Immigration absorption and anti-immigrant attitudes in European welfare states

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The immigration debate has become increasingly prominent in the politics and society of European countries over the last decade. In 2017, over 15% of European citizens thought immigration was the most important problem facing their country, compared to around 10 percent in 2005 (European Commission 2012; 2018). Importantly, natives tend to see immigration as a problem if it becomes associated with multiple threats or downsides. There are economic concerns, principally that immigrants take away jobs or form a disproportionate burden on the welfare state. There is also the fear that natives' culture and values are in jeopardy since immigrants bring in their own, foreign, culture, religion and habits. And at least since 9/11 there is also the fear that immigration breeds home-grown terrorism, as numerous terrorist attacks in the Western world have been committed by people with an immigration background. These and other concerns have provided a fertile breeding ground for anti-immigrant parties that have gained relevance in most of Europe since the late 1990s and early 2000s. Moreover, their ideas about immigration have become part of the platforms of more mainstream European parties (Van Spanje 2010; Abou-Chadi 2016).

Against this backdrop, one would expect that immigration itself has also been on the rise in Europe during this period. This is true, but not to the dramatic extent that the intensity of the immigration debate suggests. Recent studies have found a discrepancy between how natives feel about immigration on the one hand and the actual number of immigrants in the country on the other (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014; Semyonov et al. 2008; Strabac 2011). Moreover, European citizens systematically overestimate the number of migrants living in their country. Based on European Social Survey (ESS) data, Moshe Semyonov et al. (2008) show that in Germany in 2002 and 2003, people estimated the percentage of the foreign-born population at almost 20 percent on average, whereas in reality it is about 8 percent. Germany is not an exception. Similar – or even worse – overestimations can be found in Belgium, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the UK, and Slovenia (ibid., 14).

Furthermore, people who overestimate the size of immigration also tend to hold more negative opinions towards immigrants, whereas the actual size of immigration is not related to immigration attitudes (Sides and Citrin 2007; Strabac 2011; Hopkins et al. 2018). To illustrate this point, panel A of Figure 1.1 shows a simple scatter plot with the horizontal axis showing immigration size, measured as a percentage of the foreign-born population, and the vertical axis showing the percentage of citizens believing that immigration is the most important problem facing the country in 2015. Of course, the context of the countries disappears in such a crude figure, but it is still striking that there is no correlation at the country level between the number of immigrants in a country and the extent to which the population believes this is a problem ($r = .01$). On the country level, there is even a negative relationship between the percentage of foreign-born population and anti-immigration attitude, as seen in panel B ($r = -.48$).

Figure 1.1: Scatterplot of Percentage foreign born and Percentage of people who believe immi-gration is the biggest problem facing their country and Anti-immigration attitude in 2015
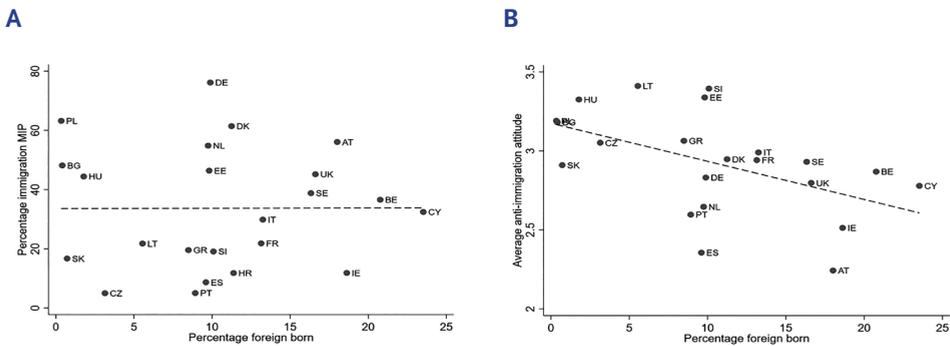
A

B

These patterns underscore how attitudes towards immigration reflect a controversy that goes well beyond the basic levels of immigration with which citizens are confronted. There are numerous ways in which immigration can be understood as more or less problematic, depending on other factors than the mere number of migrants coming in. To better understand anti-immigrant sentiment, it is necessary to look beyond the hard immigration statistics and study how immigration is *absorbed* into host societies. The term 'absorption' was used, in academic confext, to describe the adaptation and assimilation of immigrants in society since the early 1950s, for instance by Shmuel Eisenstadt (1953). But where the terms *assimilation* and *integration* mainly refer to personal adjustments made by immigrants, as largely one-way processes, immigration *absorption* also includes both the host country's institutional adaptation and the collective, societal level (ibid., 167). This is important to the debate about immigration attitudes, because the extent to and ways in which immigration is discussed and viewed by the host country's institutions, such as politics or the media, and the extent to which migrant groups are collectively different, inform individuals' immigration attitudes.

