Published in final edited form as:

Sociol Compass. 2013 April 1; 7(4): 303–313. doi:10.1111/soc4.12027.

Anti-foreigner Sentiment: State of the Art

Anna Zamora-Kapoor^{1,*}, Petar Kovincic², and Charles Causey³

¹Columbia University

²Université de Liège

³University of Washington

Abstract

This review presents the contributions of anti-foreigner sentiment research, its theoretical and methodological limitations, and potential solutions for its further development.

Six different explanations are proposed to account for the distribution of anti-foreigner sentiment within and across countries: economic competition, human capital, cultural affinity, social capital, political values, and the institutional environment. In this review, we argue that much of the extant literature heavily emphasizes variables, rather than causal mechanisms, and exhibits three main methodological limitations: (a) variable selection bias; (b) determining causality; and (c) endogeneity. We propose synthesizing prevailing theoretical perspectives around causal mechanisms and reformulating predictive models to strengthen a promising research program.

1. Introduction

Increasing cultural diversity is seen to challenge social cohesion. As early as the writing of Weber's (1978) *Economy and Society*, natives' opposition to a foreign ethnic group was conceived to be: "the primary and normal reaction" (385). Since then, sociological interest in anti-foreigner sentiment has led to significant theoretical, methodological, and policy contributions. This piece reviews prevailing explanations for anti-foreigner sentiment as scholars currently conceive them: a heterogeneous group of studies using a set of variables to explain attitudes. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive review of an already voluminous body of research, but to present six of the most prominent explanations for anti-foreigner sentiment outcomes, indicate the limitations of existing analytical approaches, and offer solutions to strengthen this scholarship. We propose to address prevailing theoretical limitations by synthesizing current explanations around causal mechanisms rather than on variables, and to improve analytical formulations by developing longitudinal panel studies, combining quantitative and qualitative data, and evaluating the effects of operationalization and variable selection bias.

2. Research on anti-foreigner sentiment

Previous reviews of the anti-foreigner literature have emphasized the explanatory power of multiple individual and contextual variables (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Rustenbach 2010).

Existing surveys of the literature have stressed the diversity of variables that appear to account for public attitudes toward immigration, but in doing so they have paid insufficient attention to the mechanisms underlying anti-foreigner sentiment. For example, several studies indicate that unemployment is related to anti-foreigner sentiment, but scholars have not yet explained the way in which unemployment generates hostility toward foreigners (see for instance, Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009; or Scheve and Slaughter 2001). This review begins by introducing the reader to six explanations accounting for anti-foreigner sentiment: (a) economic competition (Brenner and Fertig 2006; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009; Hjerm 2009; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Quillian 1995; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Schneider 2008; Semyonov et al. 2006); (b) human capital (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Hjerm 2001; Mayda 2006); (c) cultural affinity (Brubaker 2009; Ceobanu and Escandell 2008; Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Escandell and Ceobanu 2010; Fetzer 2000; Hayes and Dowds 2006; Hjerm 1998; Pehrson et al. 2009; Shulman 2002); (d) social capital (Citrin and Sides 2008; Côté and Erickson 2009; Eller and Abrams 2004; Herreros and Criado 2009; McLaren 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp 2011; Putnam 2000; Wagner et al. 2007); (e) political values (Bohman 2011; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Karapin 2002; Rydgren 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006–2008; Wilkes et al. 2008); and (f) institutional environment (Bail 2008; Brooks and Manza 2009; Coenders and Castelli-Gattinara 2011; Dancygier 2010; Pardos-Prado 2010). Next, it presents the literature's most important theoretical and methodological limitations, and offers solutions to continue developing this line of inquiry.

2.1. Economic competition

When citizens conceive of the distribution of resources as a zero-sum game, anti-foreigner sentiment appears to be an inevitable outcome of the increasing reception of international labor flows. Scholars have examined the role of economic competition from the micro-level perspective of individuals' self-interest, as well as from the macro-level approach of the interests of the dominant group. Individual self-interest arguments claim that negative attitudes towards immigrants are the product of the direct competition for jobs or residential space. Hence, the low-skilled and the unemployed are the social groups most likely to exhibit anti-foreigner sentiment (Mayda 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Yet, conflicting findings question the extent to which economic competition is driven by individual self-interest alone. Alternative approaches examined economic competition based on citizens' labor market status (Brenner and Fertig 2006; Hayes and Dowds 2006; Wilkes et al. 2008), or income (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Sides and Citrin 2007), and did not find an association with attitudinal outcomes. Due to mixed findings, scholars have complemented these theories with research examining the interests of the dominant group.

