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Public attitudes toward immigration in turbulent times

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The economic crisis of the late 2000s has transformed inter-ethnic relations. Despite the fact that North American and European economies have depended on international migration flows for decades (Piore 1979; Sassen 1988; Zolberg 2006), recent years have witnessed an increasing tension in perceptions of international migration among citizens in these regions (Telles and Ortiz 2007: 292). The increasing success of the far-right at the polls and the support for policies strengthening border controls and criminalizing unregulated migration reveal the extent to which immigrants continue to be the outsiders and scapegoats of the present era (Allport 1979; Benhabib 2004; Wimmer 2002). The unprecedented number of votes of Le Front National in the 2014 French municipal elections illustrate this generalized trend.

This special issue aims to examine emerging trends in anti-migrant sentiment in North America and Europe, embedded in a global transformation. Due to the growth of significant migratory flows in several regions of the world during the first decade of the twenty-first century (United Nations 2009), previous studies have shown the extent to which an increasing inflow of immigrants has led to an increasing opposition from the citizenry (Eger 2010; Fox 2004; Vereá 2012). The spread of populist political movements that capitalize on anti-immigrant, anti-multicultural and anti-government sentiments have not only enabled but also legitimized novel forms of inter-ethnic contention with both violent and non-violent manifestations (Berezin 2009; Dancygier 2010; Rydgren 2012).

Our main goal is to take advantage of a zeitgeist characterized by its turbulence, to revise prevailing assumptions in the literature on international migration and inter-ethnic contention, as well as to introduce novel forms of interdependence between states, citizens,

immigrants, and organized interest groups. All the papers in this collection ask, in some way, the key questions: How does anti-immigrant sentiment arise and why? How are these drivers affected by economic turbulence and political upheaval?

Billiet and colleagues examine the impact of micro- and macro-level economic variables in citizens' attitudes toward immigration since the beginning of the crisis. Their findings provide evidence to support three main claims: a) the unemployed are more likely to hold anti-immigrant sentiments than the employed; b) aggregate mean levels of anti-immigrant sentiment are higher in countries with the lowest levels of GDP growth; and c) the interaction term between unemployment and GDP growth: the unemployed in countries with a growing GDP are more likely to hold anti-immigrant sentiments than those in countries with a declining GDP. These insights provide evidence of the extent to which a receding economy may not necessarily generate unprecedented levels of anti-immigrant sentiment.

How do different research methods influence our understanding of anti-immigrant sentiment? Cea D'Ancona addresses this question by examining the extent to which survey design affects respondents' reported level of racism and xenophobia. The analysis compares and contrasts evidence from face-to-face surveys, self-administered surveys, and a hybrid survey model. The findings revealed that self-administered surveys tend to report higher average levels of racism and xenophobia than face-to-face or hybrid surveys. This research provides evidence of the extent to which instruments of data collection can affect the analysis and assessment of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Valdez examines the emergence of anti-immigrant sentiment with evidence from Sweden. The analysis reveals that the uneven distribution of non-Western residents explains the district-level support for the far right. The votes for the far right come from the districts where immigrants are most visible, and voters are prompted to think of immigration as a salient issue. Moreover, Valdez shows that the visibility of non-Western residents is especially important in the regions with the least experience with international migration. These findings suggest that, as international migration progresses, the perception of immigration as a problem declines.

Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes provide another micro-level analysis to examine the role of media in the establishment of inter-ethnic relations with evidence from Hérouxville, Quebec. The authors conducted a content analysis of the 1,243 articles, in English or French, covering the publication of Hérouxville's Code of Life between 2007 and 2012. The authors provide evidence of the extent to which the media portrayed Hérouxville's Code of Life as a racist document, criticizing it for its opposition to the multicultural values that lay at the core of the Canadian identity. The analysis shows the strength of Hegelian rhetorical strategies in the definition of Inter-ethnic relations and the power of the media in the coverage of events as symbolic as the publication of Hérouxville's Code of Life.

Messina and colleagues provide a complementary approach to the traditional citizen-centered perspective on anti-immigrant sentiment. In this article the authors examine the changing significance of international migration, and specifically the degree of inter-ethnic contention, with evidence from political elites. Semi-structured interviews with members of

the European Parliament reveal that the events of 11 September 2001, much as they changed the generalized perception of international migration among the general public, did not affect politicians' perceptions. This research sheds light on the gap between how citizens and political elites view immigration and inter-ethnic contention.

Durden and Jacobsen continue the examination of how the political elite navigates interethnic relations, from the perspective of immigration bills. This research clarifies the most important variables underlying an explanation of why certain states—Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah—decided to implement restrictive immigration measures during 2010 and 2011. The authors argue that legislative efforts to criminalize international migration were especially successful in states characterized by two main features: a) Republican majority; and b) a large percentage of the population being Hispanic, foreign-born and undocumented. This analysis indicates the role of immigrants' political enfranchisement in the establishment of inter-ethnic relations. Moreover, it suggests that, as immigrants acquire more rights, politicians will be less likely to propose and to be able to pass restrictive immigration laws.

Overall, we believe that turbulent times offer an opportunity to rethink traditional categories and understandings of old and new problems. We have used this brief collection of studies to introduce some of the most important emerging trends in the formation and transformation of inter-ethnic relations. Our goal has been to emphasize the extent to which anti-immigrant sentiment during turbulent times is a product of the effects of interaction between states, citizens, immigrants, and organized interest groups. We would like to thank the researchers for their exceptional scholarship and interest in this collective project, as well as the editor of *Migration Studies*, Alan Gamlen, for his outstanding insight, patience, and perseverance. Thank you.

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