This dissertation studies immigration politics in terms of such absorption, and contributes to understanding the origins and implications of immigration absorption in European polities. The study does so by exploring different aspects of immigration absorption and how they relate to natives' immigration attitudes. It also studies how welfare policies, aimed at providing opportunities to vulnerable groups, stimulate or hamper immigration absorption. Finally, the dissertation investigates how immigration absorption might influence natives' support for government welfare redistribution.

There are many aspects of immigration absorption that could potentially sway immigration attitudes of natives, but in this dissertation I focus on two. First, I study the collective economic and cultural integration of immigrants as major aspects of absorption. Immigration becomes more noticeable the more those migrants are economically marginalized or if they are culturally more different from natives. In this way, immigrant integration, or the lack thereof, could be related to natives' perceptions of immigration and anti-immigrant sentiment. The second form of immigration absorption involves news media reporting. For most people, news media are the main source of information about what is happening at the societal level (Demers et al. 1989). The amount of immigration coverage and the ways in which the media cover immigration could be even more important than actual immigration figures for peoples' perception of and opinion about immigration. In an earlier article, published together with Eelco Harteveld, Sarah de Lange, and Wouter van der Brug (Harteveld et al. 2018), I show that media reporting of the European refugee crisis mediates the effect of the inflow of migrants on how citizens evaluate their national and European government. In this dissertation, I explore the extent to and ways in which migrants are discussed in the media environment more generally and over a longer time period and how this relates to immigration attitudes. Immigration could be perceived as more problematic if it plays a more central role in debates in the media and if it is linked to issues that activate natives' economic, cultural, or security concerns.

Beyond making sense of these forms of absorption of immigration, I examine how such absorption relates to the cluster of policies most central to the life chances and wellbeing of both natives and migrants: the welfare state. In the discussion of economically marginalized groups the most obvious place to look for solutions is employment and, from a policy perspective, labor market policies. Labor market policies, or LMPs, are intended to provide financial relief for people who are unemployed and to stimulate or even train them to find a new job. But are the effects of such policies the same for natives and migrants? And if they are not, do they positively or negatively impact the economic integration of migrants? Finally, I consider the opposite direction of causality connecting welfare politics to immigrant absorption: How does immigration absorption affect the politics of the welfare state? On the one hand, there is concern that increasing immigration undermines citizen support for welfare policies (e.g., Eger and Breznau 2017; Soroka et al. 2006). On the other hand, the insecurities that come with immigration could motivate natives to ask for more social protection (Finseraas 2008). I examine the potential effects of media reporting on welfare-related immigration news on natives' opinion about government redistribution. Does more welfare-related immigration news increase or undermine welfare state support?

Contributions

This dissertation makes contributions to a variety of academic debates around the concept of immigration absorption and the broader immigration debate in contemporary Europe.

There is a large and increasing body of scholarship focused on understanding (anti-) immigrant attitudes. Apart from societal level explanations such as immigration itself or economic fluctuations, at the individual level education has been found to be among the most important explanatory variables shaping attitudes towards immigration. Time and again this variable has proven to be a strong predictor of anti-immigrant sentiment (Bauer et al. 2000; Citrin et al. 1997; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Sides and Citrin 2007). Natives with a lower education level are generally more anti-immigration than are higher educated natives. Often, these findings are used to argue that immigration attitudes are economically rather than culturally motivated (Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). This school of thought was popular in the 1990s and early 2000s. The reasoning, here, is that migrants tend to be relatively lower educated and tend to bear the negative economic externalities of migration, while higher educated natives may even benefit from (disproportionately low-skilled) immigration. Following this logic, migrants are thought to compete with lower educated natives for jobs, to bring down wages, and to disproportionally depend on the welfare state. The higher educated natives, in contrast, are thought to economically benefit from the inflow of lower educated migrants, because of the increasing competition in the lower tier jobs, from which the higher educated natives profit as consumers and employers. This dynamic creates *winners and losers of globalization* (Kriesi et al. 2006).

Other researchers have emphasized cultural and ideological rather than economic considerations driving anti-immigration sentiments. For instance, Jens Hainmueller and Michael Hiscox (2007) looked into which type of immigration high- and low-educated natives supported or opposed and found that natives with a lower education level are against both low-skill and high-skill immigration, while natives with higher education levels are more supportive of any kind of immigration. From the mid-2000s, studies have further challenged the idea of economic competition as a driver of anti-immigrant sentiment and pointed to more cultural reasons for why people, especially lower educated natives, are against immigration (McLaren and Johnson 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007). This cultural side of the debate has gained more traction and ideas have been developed to help to grasp what role immigrant integration plays in explaining such sentiments. Social identity theory, for instance, argues that nativist worries over the loss of national identity by the increase of different languages, traditions and customs are related to anti-immigrant sentiment (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Citrin et al. 1997; McLaren and Johnson 2007). People who think national unity is an important virtue to strive for or those who are in favor of a strong national authority prefer lower levels of immigration and perceive more negative consequences of immigration (Sides and Citrin 2007).

