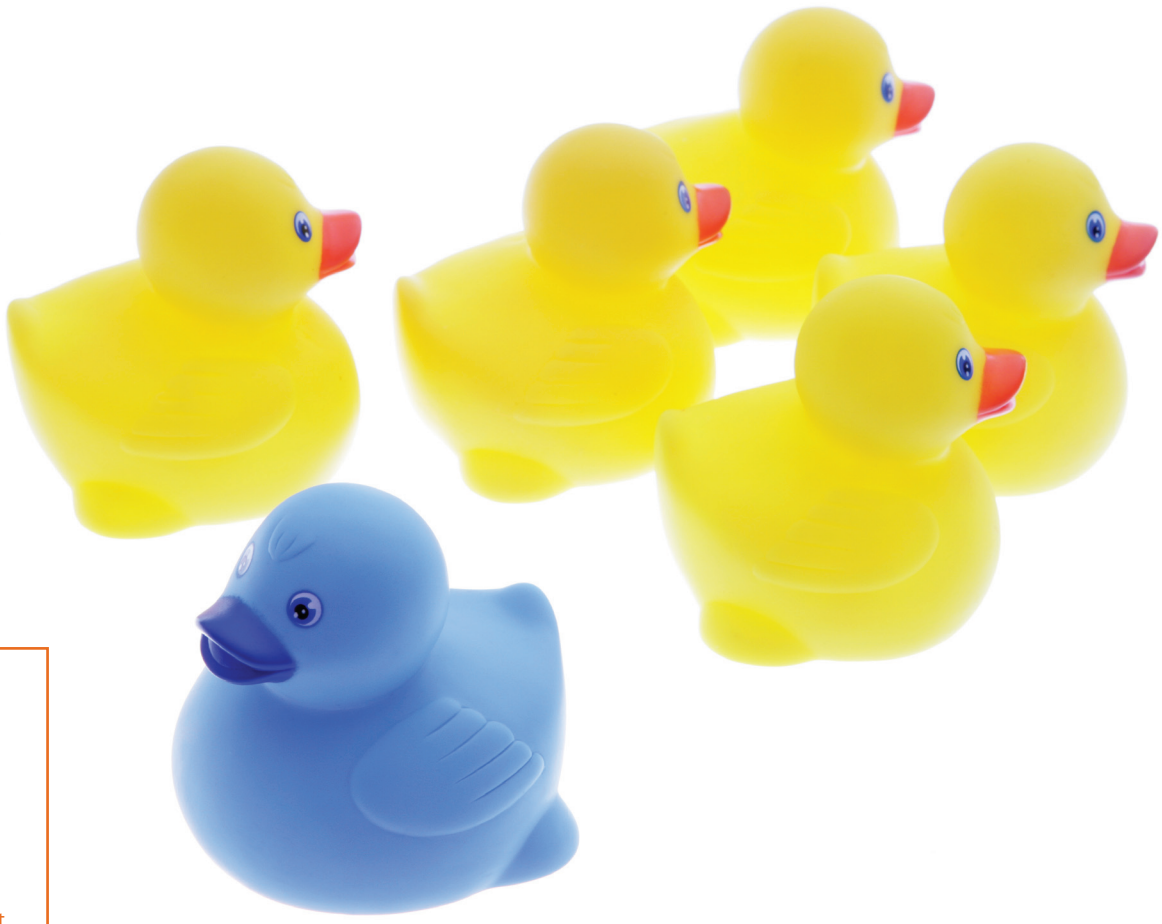
One of us?

Understanding public perceptions of labour migration in Europe

Lauren M McLaren

policy network paper



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Abstract

This paper discusses the nature and origins of public hostility towards immigration in Europe, and questions the assumption that economic self interest is the key cause of such attitudes. To the extent that economic considerations play a part, the paper argues they are more likely to involve a general concern for the impact of immigration on the overall economy, rather than being motivated purely by economic self interest. However, anti-immigration hostility, the author concludes, is predominantly driven by a fear of the cultural and social unknown that large-scale immigration represents for many. In light of such evidence, the paper makes the case for institutions of influence, including the media but above all political leaders, to take a bolder stance towards countering the fears that have developed about immigration among European mass publics.

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Introduction

Since the end of the second world war, one of the major challenges facing European democracies has been large-scale migration. In the wake of an impressive post-war economic recovery, many of the rapidly developing European countries required labourers to fuel their booming economies. While much of labour migration in these early days was from less developed European countries such as Spain and Portugal, the nature of migration changed quickly, with new entrants coming from former colonies and eventually war-torn and/or poor parts of Africa, the Middle East, and central Europe. More recently, many of the wealthier European countries have experienced increased migration from within the EU. In addition, the previously less developed countries such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Ireland suddenly found themselves in the position of receiving migrants, with Spain switching from being one of the EU member states with the lowest number of immigrants in the 1980s to being one of the largest recipients by 2008.

The political and social challenges posed by such large-scale migration cannot be underestimated (Hollifield 1997, p. 30). Although the potential difficulties created by migration often exist mostly as undercurrents of hostility or animosity among European mass publics, periodically there are dramatic events that remind us of the scale of the problem. At times, this involves violent attacks on foreigners such as those witnessed in Germany in the 1990s; at other times, it involves riots on the part of "ghettoised" foreigners or minorities, as in France in the autumn of 2005. Election outcomes also provide some indication of the undercurrent of concern on the part of mass publics, for instance, with Jean Marie Le Pen making it through to the second round of elections for the French presidency in 2002, the rise of Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, or the popularity of Jörg Haider and the Austrian Freedom party. In the case of the UK, although it is difficult for far-right politicians to gain a foothold in politics because of the single-member-district-plurality electoral system, there are clear indicators of the existence of overwhelming concern about immigration and related issues of race, culture, and religion. For instance, the 2003 British Social Attitudes survey recorded a 10% rise in anti-immigration hostility since 1995 (McLaren and Johnson 2004). Furthermore, it showed that clear majorities questioned the loyalty of Muslim migrants to Britain, while near-majorities expressed concern about the economic implications of immigration (McLaren and Johnson 2007).