In parallel to individuals' immediate interests, citizens' perception of how immigration affects the national economy can impact anti-foreigner sentiment as well. Economic conditions, operationalized as the gross domestic product (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009; Quillian 1995; Schneider 2008; Semyonov et al. 2006) or unemployment rates (Coenders and Scheepers 2008), influence citizens' perception of foreign-born populations. Prosperous economies with low unemployment rates offer the most suitable environment for maintaining positive attitudes towards immigration. Within countries, poor municipalities with high percentages of immigration exhibit the strongest anti-foreigner sentiment (Hjerm 2009). Yet, it is important to note that distinctive measurements of economic contextual variables have led to conflicting findings. For example, Sides and Citrin (2007) indicate that there is an association between a country's GDP per capita and anti-foreigner sentiment, but not between unemployment rates and attitudinal outcomes. Extant findings appear to depend heavily upon the operationalization of these complex mechanisms; a lack of agreement upon what variables better represent macro-level economic conditions, and at which level of analysis, country or regional, is the most appropriate, has generated contradictory findings. Moving forward, we encourage scholars to consider the ways in which variable selection and operationalization could be driving their results.

The current context of economic instability anticipates an increasing salience of antiforeigner sentiment based on economic factors. Further research is required to better understand the variability of these micro- and macro-level effects. The extensive use of aggregate data and multi-level models has obscured geographical differences and the potential interaction of economic competition with other explanatory factors. We propose to complement prevailing theories with evidence from case studies, in order to better understand the extent to which economic competition underlies attitudinal outcomes.

2.2. Human capital theory

Citizens' education has been traditionally conceived of as an element that reduces antiforeigner sentiment. Previous studies explain the role of education from the perspective of native-foreigner labor market competition (Mayda 2006), and citizens' interpretation of cultural diversity and stereotypes (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Hjerm 2001). From either perspective, citizens with higher education in immigrant-receiving countries are associated with low rates of anti-foreigner sentiment.

Mayda (2006) argues that anti-foreigner sentiment is a product of the distribution of human capital across the immigrant populations, relative to the native one. Since most immigrant-receiving nations have a structural demand for low-skilled labor (Favell and Hansen 2002; Waldinger and Lichter 2003), immigration maintains competitive salaries at the bottom and an income structure that rewards education. Mayda (2006) argues that if international labor flows were highly educated, we would see an inverse relationship between education and anti-foreigner sentiment: the highly educated would exhibit strong anti-foreigner sentiments as a result of the increasing competition at the top, while the lesser educated citizens would either view immigration positively or remain ambivalent.

A second group of scholars posits that education improves citizens' perception of immigration by transmitting norms and values that encourage citizens to identify the

benefits of cultural diversity and question prevailing stereotypes (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Hjerm 2001). Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) find that, in contrast to Mayda (2006), education is associated with higher levels of support for immigration, regardless of their level of skill. Yet, it is still unclear what specific set of norms and values are most favorable to encourage citizens' positive perception of foreignborn populations. Some studies have sought to dig into this puzzle, by comparing the values of the educational system in long-standing democracies versus former communist dictatorships. Coenders and Scheepers (2003) found that education is associated with positive attitudes toward immigration in prolonged democracies of Western Europe, but not in the most recent ones of Eastern Europe. A similar cross-national study indicates that education increases tolerance in all countries, regardless of their political trajectory (Hjerm 2001).

Although previous studies agree that education increases citizens' perception of immigration, there is a lack of agreement on the mechanisms underlying this effect. We encourage human capital theorists to compare and contrast the arguments presented above systematically, in order to evaluate the extent to which the role of education is tied to the distribution of skill amongst the native and the foreigner population, or, by contrast, it is related to a specific set of norms and values that can improve attitudes, regardless of citizens' level of skill. A systematic evaluation of prevailing arguments for the role of human capital is expected to help sociologists strengthen a unified theoretical explanation.