The perceived cultural threat is likely to play a role when migrant groups differ culturally and economically more from natives. This implies that bigger differences between the in-

group and the out-group are correlated with higher levels of anti-immigration sentiment of (lower educated) natives. However, a problem with the above contributions is that they tend to be based on survey data and that they link personal opinion on the (perceived) importance of some root convictions (identity, culture) to opinions about immigration. Apart from the inherent endogeneity in such operationalization, it is unclear what kind of societal developments are causing those root convictions to play out the way they do. Some studies in this field take the proportion of migrants in society as a measure of diversity, which falls short, as I noted above (Card et al. 2012; Hood and Morris 1997). There are only a few studies that link measures of cultural diversity to immigration opinions. For instance, Silke Schneider (2008) finds a positive relationship between the share of non-western migrants in society and anti-immigrant sentiment. In this study, non-westerness is taken as a proxy for cultural differences between natives and migrants. Another cultural difference that has gained relevance in political and societal debates in Europe over the past decades is religion. Tensions deriving from the immigration of Muslims in European societies have fueled debates about national identity and immigration and contributed to the rise of anti-immigrant parties (Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). Finally, Benjamin Newman operationalizes the cultural threat by measuring the effects of personal encounters of natives with migrants who do not speak the language of the host country and finds a positive effect of such encounters on restrictive immigration policies (Newman 2014; Newman et al. 2012).

I contribute to this literature by clarifying key features of absorption of immigrants in a polity, explicitly exploring how such absorption plays out for attitudes towards immigrants and towards immigration. Figure 1.2 schematically visualizes the conceptual model of the dissertation and the connections between the different chapters. First, in Chapter Two, I add two other measurements of immigrant integration to the anti-immigrant sentiment debate. The first measure relates to economic differences between natives and migrants and the second one to cultural differences. These independent variables represent the two sides of the anti-immigrant sentiment debate, while moving the explanation from personal motivation to a conceptualization of immigration absorption. The results show that labor market inequality between natives and migrants in situations where natives are increasingly more often employed than migrants matters for anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly among higher educated natives. They are more pro-immigration when the unemployment gap between migrants and natives is small. Further analyses suggest that higher educated natives support immigration when the employment of natives is high. In these times there is less pressure on the labor market, but a high employment level of natives is also reflected in a high employment gap between natives and migrants. For lower educated natives, the employment gap between natives and migrants does not seem to be related to their stance on immigration. For them, the difference in cultural values, measured by the average difference on opinions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, religiousness and personal freedom, is positively related to

anti-immigrant stance. The cultural value differences between migrants and natives seem to be less important for higher educated natives' immigration opinion.

Figure 1.2: Conceptual framework of the different chapters (numbers in the Figure relate to the different chapters)
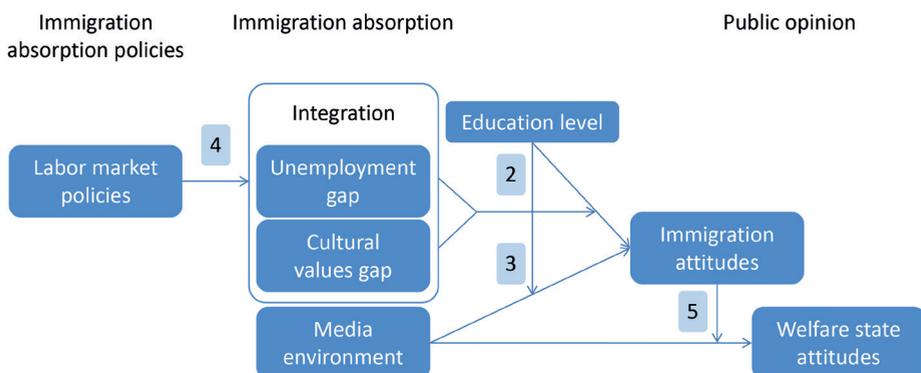
Note: This conceptual overview of the dissertation is a simplification to show the main concepts I study and to clarify how they are related across the chapters. It does not pretend to show all the indicators (and relationships between them) included in the separate chapters (and certainly not all those relevant in reality).