The political and social challenges posed by such large-scale migration cannot be underestimated

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the nature of public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. The paper begins by providing an overview of the main theories that have been developed to explain differences in attitudes to immigration and immigrants (ie why some individuals are more opposed to immigration than others); it goes on to discuss some of the key evidence regarding explanations of anti-immigration hostility. The paper finally draws some conclusions about the nature of anti-immigration hostility and the policy implications of empirical research on opposition to immigration.

Explaining anti-immigration hostility: contending theories[1]

Given the relative newness of migration to Europe and subsequent lack of theories to explain public attitudes to these newcomers, scholars have generally turned to theories developed by social and political psychologists in the United States to explain attitudes to minorities in that country. As will be seen below, many of these theories would appear to be even more applicable in the case of newcomers. The two main theoretical contenders for explaining attitudes to immigration are the theories connected to notions of competition for resources and theories emphasising the importance of "symbolic" values and culture. These theories are outlined below. In addition, researchers have explored the effects of national and local contexts, contact with minorities and immigrants, as well as fears connected to crime and safety. These ideas will also be discussed here.

Competition for resources: individual level

We begin with approaches that revolve around notions of self interest. In general terms, self interest is often argued to be connected to attitude formation and behaviour. The approach clearly has logical appeal in that it seems highly likely that people consider their own interests first and develop positions on policy based on those interests. Indeed, evidence indicates that individuals tend to be rather instrumental in their attitudes to people with AIDS (Crandall, Glor, & Britt 1997), gun control (Wolpert & Gimpel 1998), speed limits (Johansson-Stenman & Martinsson 2005), and tax referenda (Sears & Citrin 1985). Early work on voting behaviour also hypothesised that vote choices were fundamentally driven by self interest (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee 1954; Downs 1957; Campbell et al 1960; Kramer 1971; Tufte 1978), and later work has indicated that candidates for office can themselves motivate voters to vote their pocketbooks (Lau, Sears & Jessor 1990).

Research on attitudes to minorities in the United States has also tended to point to self interest and particularly individual level competition for resources as a key explanation for hostility to minorities. Namely, it is contended that conflict between ethnic or racial groups may be fundamentally perceived in terms of such competition (Bobo 1983, 1988; Bobo & Kluegel 1993). As argued by Gibson, "Members of the ingroup … enjoy privileged access to scarce resources such as jobs, power, money, welfare benefits, and housing. If this access or status is challenged, however, by competition from outgroups, then prejudice is manifested as a tool to retain their grip on the 'good life'" (2002, p. 72). Some findings from Europe and the US also point to the importance of self interest in determining attitudes to immigration (van Dalen & Henkens 2005; Fetzer 2000; Espenshade & Hempstead 1996). With regard to the latter, it is argued that competition exists between members of the native population with lower levels of job and educational skills, on the one hand, and immigrants, on the other. Immigrants tend to be perceived as mostly unskilled workers who are willing to perform jobs at lower levels of pay than natives, placing the latter at risk of unemployment (Espenshade & Hempstead 1996; see Espenshade & Calhoun 1993 for a review of findings from the US). As argued by Simon (1987), immigrants should pose the greatest threat to those of lower status—defined in terms of education, skill level and income—because those of lower status fear competition for jobs, housing, schools and social services (see also Hoskin & Mishler 1983). Burns and Gimpel (2000) further contend that it may be the case that wealth also insulates individuals from economic pressures of low skilled, immigrant labour flows: "higher income people are more secure in the labour market than the poor" (p. 205). Thus, based upon general self interest arguments and research specifically on attitudes to minorities and immigrants, it is expected that individuals at the lowest levels of skill, income and education would be the most worried about immigration and thus the most hostile to it.

1. Much of this section can also be found in McLaren and Johnson (2007).

Competition for resources: group-level

Although it is often assumed that attitudes to social and political policies tend to be fundamentally driven by self interest, a considerable body of research has developed that indicates that many of these attitudes are formed based on perceptions of the effect of policies on society as a whole (see Sears & Funk 1990; Lau, Brown & Sears 1978). For instance, while attitudes to government sponsored social welfare programmes are partly dependent on self interest, they are also explained by perceptions of societal interests and needs (Funk 2000; Gelissen 2000). Moreover, literature on voting behaviour has consistently shown that economic self interest actually plays very little role in influencing how individuals vote. Instead, voting behaviour tends to be more strongly determined by perceptions of the national economic outlook as a whole, introducing the possibility that concern for society rather than personal interest is the key factor explaining how people decide to vote (Kinder & Kiewiet 1979, 1981; Kiewiet & Rivers 1984; Lewis-Beck 1988).

These findings point to the conclusion that attitudes to immigration may similarly be driven by group interest. Anti-immigration hostility may, in fact, stem from concerns about the loss of resources of one's ingroup. That is, even if the individual herself is not under threat of competition for jobs, housing, etc, she may worry that others within her key ingroup are actually in such competition. Resource-based favouritism may, therefore, be connected to ingroup protectiveness more than economic self protection. This approach—group conflict theory (Blumer 1958)—takes as its assumption that perceptions of minority groups are seen in terms of the groups' potential for conflict with one's key ingroup; in essence, members of minority groups tend to be perceived as taking resources that "belong to" one's own group. Such arguments are especially relevant in the case of immigrants (Quillian 1995) because these individuals are seen as newcomers who threaten the jobs and benefits of established native-born citizens. Indeed, findings from US attitudes to immigration point to the conclusion that sociotropic concerns about the economy (ie concerns about the economics of the society) are far more powerful than personal economic circumstances in explaining anti-immigration hostility (Citrin et al. 1997; Espenshade & Hempstead 1996).[2]

Symbols, values and identity

It must also be recognised, however, that key sources of threat—particularly when referring to minority groups and immigrants—may not, in fact, be economic or resource based in nature. Instead, the threat posed by minorities and immigrants may be rather "symbolic" in nature and may stem from concerns about the loss of certain values or a way of life because of the presence of minority groups and immigrants. For instance, attitudes to bussing and affirmative action in the US have been shown to be motivated by symbols or general values rather than self interest (Sears, Hensler & Speer 1979; Sears et al 1980; Bobo 1983; Kluegel & Smith 1983); in addition, attitudes to minority candidates for public office (Sears & Kinder 1971; Kinder & Sears 1981) tend to be driven by "symbolic racism" rather than threat to one's personal life. Moreover, exclusionary reactions to immigrant minorities in western Europe and the US have been shown to be far more strongly related to symbolic concerns about cultural threat and maintenance of cultural unity and distinctiveness than to individual or collective economic threat (Sniderman, Hagendoorn & Prior 2004; Lahav 2004; Ivarsflaten 2005; Gibson 2002; Fetzer 2000; Espenshade & Calhoun 1993). As Erikson (1966) argues, communities occupy not only a defined geographical space but also develop an "ethos" or "way"; these set the community apart as a special place, providing an important point of reference for its members.