2.3. Cultural affinity

Cultural affinity theory states that citizens' perceptions of immigration depend on their individual similarities with the members of the out-group, and their collective degree of inclusion/exclusion in the dominant group. Fetzer (2000) found that citizens who are second-generation immigrants exhibit less prejudice towards foreigners than those who do not have an immigrant background. Elements facilitating citizens' identification with foreign-born populations, such as having a foreign-born parent, can explain why some citizens view immigration much more positively than others. Beyond individual characteristics, citizens empathize with immigrants as a result of their similar structural position vis-à-vis the dominant group (Hayes and Dowds 2006), and prevailing understandings of national identity in the destination country (Ceobanu and Escandell 2008; Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Escandell and Ceobanu 2010; Hjerm 1998; Pehrson et al. 2009; Shulman 2002).

Previous studies have revealed that citizens who belong to religious minorities tend to view immigrants much more favorably than those who belong to the dominant group. Hayes and Dowds (2006) provide evidence to support this claim by comparing public attitudes toward immigrations amongst Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Although foreign-born populations are not necessarily Catholics or Protestants, citizens who belong to the Catholic minority are more likely to think about immigration positively than their Protestant peers, because they are outnumbered. Evidence from Northern Ireland suggests that cross-national differences in anti-foreigner sentiment could be associated with the uneven distribution of minorities across countries. Further research is required to evaluate the extent to which

countries that are culturally homogeneous exhibit stronger degrees of anti-foreigner sentiment than those that have long established minorities.

Prevailing understandings of national identity are expected to affect citizens' hostility towards foreigners as well. Studies analyzing anti-foreigner sentiment across countries have approached this phenomenon by contrasting immigrant-receiving nations with a notion of identity based on descent (*jus sanguini*) versus those based on country of birth (*jus soli*). Countries with ethnic-based notions of identity exhibit stronger anti-foreigner sentiments than those that have a civic understanding of national membership (Hjerm 1998; Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Pehrson et al. 2009). Other studies have reported that there is no such association (Shulman 2002; Ceobanu and Escandell 2008). Similar to what has been observed in the economic competition section, scholars' selection of variables and operationalization of concepts could be underlying these conflicting results.

Countries with strong regional boundaries have offered an exceptional opportunity to examine the role of distinctive understandings of national identity. Within-country comparisons indicate that citizens in regions with nation-building projects, such as Flanders in Belgium or Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia in Spain, exhibit stronger anti-foreigner sentiments than their peers from regions without such political aspirations (Billiet et al. 2003; Escandell and Ceobanu 2010). While these findings offer a valuable theoretical contribution, they question the extent to which policy intervention can palliate antiforeigner sentiment. If anti-foreigner sentiment is a product of the historical development of national identity, how can new policy change attitudinal outcomes?

In sum, while citizens' opportunities to identify themselves with foreign-born populations affect their attitudes, further research is needed to develop a parsimonious explanation of the role of national identity on attitudes. An increased focus on the specification of causal mechanisms represents a necessary next step to advance these explanations.

2.4. Social capital

In addition to economic competition, education, and cultural affinity, citizens' social ties appear to explain anti-foreigner sentiment as well. Most scholarship in this field indicates that social capital reduces hostility towards the out-group by increasing: (a) contact with foreigners; and (b) trust. Contact with foreign-born populations reduces anti-foreigner sentiment by dispelling negative stereotypes ascribed to immigrants (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). Studies examining the relationship between different types of ties with immigrants and their impact on attitudes indicate that friendship reduces anti-foreigner sentiment to a greater extent than superficial relationships (McLaren 2003; Wagner et al. 2007). Citizens who have foreign-born friends are likely to view foreigners much more positively than those who do not have them. Albeit it is plausible that citizens' social capital improves attitudes toward immigration, the causal relationship might be in the opposite direction: citizens with positive attitudes toward foreigners might be more likely to have foreignborn friends. This methodological weakness, endogeneity, will be discussed later in light of potential solutions.

Research examining citizens' participation in voluntary associations builds upon the same assumptions: increased civic participation is expected to improve citizens' perception of

immigration (Putnam 2000). It is critical to note that different types of associations generate distinctive attitudinal outcomes. Previous studies find that citizens' participation in associations whose members have low education is likely to increase hostility towards foreigners, whereas participating in associations where there is an above-than-average level of education, such as in environmental groups, reduces anti-foreigner sentiment (Côté and Erickson 2009). Based on these findings, research examining the prevalence of specific types of associations in an area can offer useful insights to estimate the distribution of public attitudes toward immigration.