Second, I explore the role of media reporting on immigration as another form of immigration absorption that can be expected to influence immigration attitudes (Chapter Three). For most people, news media are the main source of their knowledge of societal problems and debates. The media give meaning to societal issues and are therefore a crucial factor in how a society understands and absorbs immigration. Although the aim of journalism is to follow societal trends, media have their own dynamic (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Harcup and O'Neill 2001). A case can be made for the influence of media reporting on immigration attitudes. This is a well-developed field of research with many, mostly country-level, case studies, looking at the effects of 1) media attention on immigration (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007; Van Klingeren et al. 2015), 2) the framing of immigration (Igartua and Cheng 2009; McLaren et al. 2018), and 3) the tone of immigration news on anti-immigrant sentiment (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Schlueter and Davidov 2013). The main conclusions that can be drawn are that increased media reporting on immigration increases the importance given to the issue on the public agenda (agenda-setting). Specific frames, such as a crime frame, economic frame, and education frame, also invoke anti-immigrant sentiment, whereas a (positive) economic-contributions frame has been found to do little to increase sympathy for migrants (Igartua and Cheng 2009; McLaren et al. 2018).

Although some of these studies have theoretically linked the amount of media attention to anti-immigrant sentiment, the actual dependent variable used is a measure of problem

importance ("what is the most important problem facing your country?") (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007; Van Klingeren et al. 2015). This could be problematic, because it is unclear whether this question actually measures anti-immigrant attitudes, merely issue importance, or both (Miller 2007; Wlezien 2005). It is not unthinkable that a person who is not necessarily anti-immigration still names immigration as an important problem for the country, just because of the prominence of the issue in the public debate. When it comes to the analysis of the influence of the content of media reporting on immigration attitudes, the literature on framing is insightful. In different country case studies, the effects of different frames on anti-immigrant opinion have been studied (see Eberl et al. 2018 for a helpful overview). The advantage of such studies is that specific immigration related debates can be mapped and their relationship to immigration opinions analyzed. In this dissertation, however, I broaden the scope and determine which associative frames in the media environment – welfare, Islam, or terrorism – across 10 European countries are most strongly related to citizens' immigration attitudes.

The empirical analyses suggest that mere attention to immigration in the media environment does not sway immigration opinions one way or the other. Yet the comparison between the three immigration frames points into an interesting direction. Increased reporting on the immigration-welfare frame does not seem to be related to anti-immigrant attitudes, but reporting on the two non-economic issues, Islam and terrorism, is positively related to anti-immigrant attitudes.

Chapter Two (on economic and cultural differences) and Chapter Three (media reporting) both consider the impact of immigration absorption on immigration attitudes. These chapters provide strikingly similar findings on when and whose immigration attitudes change. In both chapters, I distinguish between the economic and cultural aspects of absorption. I investigate whether the effects are conditional on citizens' education level by analyzing interaction effects with education. My findings support the notion that it is important to distinguish between economic and cultural absorption of immigration and that education does play a role in how this absorption is processed by natives, but in different ways than the economic approach suggests.

In line with the recent literature on anti-immigrant sentiment I find that (1) the cultural aspects are more important in explaining immigration attitudes and (2) natives with a low education level respond more strongly to both (a lack of) cultural integration of migrants and media reporting on the non-economic sub-issues of immigration. In other words, lower educated natives seem to be more susceptible to cultural differences between migrants and natives and to media reporting on cultural issues related to immigration than their higher educated counterparts, although this difference is weak in case of the media reporting. Higher educated natives' anti-immigration opinion increases if the

employment gap between natives and migrants increases. The fact that lower educated natives respond differently to these cues is not surprising, but this insight can explain anti-immigrant sentiment and the differences between the opinions of those two groups of natives. It also shows that the cultural debate about immigration and cultural differences between natives and migrants further polarizes lower and higher educated natives.

Another area of study where the absorption of immigration is understudied is the debate around the relationship between immigration and the welfare state. Issues of immigration and the welfare state are often seen as interrelated (e.g., Brady and Finnigan 2014; Burgoon et al. 2012; Crepaz 2008; Soroka et al. 2006). Welfare policies have the potential to improve immigration absorption as they are intended to decrease inequality in society. The politics of the welfare state might also be influenced by the extent to which immigration is viewed as a problem for welfare state sustainability.

In most European countries, there is a significant gap between natives and migrants when it comes to unemployment. Immigrants are substantially more likely to be unemployed than natives. Because unemployment is associated with a variety of other problems, from loss of income, to health issues, to crime (Caliendo and Schmidl 2016), it is crucial to understand how social policies relate to the unemployment gap between migrants and natives. One important question in this debate is whether the social policies in place are similarly effective for migrants as they are for natives. In other words, do welfare policies decrease existing inequalities and promote immigrant absorption, are such policies irrelevant, or do they marginalize migrants? This is the main topic of Chapter Four. By increasing or decreasing the unemployment gap, social policies can either help or hinder the absorption of immigration. Key social policies relevant to unemployment gaps are the array of provisions associated with LMPs: unemployment benefits (UBs) and training programs, subsidized labor, direct job creation and other active labor market programs (ALMPs). These policies are intended to get unemployed people back to work and avoid long-term unemployment across societal groups. Their implications can and should be crucial to immigration absorption.