Empirical research on social identity theory points to the conclusion that identities are terribly important to individuals, and that individuals protect these identities even if they have no realistic meaning (that is, they have been created in experiments in which participants are randomly divided

2. Political science academic literature on voting behaviour distinguishes between "pocketbook" and "sociotropic" voting. As argued by Kinder and Kiewiet (1981), citizens are likely to ask of government, "What have you done for the country lately?", which these authors refer to as "sociotropic" economic concerns, rather than "What have you done for me lately?", which they refer to as "pocketbook" economic concerns (see also Lewis-Beck 1990, p. 37).

into groups, such as group A, group B, group C, etc, and have no reason for common identity other than membership in group A, group B, group C, etc) and even if the individuals in question receive no financial benefit from them (Tajfel 1970; Turner 1982, 1985; Turner et al 1987, Turner et al 1994; Monroe, Hankin & van Vechten 2000). Outside of the experimental context, it is contended that people use established identities to provide a clear sense of self (see Sniderman, Hagendoorn & Prior 2004). Those identities tend to have their bases in perceptions of differences, particularly differences in values and approaches to life, and holders of identity are protective of such perceived distinctiveness. New immigrants and minorities are likely to be perceived as having fundamentally different values and ways of life that are a potential threat to the way of life in European democracies.

It must be recognised, however, that the current construction of identity in terms of national identity in European democracies is a result of intellectual- and state-led policies of prior centuries. That is, while it is clear from experimental work in the field of social psychology that identity is extremely important, historical evidence (eg Hobsbawm 1992; Anderson 1991) presents a fairly convincing case that the nature of modern identities—particularly national identities—was developed by European nation state leaders in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was during this period that central governments were able to use printing presses and transport to spread a common national mythology to the masses for the sake of promoting the sort of loyalty that would guarantee a strong military consisting of soldiers willing to die for their homeland. Leaders presumably also realised that common identity with other citizens and with their leaders would make governance in relatively large territories more manageable than relying solely on coercive mechanisms. This evidence highlights the surprising ease with which government leaders can (re)construct identities.

In addition, it is also important to note that research indicates the power of media framing in the modern day. Although mass media are not generally thought to be strongly capable of telling citizens what to think, they are thought to be fairly powerful in altering the way in which ideas and issues are "framed" (Kinder 1998; Cappella & Jamieson 1997; Iyengar 1991; Kinder & Sanders 1990, 1996; Mendelberg 1997; Kinder & Nelson 1998). For instance, evidence from the US points to the conclusion that changes in the way media have framed race policy—whether in terms of egalitarianism or individualism—has had a tremendous impact on Americans' perceptions of these issues and subsequent support (or lack thereof) for government action to alleviate inequalities (Kellstadt 2000). In addition, Druckman (2001) contends that framing effects occur because citizens delegate to ostensibly credible elites to help them sort through frames, confirming the power of such elites to help determine the way in which citizens contemplate various topics.

> Government and media discourse on identity and immigration can have some impact on citizens

Combining the evidence from social identity research, in which identities can to some degree be "created" in experimental conditions, with historical research on the creation of national identity, and with research on media effects, it seems entirely likely that government and media discourse on issues like identity and immigration can have some impact on citizens in the framing of these issues as well. That is, it may be the case that these sorts of institutions are capable of framing national identity in more or less exclusive terms, as well as provide some frames of reference with which to describe and define identity. Similarly, institutions like the media and government may be able to set the tone regarding where immigrants fit within the nation's conceptualisation of its identity. Obviously, such arguments require further exploration, but evidence from these various strands of research provides a fairly compelling basis from which to conclude that governments and media may indeed have a key role to play in "framing" identities.

Context and contact

The ideas presented above represent the general theoretical perspectives that are often used to guide thinking about hostility to minorities and outgroups in general. It is important to also consider the effects of context and contact on the types of threat outlined in these theories.

In keeping with the realistic aspect of group conflict, some researchers have contended that fear of competition over resources is only likely in certain threatening contexts. For instance, a considerable body of literature has developed relating attitudes toward outgroups to the context in which survey respondents live; again, particularly in studies of prejudice in the US. For instance, the "powerthreat" hypothesis contends that "racial animosity increases with the percent of blacks in an environment" (Oliver & Mendelberg 2000, p. 574). Numerous scholars have investigated this hypothesis, with findings often indicating that negative racial attitudes on the part of whites in the US are to some degree a function of the level of concentration of African Americans (Bobo 1988; Giles & Hertz 1994; Taylor 1998). In addition, research on anti-immigrant prejudice in Europe confirms that higher concentrations of immigrants are related to such prejudice (Quillian 1995).

However, early studies from the US also found rather conflicting results in terms of the effects of high concentrations of African Americans in a white individual's neighbourhood on that individual's level of prejudice toward African Americans, as outlined in the review essay by Amir (1969). Such conflicting findings are likely to be a result of contact occurring in some neighbourhoods and not in others; that is, if individuals live in contexts of high minority residence and have no intimate contact with these minorities, then the perception of threat is likely to be far higher than if the individual does have such intimate contact.[3]

> High levels of immigration on its own makes little difference in explaining anti-immigrant hostility

Findings in my own research (McLaren 2003) point to the conclusion that a context of high levels of immigration on its own appears to make little difference in explaining anti-immigrant hostility in Europe, but that context does interact with contact. Even after introducing fairly rigid controls for anti-immigrant predispositions (ie perceived threat to the country's economy and culture), the effect of contact with minorities on anti-immigrant sentiment—with or without context—was statistically significant. Namely, those who reported having friends from minority groups were less hostile toward immigrants than those who did not. In addition, those living in contexts of high immigration but who had no friends from among minority groups tended to express the highest amount of anti-immigrant sentiment, while individuals living in a context of high immigration but who had at least some minority friends tended to be significantly less hostile to immigrants. These results confirmed those of Thomas Pettigrew published a few years previously in the Annual Review of Psychology (1998).