Beyond the study of social capital from its traditional micro-level approach, scholars have analyzed anti-foreigner sentiment in relation to citizens' generalized level of trust. Citizens exhibiting high degrees of trust, also called "social trusters", are more prone to view immigrants as trustworthy and therefore more likely to cooperate with them (Citrin and Sides 2008; Herreros and Criado 2009). The relationship between general social trust and attitudes toward immigrants is independent from citizens' contact with immigrants (Herreros and Criado 2009). However, if cultural diversity reduces social cohesion (Kesler and Bloemraad 2010), and hence, generalized levels of trust, anti-foreigner sentiment is unlikely to decrease in the near future.

Durlauf (1999) presents the most important critique to social capital research. He claims that social capital scholarship still needs to disentangle what are the elements driving its emergence, presence, or absence (Durlauf 1999). In the study of how membership in associations could be affecting anti-foreigner sentiment, scholars should consider the extent to which strong intra-group ties could actually increase hostility towards immigration by enhancing identification with the in-group. We agree with Durlauf (1999) and see that, at least in the context of anti-foreigner sentiment research, social capital is still a somewhat fuzzy concept and future studies need to: (a) define it more precisely; and (b) disentangle what elements drive its emergence, presence, or absence.

Due to the potential endogeneity and feedback processes in social capital explanations, we encourage scholars to reformulate their analytical approach using longitudinal data, as a minority of scholars have already done (see for instance Eller and Abrams 2004). The development of new panel studies is expected to facilitate the assessment of this phenomenon as well as its variation across countries and over time. We encourage scholars to focus on assessing the limits, net effects, and significance of social capital, and examine whether its relationship with public attitudes is as straightforward as prevailing theories suggest.

2.5. Political affiliation

Citizens' interaction with the political field offers an alternative perspective to explain anti-foreigner sentiment. Anti-foreigner sentiment is conceived of as a product of individuals' political values (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Wilkes et al. 2008), as well as the mobilization of anti-immigrant political parties (Bohman 2011; Karapin 2002; Rydgren 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007). Micro-level perspectives claim that citizens' values drive anti-foreigner sentiment: conservative citizens are much more likely to hold negative attitudes toward immigration than their liberal peers (Semyonov et al. 2008; Wilkes et al.

2008). The relevance of citizens' self-placement in the left-right axis prevails, even after controlling for respondents' socio-economic and educational differences (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Nevertheless, as it has been observed in other explanations, conservative values could be encouraging anti-foreigner sentiment to the same extent that anti-foreigner sentiment could be motivating conservatism. In order to strengthen this claim, previous studies require further evidence indicating the direction of causality between political values and attitudes. Case study research offers a useful analytical strategy to overcome this problem, especially when combining quantitative and qualitative data. The use of archival data and the substantive expertise of immigration scholars would help to identify and explain feedback processes between political participation and public opinion outcomes.

At the macro level, the degree of anti-immigrant mobilization by either mainstream parties or new far-right organizations appears to explain attitudinal differences across countries as well. While citizens may not necessarily have an opinion about immigration, their exposure to political organizations that present immigration as a problem has been found to raise anti-foreigner sentiment. Anti-foreigner sentiment is especially concentrated in countries where mainstream political parties view immigration as a priority (Bohman 2011; Karapınar 2002), or there is a strong mobilization of far-right political parties (Rydgren 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006–2008).

A large part of citizens' socialization with the immigration phenomenon occurs through the media. Dunaway et al. (2010) reveal that the higher media coverage of immigration in Border States than in non-border states has led to the stronger perception of immigration as a problem in the former versus the latter. Research revealing the explanatory power of political variables at the micro and macro levels has contributed to the sociological understanding of multi-ethnic democracies significantly. We know that citizens' values, the mobilization of radical right-wing political parties, and mainstream political parties' discussion of immigration as a priority affect anti-foreigner sentiment. At the same time, it is still unclear the extent to which contextual political processes explain or are explained by citizens' attitudes. In our view, case study research combining quantitative and qualitative data would enable scholars to evaluate the extent to which constituent demands and political parties' stance on immigration influence one another.