It remains an open and empirical question whether LMPs are more effective, just as effective, or less effective for migrants compared to natives. In fact, there are factors underlying employment gaps between natives and migrants that could skew the effectiveness of the LMPs in getting some people rather than others back to work. Established disadvantages of migrants are related to welfare programs, employers, or the characteristics of migrants themselves (Brücker et al. 2002). First, on the side of the policies, it is possible that the more exclusive the policy is, the more difficult it is for migrants to access, thus increasing the employment gap (Corrigan 2014; Eugster 2018; Sainsbury 2006). Such "welfare chauvinism" could foster higher educated natives' support for social policy, but may well contribute to increased unemployment among migrant groups and to social exclusion. Second, on the

side of the employers, employment discrimination is a well-documented problem that LMPs cannot resolve (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Carlsson and Rooth 2007; Evans and Kelley 1991; Reimers 1983). Third, on the side of the migrants, it could be that some of the problems unique to migrants also make labor market policies less effective for them than for natives. For instance, a language deficit, lower or not-translatable skills or diplomas, or a lack of experience navigating the new labor market may not be solved by insurance transfers or "hand-outs" (Barrett and McCarthy 2008; Chiswick 1978; Chiswick et al. 2005). If LMPs are successful in helping unemployed people back to work, the out-group might well be the last group to benefit from these policies, thus exacerbating gaps in labor market participation.

As part of this dissertation's analysis of absorption of immigration, I analyze whether LMPs on average widen or narrow the employment gap and I explore the aforementioned possible explanations. The results show that both UBs and ALMPs increase the employment gap. The positive effects of UBs on the employment chance of native unemployed people does not translate to third-country migrant (TCM) groups. ALMPs even appear to have a negative effect on the employment chances of these non-EU migrants. Further analyses suggest that the differences in effects disappear for migrants that are in the host country for nine years or longer, which implies that time spent in the country, adjusting to the labor market, could help migrants to obtain the intended effects from the LMPs. These patterns are, in any event, major correctives to intuitive and optimistic views of activation oriented social policies to foster integration and immigrant absorption.

On the other side of the relationship between immigration and the welfare state lies the question whether immigration strengthens or undermines support for the welfare state among natives, which is an important condition for a functioning welfare state in a liberal democracy. This question is the last feature of migrant absorption on which my dissertation focuses and the subject of Chapter Five. It is an important issue, because whether the relationship between immigration and welfare state support is positive or negative is neither theoretically straight-forward nor resolved as an empirical issue. In most countries, migrant groups rely more on non-contributory government assistance than do natives, but whether this is related to the overrepresentation in other vulnerable categories (e.g., education level) or whether it is really an effect of simply being a migrant is contested (Barrett and McCarthy 2008; Castronova et al. 2001). On average, natives feel that migrants are less deserving of government assistance and they prefer their tax money not go to migrant out-groups (e.g. Reeskens and Van der Meer 2018). In this way immigration may lead to a decrease in support for the welfare state and increasing immigration can foster welfare chauvinism (Eger and Breznau 2017). In contrast, the opposite effect is also possible at the margin, as immigration can foster economic insecurities, especially for lower educated natives, leading natives to demand more, not less, social protection through government redistribution (Finseraas 2008; Burgoon et al. 2012).

When it comes to understanding welfare state support, the role of immigration absorption is often overlooked. Given the importance of immigration in the public debate and knowing that immigration is often related to welfare state support, media framing of immigration could affect support for the welfare state. In a survey experiment, Sabina Avdagic and Lee Savage (2018) found that people who read news that negatively links immigration to the welfare state show lower support for government spending on social benefits and services than does the control group (no framing). Surprisingly, the group receiving news with a positive association between immigration and the welfare state also show lower welfare state support than the control group (although less negative than the group with the negative immigration-welfare cue). This could be an artifact of the overwhelming negativity of the current immigration debate (Esser et al. 2017), which is activated even by positive news or it could be dependent on people's pre-existing opinions about immigration and the welfare state (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Gilens 1995; 1996).

In this dissertation's final analysis of absorption politics, I study spillover effects of the immigration debate into welfare state support at the aggregate level. I argue that this framing is related to attitudes about government redistribution and that this relationship is conditional on someone's attitude to immigration. People who hold anti-immigration opinions are less supportive of government redistribution if immigration and welfare are more often linked in the media. The opposite is true for people with a positive opinion about immigration; they tend to be more supportive of government redistribution when the welfare-immigration frame is more prominent in the news. Thus, this media framing appears to spur feelings of welfare chauvinism among natives who are against immigration and feelings of solidarity – with migrants and/or the lower tier of the labor market – of those who are more positive about immigration.

Analytical approach and methods of analysis
The study uses a quantitative approach, using data from across countries and time. Because of data availability, the selection of the countries and years differs slightly between the chapters.[1] However, the underlying principle of the case selection is consistent: as many European countries as possible, at least a mix of various net-immigration countries

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[1] Chapter Two: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Chapter Three and Four: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Chapter Five: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

across different parts of Europe, from the beginning of the 2000s until most recently. Although the included European countries and years per paper could be characterized as a convenience sample, largely dependent on data availability, there are important theoretical reasons to study recent years within European countries.