In terms of connection to other theories, it is thus expected that contact may be able to (a) change stereotypes, in part by revealing the humanness and individuality of members that were previously perceived mostly in group terms, (b) reduce the subsequent perception of groups being in conflict over resources, and (c) perhaps change the perception that the values of people in other groups are fundamentally different from one's own; although, of course, some might argue that contact may actually confirm perceived differences.

Another context which has recently been highlighted as being important in explaining hostility toward immigrants and immigration is the legal context in which individuals live. Specifically,

3. Note that there is an extensive social psychology literature on the types of contact that do or do not matter, but research appears to be converging toward agreement that intimate contact in the form of friendships with the potential outgroup is the most consistent type of contact to reduce hostility toward members of that outgroup.

Weldon (2006) points to three types of citizenship legal cultures in Europe. First is the collectivist-ethnic culture, which assumes the world to be divided naturally into different ethnic units, with the nation state being a collective entity based on shared ethnicity. For instance, traditionally, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Belgium have made it very difficult for ethnic minorities to obtain citizenship because they are conceived of as not being part of the "nation" in those countries. Weldon predicts that social and political tolerance toward immigrants and minorities should be lowest in these types of countries.

The second type of legal culture is the collectivist-civic system, which is an "assimilationist" or "republican" model. This approach rejects the notion that ethnicity is the defining feature of the nation and instead defines the nation state in political and secular terms. Ethnic minorities in these systems can obtain citizenship but are expected to assimilate into the native population and give up their distinctive cultural characteristics. Examples include France, Portugal, Greece and Denmark. Weldon predicts that tolerance will be higher in these countries than in the collectivist-ethnic systems.

The final type of citizenship legal culture is the individualistic-civic system in which ethnicity and cultural orientation are viewed as a personal choice and minorities are not required to give up their ethnic identity in any sphere of public life. In this type of system, the state explicitly protects the right to ethnic difference and expression and in some cases even takes an active role in supporting minority traditions. Examples include Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland. Weldon's prediction is that tolerance toward newcomers will be at its highest amongst these countries, and his findings generally support his hypotheses.

Crime and safety threats

Within the general context of realistic and symbolic threats, we may also consider the question of whether opposition to immigration stems from concerns about crime and safety. For instance, citizens may perceive that immigrants pose a real threat to their own personal safety. However, the work of Sniderman et al (2004) indicates that individuals who express concerns about personal safety are no more or less hostile toward immigrants than those who do not have safety worries. Fear of crime caused by immigrants may also be seen within the context of symbolic threats, in that immigrants are often presented as not sharing the values of the host society, including values regarding respect for the law.

As discussed elsewhere (McLaren & Johnson 2007, p. 717), it has been well documented that the British public are substantially more worried about crime than the actual levels of crime would suggest they should be. According to data from the British Crime Survey for 2002–3, 73% of people thought that crime in the country as a whole had increased over the past two years and 38% actually thought it had increased "a lot". This is despite the fact that according to BCS estimates there has been a consistent downward trend in levels of crime since 1995. Most interestingly, and of relevance here, is the finding that tabloid readers were much more likely to think the crime rate has increased a lot than broadsheet readers—43% compared to 26%. Similarly, the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2003 indicates that 82% of tabloid readers want the number of immigrants reduced (and 60% reduced a lot) compared to 57% of broadsheet readers (27% wanting the number reduced a lot). Thus, to the extent that newspapers influence the views of their readership, it seems plausible that the news stories in tabloids are both increasing people's fear of crime and their worries about immigration, and that many readers are consciously or subconsciously linking the two. Moreover, as tabloid readers represent the majority of all newspaper readers, it is not simply a small minority of the population that is likely to be taking such cues from the media.

Explaining anti-immigration hostility: some evidence

As discussed above, it is expected that opposition to immigration is likely to stem from (a) the threat posed by immigrants to one's personal economic situation, (b) the threat posed to the economic conditions of one's ingroup as a whole, and (c) the threat to culture, values, or way of life that new entrants present. In addition, researchers have hypothesised that context, contact and perceptions of safety and crime are likely to explain differing attitudes to immigrants and immigration. Given that the main debates still correspond to issues of realistic economic threats versus symbolic cultural threats, it seems appropriate to explore some of the empirical findings in greater detail, with findings from studies of contact, context and crime and safety having already been briefly reviewed above. Thus, below I outline some of the tests of each of these propositions that have been conducted in the European context.

Threat to personal economic situation has little or no impact on anti-immigration hostility

Beginning with threats posed to the individual, researchers have used several different indicators to investigate the effects of such threats. Some rely on the individual's income, arguing that those at lower levels on the income scale should be more threatened by immigration, as should individuals who do manual labour or are unemployed. It is assumed that these are the groups who are in most direct competition with immigrants for jobs, housing and state benefits (see Quillian 1995; McLaren 2003; McLaren & Johnson 2007). Some researchers also explore perceptions of threat to the individual's finances (Sniderman et al 2004; Sides & Citrin 2007). In general, most of these findings indicate that threat to personal finances or personal economic situation has little or no impact on anti-immigration hostility.

For instance, using Eurobarometer poll number 30 from the Autumn of 1988, Quillian (1995) finds that a self-reported decline in economic status in the past 12 months, low levels of life satisfaction and being in the lowest income quartile all either have effects in the opposite direction to that expected or have no discernable effects at all. Even the size of the effect of education—sometimes taken as an indicator of economic position—is quite small: on Quillian's racial prejudice scale, which ranges from 0-1, with 0 representing no prejudice and 1 representing the highest possible level of prejudice, a five-year difference in years of education only reduces prejudice by 0.04 (see the Appendix for the measures used in Quillian's analysis).