2.6. Institutional environment

Governmental regulations are likely to affect attitudinal outcomes by establishing the institutional environment in which natives and foreigners coexist. Recent reviews of the literature (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010) have pointed out the lack of studies examining the explanatory role of the institutional environment:

“Research has yet to provide a clear picture of the institutional and socio-political macro-level factors that affect the emergence and manifestation of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration” (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010, 310).

For decades, the lack of cross-national standardized estimates has limited researchers' opportunities to compare and contrast immigration policies. Analytical formulations of anti-foreigner sentiment have traditionally ignored the role of governmental regulations, due to the limited possibilities of establishing causality between policies and attitudes. As

democratic societies are expected to represent the interests of the citizenry (Brooks and Manza 2009), it is unreasonable to conceive the governmental regulation of immigration as an independent element from citizens' perception of their multi-ethnic environment.

The recent publication of the Migrant Integration Policy Index represents one of the first efforts to fill in this gap, with integration policy data on seven different dimensions: (a) labor market mobility; (b) family reunion; (c) education; (d) political participation; (e) long-term residence; (f) access to nationality; and (g) anti-discrimination, for thirty-three nations. The current availability of data has led to an emerging literature with promising findings. Restrictive integration policies have been found to encourage anti-foreigner sentiment (Coenders and Castelli-Gattinara 2011), while policies facilitating immigrants' political participation have been associated with positive attitudes toward foreign-born populations (Pardos-Prado 2010). Both papers identify the restriction of immigration policy frameworks as the mechanism driving attitudes: restrictive institutional environments encourage citizens to view immigration as a problem, whereas less restrictive policies reduce the salience of immigration as an issue.

The most compelling explanations for the role of the institutional environment in the public opinion have used innovative methodological strategies. Dancygier (2010) combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to decipher within-country differences in the type of inter-ethnic conflict in two British municipalities. It reveals that the variability of immigrants' access to economic and political rights has generated *immigrant-native* conflict in areas where immigrants have economic but not political rights, and *immigrant-state* conflict in places where immigrants enjoy both economic and political power. As structural conditions affect inter-ethnic relations, they are also expected to influence citizens' perception of the out-group. From a cross-national comparative perspective, Bail (2008) uses fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis to identify the distinctive structure of social boundaries across Europe, and the extent to which they differ from prevailing philosophies of integration. It offers a typology of destination countries, based on the strength of their racial, religious, educational, linguistic, occupational, and cultural symbolic boundaries. Knowledge of the type and structure of symbolic boundaries benefits the theorization of inter-ethnic relations by revealing the heterogeneity of destination countries.

Due to the dynamic relationship between policies and attitudes, we encourage scholars to use methodologies that allow them to determine the direction of causality between these variables. Cross-national comparative estimates of governmental regulations of immigration and integration facilitate improving the sociological understanding of how the institutional environment shapes attitudes. We expect to witness the growth of this literature in the near future.

3. Prevailing weaknesses and possible solutions

The review of the anti-foreigner sentiment literature indicates that citizens' economic competition, human capital, cultural affinity, social capital, political values, and the institutional environment are thought to impact public attitudes toward immigration. While this body of scholarship has contributed to the sociological understanding of inter-ethnic

relations, theoretical and methodological weaknesses limit the development of this line of inquiry. We propose to solve these problems by synthesizing the theoretical program, and improving its methodological tools.

Scholarship on anti-foreigner sentiment has evolved by revealing the explanatory power of an increasing number of micro- and macro-level variables. Due to the diverse explanations that characterize the literature, we encourage sociologists to synthesize prevailing explanations around causal mechanisms that can be empirically tested. The goal is not only to say that a specific variable, e.g. employment status, generates anti-foreigner sentiment, but to provide a theoretical explanation for this relationship. The field could benefit from insights made in other areas of study, such as social psychology or ethnicity. Indeed, as massive immigration from the developing countries to Western and Northern Europe enters its fourth decade, and many descendants of immigrants are being given citizenship, the question of attitudes towards immigrants or “foreigners” is becoming inseparable from the question of attitudes towards ethnic minorities. The cognitive turn in studies on ethnicity, with its emphasis on “culturally specific ways in which persons, institutions, organizations, and discourses make sense of experience and interpret the social world” (Brubaker 2009), might represent a promising perspective on how to integrate various situational and dispositional variables used to explain attitudes toward immigrants.