Although there are many differences between countries in terms of immigration history, patterns and politics, there are also a number of similarities across Europe. Most of the countries in the sample are net-immigration countries, with a welfare state and a vivid immigration debate in politics, media and society. So far, there has been no research on the effects of immigration absorption that focuses on immigrant integration and media reporting in Europe, so it is unclear if the theories developed in country case studies and small N country comparative studies would also apply in a systematic large N study across Europe. It would be interesting to broaden the scope even further and include countries beyond Europe. However, on top of the practical data issues, including countries like Australia and the United States would quickly become difficult, because of the different immigration histories, demographies, identity politics debates and presence or absence of welfare states, let alone extending the sample with Asian countries or the global south. Disaggregating would come with opportunities to improve causal inferences by improving the internal validity of the measurements or by going deeper into the causal mechanisms or country- or time-specific circumstances, but jeopardizes the aim to generalize. These kinds of dilemmas are inherent to social science research and optimizing one aspect often leads to the weakening of the other, if time and resources are held constant.

When it comes to the time period of the research, all chapters cover at least the period 2002-2015.[2] These years form an essential period in Europe for the immigration issue. In many countries, they include the rise of political parties running on an anti-immigration platform. Europe saw an increase of terrorist attacks, some perpetrated by migrants or people with an immigration background. Moreover, the selected years cover the periods before and during the refugee crisis of 2014-2015. I use the ESS for my main dependent variable and a number of individual level control variables. The reasons for using the ESS are threefold: (1) it includes three relevant questions on immigration attitudes; (2) it contains a good measure of education level; and (3) the dataset is based on excellent sampling across Europe over many years. The main disadvantage is that the ESS does not go further back than 2002. This is unfortunate, considering that this period could be characterized as one in which, on a policy level, immigration was already Europeanized and countries have adopted large numbers of post-colonial and labor migrants. That

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[2] Chapter Two: 2002-2017.

Chapter Three and Five: 2002-2015; media data collection was performed before the release of ESS wave 8.

Chapter Four: 1998-2015.

being said, the debate was not as prominent or as heated as in the years that are covered by this dissertation. Given the fact that my conclusions give more leverage to the cultural motivations behind anti-immigrant sentiment than to the economic ones and that my dissertation, as well as the literature it is in agreement with usually covers the 2000s, it is not entirely certain that the 1990s literature on economic motivations of anti-immigrant sentiment were incorrect or just describing a different time period with a different way of looking at the issue. It would be interesting to see if the effects of the cultural threat are similar in times when the issue is less salient.

Across the chapters of this the dissertation I make distinctions between immigrants and natives. With immigrants I refer to everybody who is born in a different country than where they are currently residing: the foreign-born population. This includes people from other EU countries and even neighboring countries. The reason for migrating (economic, seeking refuge, family migration, etc.) is not relevant for inclusion or exclusion from this broad category. Disaggregating based on origin country or migration reason is not possible with the available data. This is reflected in my measures of immigrant integration, where I take the average employment and average scores on three key cultural values of this group of migrants as a whole. When it comes to the other immigration related measures, it is not possible to work with a clear definition of what a migrant is. For instance, the measurement of the size of media attention to immigration contains several broad terms that describe immigrants and immigration, but the way those terms are used is in the hands of the journalists who write the newspaper articles. The same applies to the immigration attitudes of the respondents to the survey. The survey questions all use the term 'immigration' without an additional definition, which leaves space for interpretations and associations of the respondent. This too makes it difficult to disaggregate the broad categories of migrants and natives.

One of the most complicated endeavors of this dissertation is to measure immigration absorption and to distinguish it from real-world developments, such as immigration size and immigration attitudes. The choices made in conceptualization and measurement have important consequences for the quality of the study and the nature of the results and interpretation. To ensure the quality of the measures, the guiding principles have been to meticulously explain and justify all the steps of data collection and variable alteration and to show, as robustness tests, the results of the analyses in case other choices were made. Most of the variables in the regression models come directly from their original sources, have been carefully collected and are widely used (ESS, Labour Force Survey (LFS), Eurostat). For some key variables, I performed data alterations of existing variables and I personally collected data for other variables, which need a short clarification.

My first measure of immigration absorption involves economic and cultural immigrant integration. Key in the measurement of integration is gauging the differences between migrants and natives, in this case economically, in terms of employment, and culturally, in terms of core cultural values. The underlying reasoning is that if migrants in country A are more often unemployed than migrants in country B, but at a more similar rate as the natives in A, the perception of economic success or integration of migrants in country A is likely higher than that of the migrants in country B. The same goes for cultural values. If migrants in country A are for instance more religious than the migrants in country B, but the natives in country A are also more religious, the natives in country A experience fewer differences between them and the migrant groups, which could influence their immigration attitudes down the line. Data for the two variables is retrieved from the LFS in case of unemployment and from the ESS for cultural values differences.