The effects of being in the lowest income quartile are even smaller than this. Even once interactive effects across various economic indicators are taken into account, being in the lowest income quartile only effects anti-immigrant prejudice by 0.027 (ie less than 3%), and it appears that people in this lowest quartile are less prejudiced than those in the higher quartiles (note that lowest quartiles were compared to all other quartiles combined in Quillian's analysis) (See Table 3 on p. 606 of Quillian 1995). On the other hand, being in the working class (ie being a manual worker) increases anti-immigrant prejudice and racial prejudice by about 0.02, while change in one's economic situation only has a 0.01–0.015 effect on racial and anti-immigrant prejudice. My own research (McLaren 2003) finds similarly weak effects in a Eurobarometer poll conducted almost 10 years later (but see Semyonov et al 2008). In the case of the UK, my research with Mark Johnson (McLaren and Johnson 2007) indicates that income level, type of job performed by the respondent and whether the respondent is unemployed or receives benefits all have no effect on general hostility to new immigration or on fears that immigrants take jobs from the British born or are bad for the economy.[4]

4. Note, however, that other bivariate findings and qualitative analyses from the UK confirm that poorer, less educated members of the white majority are significantly more likely to be hostile to immigrants, minorities, and asylum seekers (Saggar 2003, p. 185; Lewis 2005).

Sniderman et al (2004) investigate perceived economic threat in a Dutch sample from 1997–98 and find that perceptions of individual level economic threat (ie "I am afraid that my economic prospects will get worse") has no discernable effect on hostility to most of the groups investigated (ie Turks, Moroccans or Surinamese) and only has a very small effect on hostility toward refugees. Sides and Citrin (2007) reach largely similar conclusions using the European Social Survey of 20 countries from 2002–3.

Moving now to economic threats presented to the ingroup as a whole, most scholars focus on the nation state or country as the key ingroup under threat from immigration. Indicators of such threat include the actual economic situation in the country (eg Quillian 1995; Sides & Citrin 2007)—unemployment and GDP per capita, in particular—as well as perceptions of the economic situation in the country (Sniderman et al 2004; Sides & Citrin 2007). The empirical findings from such investigations are more ambiguous than is the case with individual level economic threat. For instance, Quillian finds no direct impact for economic conditions, as measured by GDP per capita, but does find a powerful interactive effect when economic conditions and the size of the foreign population interact: poor economic performance generally only impacts on attitudes to immigrants when combined with a high number of foreigners in the country. That is, people only appear to blame immigrants when there are large numbers of foreigners around to blame. On the other hand, Sides and Citrin (2007) find very little difference in anti-immigration hostility between countries with poor or strong economic conditions, measured by unemployment levels, change in unemployment levels, GDP per capita and change in GDP per capita; nor do they find much effect for the numbers of foreigners in the country. Figure 1 illustrates the weak effects of both unemployment and number of foreigners on anti-immigration hostility.

Figure 1: Foreign-born, unemployment and anti-immigration hostility

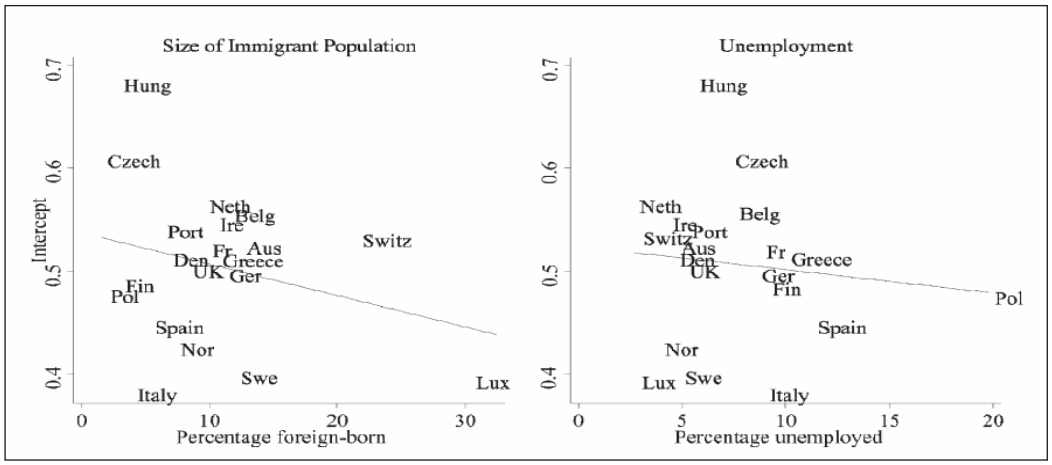


Figure reprinted from Figure 4 in Sides and Citrin (2007, p. 495). These graphs present results from models of preferred levels of immigration, but the authors report that the results were similar for perceptions of the consequences of immigration (see the Appendix for question wording). The left hand graph in the Figure presents the relationship between the size of the immigrant population, specifically the percentage who are foreign-born in each country as calculated from OECD data, and the preferred level of immigration, with low values on the latter representing less hostility toward immigration and high values representing greater hostility (with the theoretical range of this scale being 0–1), controlling for other factors that are believed to have an effect on anti-immigration hostility (eg perceptions of the economy, education, etc). The right hand plot presents the relationship between anti-immigration hostility and the state of the economy, operationalised as the level of unemployment in 2002, again controlling for other factors that are believed to have an effect on anti-immigration hostility. Note that these plots reveal a slight negative pattern between percentages of foreigners in the country and unemployment on the one hand and hostility toward immigration on the other; specifically, higher percentages of foreign-born residents in the country and higher levels of immigration actually correspond to a slight reduction in anti-immigration sentiment, again, once other factors like the respondent's level of education, perceptions of the economy, etc are taken into account. This is the opposite of what is generally predicted about the relationships between these variables. Also note that the array of countries in each of these plots indicates that there is a great deal of variation around the linear pattern and that once the outlying cases (eg Luxembourg and Poland) are removed, it is likely that no linear pattern at all would be detected.