When it comes to my other measure of immigration absorption, media reporting, I use my own calculations of relative attention to and framing of the immigration issue in the media environment per country per month. The concept of the media environment is crucial to my analysis of the absorption of immigration through media reporting. To study media effects outside the artificial setting of a lab or survey experiment, over long stretches of time and in different countries is a challenging undertaking for a couple of reasons. Quality data on the content of news on TV, radio and social media is scarce, which leaves newspapers. Also, it is not possible to know and measure, let alone control the media reporting the respondents consume across countries and time. This means I have to rely on the assumptions that most media outlets, although they may differ in the tone of the news, still follow a similar media agenda, of which mainstream newspapers are indicative (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2008), and that the general public has a notion of this information environment by following the news or by interactions with other people (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Jerit et al. 2006; Peter 2004; Schmitt-Beck 2003; Shoemaker and Reese 2014). The measures themselves are measures of issue importance, relative to the total news supply. I used relatively simple, clearcut search terms for immigration and immigration related to welfare, Islam and terrorism to derive the relevant newspaper articles from the LexisNexis database. For every country in the sample I selected a mainstream newspaper with the highest circulation available. The monthly measures of immigration and its associative frames are divided by the total number of newspaper articles of the same newspaper in the same month to get a measure of relative issue importance.

My main dependent variable in the first part of the dissertation is immigration attitudes. It is used in Chapters Two and Three and as a moderating variable in Chapter Four. It is extracted from the ESS and measured by three components. The scale includes a question on the general opinion of the respondent on immigration, whether the respondent thinks

immigration is good or bad for the economy and if the respondent thinks the cultural life is enriched or undermined by immigration. This scale is used in an effort to get as close to immigration opinions as possible, including both economic and cultural cues. In this case it is preferred over the most-important-problem (MIP) question. Although an MIP question is an appropriate question to measure an issue salience, the formulation is too general to obtain a valid measure of someone's opinion on a certain issue. It is not impossible that someone with a pro-immigration attitude names immigration as an important problem. A direct measure of anti-immigrant sentiment is also preferred over support for an anti-immigrant party, because that variable contains unknown information about other issue positions (like, for instance, European unification or law and order) and the relationship between a respondent and the current political landscape in the country.

All the empirical chapters of this dissertation include models using the analysis of interaction effects, because a number of the relationships described earlier are expected to be dependent on personal characteristics. Working with interaction effects requires extra care with both the composition and the interpretation of the models (Brambor et al. 2006). The interaction models on which I focus follow a commonly used strategy of including the same control variables and other estimations as the baseline models, only adding the interaction terms of the key variables of interest. For an informed interpretation of such interactions, the substantive and statistical meaning and significance of the results requires counterfactual modeling/plotting of the marginal effects. This dissertation always analyzes interaction models in such terms, as is good practice (ibid.). My analyses also address an often-overlooked issue of interaction models: the ambiguity of a causal or correlational process that underlies a given interaction revealed by such models. A substantively and statistically significant interaction between two variables, say media framing and anti-immigration attitudes in shaping some outcome of interest, might plausibly reflect two very different conditional processes: a situation where the effect of media framing is moderated by anti-immigration attitudes and/or a situation where the effect of anti-immigration attitudes is moderated by media framing. Interaction models are mute as to which process is afoot in real political and social life. In my dissertation's interaction models, I show and discuss both the marginal effects of the interaction effect as proposed in the corresponding hypothesis and the effects of the same analysis taking the independent variable as the interaction term and the interaction term as the independent variable.

It is worth emphasizing that throughout the dissertation I cautiously aim to make causal claims. The inferences concern the possible effects or influence of immigrant integration on immigration attitudes of natives, effects of the changes in the media environment in terms of attention to immigration and the related frames on natives' immigration opinion and welfare state opinion, and the effects of labor market policies on employment

differences between natives and migrants. The kind of research questions and the multiple-country quantitative approach make it impossible to conduct experimental research, which is considered the gold standard of causal inference. Despite my best efforts, I had to make concessions to this ideal and to a greater or lesser extent violate some of the conditions of causal inference to conduct my analyses. Where possible, I have tried to resolve these threats to causality, but it is impossible to rule out any uncertainty. In this section I discuss and reflect on what I consider the most important limitations of the causal claims.