Evidence related to perceived economic threat is equally ambiguous. McLaren (2003) and McLaren and Johnson (2007) explore perceived economic threat posed by immigrants and find these indicators to reveal fairly high levels of perceived threat in Europe and in Britain, respectively. Economic fears related to immigration also appear to have powerful effects on general attitudes toward immigration. However, as pointed out by Sniderman et al (2004), the indicators used in such studies

create measurement problems by confounding the threat posed by groups like immigrants with the threat felt by the economy. In a "decoupling experiment", these authors explore the impact of economic threat with items that are "coupled" (ie "I am afraid the economic prospects of Dutch society will get worse because of ethnic minorities") and items that are decoupled (ie "I am afraid the economic prospects of Dutch society will get worse") and find that when the more appropriate decoupled items are used, there is no discernable effect of economic threat on hostility to Turks or Moroccans and only small effects on hostility to Surinamese and refugees. On the other hand, Sides and Citrin (1997) find that across the 20 European countries included in their analysis, sociotropic economic perceptions—concern about the country's economic situation—do appear to explain perceptions of negative consequences of immigration and preferences to reduce immigration.

Thus, the empirical evidence on the relationship between economic conditions, personal economic situation, perceived economic threat to the country and hostility to immigration is extremely ambiguous. On the other hand, evidence regarding the threat to culture, values and way of life consistently indicates that such threats are powerful predictors of differences in hostility to immigrants and immigration. Cross-national research conducted by the author (McLaren 2003) and research conducted in the UK by the author (McLaren & Johnson 2007) point to this conclusion, but as discussed above, this research relies on potentially problematical "coupled" indicators. We can again turn to the experiments conducted by Sniderman et al (2004) for more definitive conclusions about the effects of threats to culture, values and way of life. Using a decoupled item measuring collective cultural threat (ie "These days, I am afraid that the Dutch culture is threatened"), these authors find that perceived cultural threat has a large and significant effect on hostility toward all groups investigated (see Sniderman et al 2004, Table 2, p. 39).

Threats to culture, values and way of life are powerful predictors of differences in hostility to immigrants

Equally relevant here is the "Fitting-in experiment" conducted by the same authors, in which respondents are told "Let me tell you about a group of new immigrants that may come here". Respondents are then randomly assigned to one of four groups who receive one of the following stimuli:

- "They speak Dutch fluently and have a very good chance to fit in smoothly with the Dutch culture"
- "They don't speak Dutch fluently and don't have a good chance to fit in smoothly with Dutch culture"
- "They are highly educated and well suited for well-paying jobs"
- "They are not highly educated or well trained and only suited for unskilled jobs"

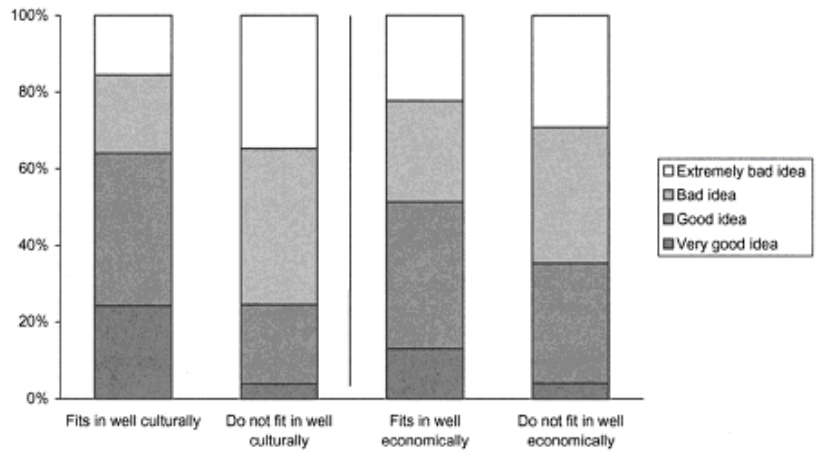
Respondents are then asked "Do you think that it is a good idea or bad idea for these immigrants to be allowed to come here? Would you say that it is a very good idea, a good idea, a somewhat bad idea, or an extremely bad idea?"

The results are shown in Figure 2 and point to the conclusion that whether immigrants are expected to fit in culturally matters more than whether they are expected to fit in economically: approximately 80% of Dutch respondents prefer to restrict immigration when immigrants do not speak Dutch and will not fit in culturally, while only 40% prefer restrictions even when the immigrants would fit in cultur-

ally. On the other hand, approximately 65% would restrict immigrants who do not fit in well economically, while about half would restrict immigration even if the immigrants in question are expected to fit in economically. That is, the difference between the first two stimuli is about 40% whereas the difference between the second two is only about 15%. As argued by Sniderman et al (2004): "not fitting in culturally evokes significantly more opposition to immigration than not fitting in economically, while fitting in culturally promotes significantly more support for it than fitting in economically" (p. 43).

Figure 2: Sniderman et al (2004) Fitting-in experiment

FIGURE 1. The Fitting-In Experiment



Note: The question began with the same introduction for all respondents: "Let me tell you about a group of new immigrants that may come here." Next, each condition described the immigrants differently.

Fit in well economically ($N = 492$): "They are highly educated and well suited for well-paying jobs."

Do not fit in well economically ($N = 516$): "They are not highly educated or well trained and only suited for unskilled jobs."

Fit in well culturally ($N = 526$): "They speak Dutch fluently and have a very good chance to fit in smoothly with the Dutch culture."

Do not fit in well culturally ($N = 473$): "They don't speak Dutch fluently and don't have a good chance to fit in smoothly with Dutch culture."

Following the different descriptions, respondents are asked "Do you think that it is a good idea or a bad idea for these immigrants to be allowed to come here? Would you say that it is a very good idea, a good idea, a somewhat bad idea, or an extremely bad idea?"

Figure reprinted from Figure 1 in Sniderman et al (2004, p. 43).

Sides and Citrin (2007) also use indicators of cultural and national identities that can be considered as "decoupled": 1)"It is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions". (Note that a narrow majority—51%—agreed with this item, compared to 26% who disagree, with the remainder uncertain or ambivalent. This preference for cultural unity is interpreted by the authors as support for an "ethnic" definition of nationhood and should be associated with opposition to immigration.); 2) A combined index of eight European Social Survey items about whether policy in a particular domain should be made at the international, European or national level.

Both of these indicators are consistently strong predictors of anti-immigration hostility. Thus, using a larger number of countries and a wider range of economic indicators, these authors conclude that "European opinion about immigration depends less on economic status (material "interests") and more on both "symbolic" attitudes about the nation ("identities")" (Sides & Citrin 2007, p. 477).

Conclusions

My research with Mark Johnson (McLaren and Johnson 2004, 2007) indicates that as of 2003, roughly 75% of British citizens wanted immigration levels to be reduced a little or a lot, with 50% choosing the latter category. In addition, 47% believed that immigrants take jobs away from the British born, while 44% thought that immigrants were not good for the British economy. These percentages alone might lead one to question the extent to which anti-immigration hostility is driven by personal economic concerns, as it would be rather surprising to find that half of the UK population feels a personal economic threat arising from new entrants.

This paper has reviewed some of the main theories developed to explain anti-immigration sentiment, as well as a small but significant portion of empirically based academic literature on opposition to immigration in Europe. In general, the findings from these key studies point to the conclusion that personal economic self interest is unlikely to be a powerful explanation of hostility to immigration. Moreover, while self-reported group-level economic threat may be somewhat more important in explaining anti-immigration hostility, the "Fitting-in" experiment and other research conducted by Sniderman et al (2004) make it clear that this factor may be far less relevant than cultural concerns; similarly Sides and Citrin (2007) find little evidence to indicate that real country level economic conditions have much bearing on public sentiment regarding immigration.

As Mark Johnson and I have argued elsewhere (McLaren and Johnson 2004, 2007), it is somewhat disconcerting that even among the more educated portion of the British population, hostility towards immigration is on the rise. Given that such individuals ought to be the least economically threatened by new immigrants, along with the array of evidence presented above, we must conclude that factors other than personal economic vulnerability have produced strong anti-immigration sentiment. Namely, some of the fear may be about the effect on the country's economy as a whole (and thus the impact of immigration on the wider group of British citizens), but the evidence presented above points to the conclusion that symbolic threats to values and culture are likely to be even more important in explaining hostility to immigration.

Even among the more educated of the British population, hostility towards immigration is on the rise

Mark Johnson and I have also speculated that the framing of the immigration issue by the media and politicians may be crucial to explaining the way immigrants are perceived and may explain changes in public sentiment toward immigration and immigrants (McLaren & Johnson 2004, 2007). An experiment conducted by the Sniderman team (Sniderman et al 2004, p. 45) in many ways confirms the power of framing when it comes to immigration. Specifically, when these researchers primed a subsample of the respondents to think of themselves as being Dutch ("People belong to different types of groups. One of the most important and essential of these groups is the nation which you belong to. In your case you belong to the Dutch nationality. Each nation is different.") or to think of themselves as individuals ("People differ in many ways and each human being is unique. One person likes music, another likes to go for a walk, still another likes to go out. Everyone is different.") and then asked whether immigration should be made more difficult than it is now, those who were primed to think of themselves as Dutch displayed higher levels of opposition to immigration, even among those with otherwise low levels of cultural threat. As argued by the authors, "situational triggers mobilise opposition broadly through the general public rather than just activating a core constituency already predisposed to oppose immigration" (p. 45).

In terms of policy implications, the studies discussed in this paper point to the conclusion that if government leaders wish to counter hostile public attitudes to immigrants and immigration, they will primarily need to direct their arguments toward concerns about the impact of immigration on both the economy, on the one hand, and culture and values, on the other, emphasising the effects to society as a whole. Given that national identity has in great part been constructed by government officials and intellectuals in the first place, it does not seem overly far fetched to assume the same groups can play some role in reconstructing identities along slightly different lines to counter the fears that have developed about immigration among European mass publics.

Addressing the economic fears may be a relatively simple task of presenting clear information to citizens about the economic benefits of immigration and the costs of reducing immigration. Many among the political elite in Europe tend to argue that immigration is indeed economically beneficial, but some supporting evidence of this, along with evidence indicating that major ingroups like co-nationals are not being harmed by immigration may help to change opinion far more than evidence-free rhetoric which may appear to be biased.

Addressing cultural fears is likely to be more difficult, however. Fears related to the religion and culture of new immigrants were apparent in Europe before the attacks of September 11, July 7, and the Madrid train attack of 2005, and these incidents have heightened fears even further. For instance, clear majorities express fears about the loyalty and identity of Muslims in Britain (McLaren & Johnson 2007). Based on empirical research, it appears that countering such fears may be achieved by (a) careful framing of identity itself (Sniderman et al 2004); (b) presentation of statistics indicating precisely what portion of the public are immigrants—figures which are likely to be far lower than most citizens realise (Sides & Citrin 2007); and (c) considering methods of encouraging "intimate" (friendship-based) contact between immigrants and citizens (Pettigrew 1998; McLaren 2003). On the latter point, it is clear that any government policy along these lines must be carefully planned, as evidence from the US points to the failure of policies like bussing between schools. Given that research points to the positive effects of intimate contact (Pettigrew 1998; McLaren 2003) in reducing animosity toward minorities and immigrants, perhaps it is time to consider policies that can change the current settlement and housing patterns which appear to discourage such contact.

The review of academic findings on anti-immigration and anti-immigrant hostility provided above clearly highlights some of the difficulties involved in reaching conclusions about the causes of anti-immigration sentiment. Although much evidence points to the conclusion that economic self interest is unlikely to play a major role in such sentiment, given that such findings are clearly counter to conventional wisdom and understandings of behaviour such as voting for extreme right parties such as the BNP, it seems that better evidence may be required to more firmly draw such conclusions. For instance, across western Europe, the size of polling samples which fall into the lowest socioeconomic group is increasingly small, and so it may be that analyses need to concentrate on "oversampling" from this group. Moreover, experiments such as the Sniderman et al (2004) decoupling experiment ought to be replicated in other European countries before completely discounting economic self interest as a causal explanation for anti-immigrant sentiment. Equally important is considering the effects of the various factors mentioned above on different types of migrants, again, using quasi-experimental methods. Thus, while we seem to have a rough picture of the nature of anti-immigrant sentiment, more work must, of course, be done to clarify our understanding further.