An important aspect that distinguishes a causal claim from a mere correlation is the establishment that the cause precedes the effect. The preferred way to control for this reversed causality in regression models is by adding the lagged dependent variable. Unfortunately, throughout the chapters, the dependent variable is individual level non-panel data, which makes a lagged dependent variable impossible without aggregating and thereby losing the richness of the individual level dependent and control variables. I dealt with the issue of reversed causality by lagging the independent macro-level variables by one time unit (months or years, depending on the analysis). I compared the results with the same models with a lead of one time unit of the independent variable, modeling the reversed relationship to see which order of time shows the strongest correlation. Because this is not the preferred manner, it limits the ability to make causal claims to some extent. The second threat to causal inference involves the mechanisms through which the putative causes have their putative effects. Apart from the analyses of Chapter Five, I am only able to measure the statistical relationship between the dependent and the independent variable, without explicitly measuring the channels through which the relationship should operate. I use the work of other scholars to argue for the way the relationships work theoretically, while realizing the limitations of my own endeavor. Finally, I put effort into controlling for omitted variables, both at the individual and the country level, where possible. This is not perfect, because measures are sometimes mere proxies for underlying concepts and sometimes there is no good data on possible omitted variables, but the statistical models in all four empirical chapters contain at least the control variables most commonly used in the literature.

Given these partly unresolved threats to causal inference, my case should not be viewed as the final word on the debates it is engaging with. However, given the virtues of the multilevel repeated cross-sectional data, the quality of the data, the validation exercises, the time lags, control variables, various robustness tests and the embeddedness in existing research, my findings exceed mere correlational associations and provide plausible argumentation for causal propositions. The claims that I make throughout the dissertation should be perceived in this light.

Outline of dissertation

The empirical body of this dissertation is divided into two parts, each consisting of two chapters. The first part focuses on explaining anti-immigrant sentiment by studying different measures of immigrant absorption. In Chapter Two I examine the effects of different measures of immigrant integration, or lack thereof, on anti-immigrant attitudes. Immigrant integration is an understudied part of immigration absorption and an important variable for explaining anti-immigrant attitudes. It also paints a nuanced picture by on the one hand distinguishing labor market integration (i.e. the unemployment gap) and cultural values integration, but on the other hand showing that the effects of these forms of diversity differ depending on respondents' education level. The chapter concludes that the employment gap between migrants and natives negatively affects the anti-immigrant sentiment among higher educated natives. This result is caused by the employment level of natives, because this increases the employment gap between natives and migrants and increases support for immigration among higher educated natives. For lower educated natives, on the other hand, those labor market indicators are not relevant and they seem to take the cultural side of integration more seriously. All other things being equal, the more different immigrants are in some important cultural aspects, the more anti-immigration lower educated natives are. Cultural values integration does not show a statistically significant relationship with the immigration attitudes of natives with a higher education level.

In Chapter Three I consider what happens to citizens' immigration opinion if they live in a country in which the media debate about immigration is salient: Are they more anti-immigration? And what type of framing of the immigration debate contributes most to anti-immigrant sentiment? What becomes clear is that media attention to immigration or to immigration in relation to the welfare state does not affect people's immigration opinion on a societal level in 10 European countries over 13 years. However, there is a small positive relationship between the Islam and terrorism frames and anti-immigrant attitudes. These effects are slightly stronger for lower educated natives than for higher educated natives. Comparing the results of media attention and the welfare framing to the results of Islam and terrorism frames, I conclude that the immaterial frames, concerning cultural identity and security, are more central than the immigration debate as such or the economic related immigration frame.

The second part of the dissertation evolves around the effects of welfare policies on immigrant absorption and the consequences of immigrant absorption for support for the welfare state. In Chapter Four I shed light on one of the possible causes of integration, namely employment. More specifically, I look at LMPs and ask the question whether they improve the employment of natives and migrants equally. The results do not give cause for optimism on the effects of both passive and active labor market policy programs (UBs

and ALMPs, respectively) on the employment of migrants. The positive effects of UB spending on the employment chances of natives and EU migrants do not apply to TCMs. ALMPs even show a negative effect on the employment chances of TCMs. The good news is that these less positive and negative effects are negated when migrants have spent over nine years in the host country and have had enough time to adapt to the demands of the new labor market.

Chapter Five connects the literature on the relationship between media reporting and public opinion with the literature on immigration and support for the welfare state. Increasing diversity in society can lead to declining support for income redistribution among natives. Because news media are an important link between societal developments and the public, I hypothesize that the emphasis on immigration and immigration in relation to welfare has an effect on natives' support for income redistribution. I do not find a direct effect of this media reporting on support for income redistribution on a societal level in Europe over 13 years, but this is mainly because there is a different effect for people who are for and people who are against immigration. People who hold a positive opinion about immigration are more in support of redistribution when the welfare-related immigration debate is getting a lot of attention. People who are against immigration are more against redistribution when there is more media attention to welfare in relation to immigration.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, provides the conclusions of the dissertation. It also discusses reflections on the literature, avenues for further research and opportunities for policymaking regarding the absorption of immigration.