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Appendix: data and measures

Quillian's (1995) measures of anti-immigrant and racial prejudice

Quillian creates two separate indices, one for anti-immigrant prejudice, and the other for racial prejudice. These indices are created from seven questions which ask about prejudice toward people of other races and nationalities. For each question, respondents were read the statement: "I am going to read you out opinions. For each opinion I read out, please tell me to which, if any, kinds of people it applies." Respondents were then shown a card listing groups of people to whom the statement could apply: "people of another nationality", "people of another race", "people of another religion", "people of another culture", "people of another social class", "none of the categories", and "all of the categories". Respondents could choose more than one. The seven statements used to construct the indices are: (1) They exploit social security benefits. (2) Their presence is one of the causes of delinquency and violence. (3) Marrying into one of these groups always ends badly. (4) To have them as neighbours creates problems. (5) If there are a lot of their children in school, it reduces the level of education. Responses to these five questions were coded 1 for the anti-immigrant prejudice index if the respondent indicated that the statement applied to the "people of another nationality", 1 for the racial prejudice index if the respondent indicated that the statement applied to "people of another race", and 0 otherwise. The last two questions in the index follow a different format: (6) Generally speaking (show card), how do you feel about the number of people of another (nationality/race) living in our country? Are there too many, a lot but not too many, or not many?" Responses of "too many" were coded 1 and other responses were coded 0. (7) "Do you personally, in your daily life, find disturbing the presence of people of another (nationality/race)?" Responses were "disturbing" (coded 1), or "not disturbing" (coded 0). Quillian indicates that these items were strongly intercorrelated, and concludes that they could be combined to create indices. To create the two indexes, one for anti-immigrant and one for racial prejudice, he summed the scores on the seven items in each scale and scaled the index to range in values from 0 to 1 (presumably by summing and dividing by the number of items in each index, 7) (see Quillian 1995, pp. 592–93).

Table 3. Impact of Perceived Group Threat on the Effects of Individual-Level Variables for Ireland and Belgium[a]

Variable	Expected Effect for[b] Ireland	Belgium	Difference	Interquartile Range[c]	Impact of Difference in Slope on Prejudice[d]
RACIAL PREJUDICE					
Education	-.0033	-.0111	-.0078	5.0	-.0391
Age	.0006	.0017	.0011	30.0	.0342
Working class	.0055	.0298	.0243	1.0	.0243
Other races in neighborhood	.0298	.0337	.0039	1.0	.0039
Change in economic situation	.0083	.0201	.0118	1.0	.0118
Alienation score	.0471	.0816	.0345	.4	.0138
Intercept	.1101	.3372	.2271	–	.2271
ANTI-IMMIGRANT PREJUDICE					
Education	-.0051	-.0147	-.0096	5.0	-.0481
Age	.0002	.0012	.0010	30.0	.0317
Worki ng class status	.0062	.0276	.0214	1.0	.0214
Immigrants in neighborhood	.0319	.0200	-.0119	1.0	-.0119
Change in economic situation	.0028	.0181	.0152	1.0	.0152
Alienation Score	.0345	.0974	.0628	.4	.0251
Income lowest quartile	.0137	-.0130	-.0267	1.0	-.0267
Intercept	.1108	.2970	.1863	–	.1863

a. Ireland and Belgium were chosen because their scores on the interaction term P/... x Gk are just above the 25th and just below the 75th percentile, respectively (Ireland =.069; Belgium =.282).

b. The expected effects are computed from the estimates in Tables 1 and 2, Model 4.

c. The interquartile range (IQR) is the difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles. The number in the column is the IQR for the pooled sample of 11,676 individuals, except for dichotomous variables, where the number in the column is 1. The effect of the difference in slopes is evaluated for a change in individual characteristics from the 25th to the 75th percentile for ordinal and interval variables, and from 0 to 1 for binary variables.

d. This is the change in expected prejudice associated with a change in an individual characteristic listed under the IQR column for an individual in Ireland as compared to Belgium. For instance, a five-year change in education is predicted to decrease racial prejudice by .0391 more in Belgium than in Ireland because of the greater threat presented to the dominant group in Belgium.

Sides and Citrin (2007) measures of preferred levels of immigration and perceived consequences of immigration

The principal dependent variable in the Sides and Citrin analysis (2007) measures beliefs about the appropriate level of immigration into one's country. The European Social Survey (ESS) asked a series of questions that referred to different kinds of immigrant populations. Two questions centred on race and ethnicity: "To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?" and "How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?" Respondents were given these options: allow many, allow some, allow a few, or allow none. The modal preference of respondents was for the vague category of "some". With regard to immigrants of the same race or ethnicity, 16% answered "many", 49% answered "some", 29% answered "a few" and only 6% answered "none". Respondents were somewhat less welcoming when asked about immigrants of a different ethnic background: the majority said "many" or "some" (10 and 43%, respectively) while 36% said "a few" and 11% said "none". Answers to these two questions are highly correlated (r=0.76). (Sides & Citrin 2007, p. 481–82).

The second set of questions used in their analysis centre on the perceived consequences of immigrants. The ESS included a series of scales referring to different areas of a country's life, for example, economy (ie whether immigrants are good or bad for the economy, whether they take jobs away or help create new jobs and whether they take out more services or put in more taxes), crime (ie whether immigrants make crime worse or better) and culture (make the country a worse or better place to live and whether they undermine or enrich cultural life). The response categories ranged from 0 to 10, where one endpoint indicated a bad outcome, such as "take jobs away", and the other

indicated a good outcome, such as "create new jobs".

The authors created composite "perceived consequences" and "preferred levels" indices by averaging responses to the six items related to each of these topics. Each index is coded from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates more negative feelings about immigration. They computed this index by scaling each individual item to range from 0 to 1 (such that 1 indicates allowing no immigrants into the country), and then averaging these items (Sides & Citrin 2007, pp. 481–84).