Toward the end of developing a theory of anti-foreigner sentiment, we recommend that scholars focus on establishing the most important mechanisms driving the variability of anti-foreigner sentiment. Theoretical models should be robust to multiple empirical specifications. If an explanatory mechanism is economic competition, we would expect to observe statistical significance when measuring the effect of different variables representing native-foreigner economic competition, such as: (a) unemployment; (b) low income; or (c) low education, as well as confirmation from qualitative data. If we hypothesize that the unemployed are those most likely to experience native-foreigner competition, we would expect to them to mention it in interviews. By deriving hypotheses from proposed mechanisms, rather than inducing mechanisms from empirical findings, scholars will gain analytical leverage and provide empirical tests to adjudicate between explanations. Wimmer’s (2008) work is an exemplar of this approach, although its focus is on the construction of ethnic boundaries rather than the sources of anti-foreigner sentiment. The inclusion of cognitive micro-foundations as well as supra- individual factors such as political context provides a sophisticated approach to theorizing ethnicity that may serve as a model for future work. Theorizing the mechanisms that link micro and macro as well as making explicit the empirical implications of these mechanisms provides a synthetic approach to advancing this broad research program.

Common methodological problems include operationalization, determining causality, and endogeneity. Distinctive strategies to operationalize anti-foreigner sentiment have allowed scholars to contribute to the literature on exclusionism, tolerance, or prejudice, but at the same time, it has limited the scholarly dialogue. Previous reviews have acknowledged the diverse strategies for operationalizing the dependent variable, but have not offered specific solutions (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010). We propose that scholars test their analytical formulations on multiple dependent variables, and, if possible, use different independent

variables to evaluate the extent to which results vary according to the selection of indicators. For instance, human capital may reduce prejudice, but perhaps does not necessarily affect exclusionism. Evidence of how the selection and operationalization of variables affects results is expected to improve analytical formulations, not only by reducing their sources of bias, but also by improving the scholarly understanding of what specific types of measures influence attitudes. Theoretical models that are robust to multiple empirical specifications provide additional confidence in the proposed explanatory mechanisms; conversely, theoretical models that rely on questionably identified models undermine the advance of this research program.

The problem of determining causality emerges when there is a bi-directional association between independent and dependent variables. Research examining the effects of far-right mobilization or governmental regulations of immigrants' integration has the potential to run into this problem, due to the dynamic relationship between these contextual variables and attitudes. We suggest using: (a) longitudinal data allowing scholars to trace attitudes historically; or (b) case study research to evaluate the elements underlying political shifts, attitudinal outcomes, and their feedback processes. Evidence from new immigration countries, where governmental regulations preceded the arrival and settlement of international migrants, has the potential to contribute to this literature, while overcoming traditional problems of causality.

Finally, endogeneity encompasses the inability to establish causality as a result of the inclusion of the dependent into the independent variable. It is potentially present in many of the studies above, for instance, those examining the role of social capital or political values. Due to the nature of endogeneity, we encourage scholars to reformulate predictive models according to the structure of the causal mechanism that they seek to test. We propose the use of time-ordered hypotheses, and identifying causal mechanisms with testable empirical implications. For example, if X is causing Y, then we would observe A, but if Y is causing X, then we would observe B. Although modeling endogeneity is necessary to increase the validity of findings, it is important to keep in mind the prevalence of feedback processes that might be at work in this type of research. We propose complementing quantitative models with qualitative evidence to confirm the independence and direction of causality between variables.

Anti-foreigner sentiment scholarship has led to outstanding contributions in the last three decades. We would like to strengthen its research program by motivating scholars to synthesize theoretical propositions and use analytical approaches that attempt to attenuate issues of operationalization, establishing causality, and endogeneity.

4. Conclusion

Previous studies propose that economic motivations, human capital, cultural affinity, social capital, political values, and the institutional environment explain anti-foreigner sentiment. While current explanations contribute to the sociological understanding of inter-ethnic relations, discrimination, xenophobia, and exclusion, theoretical and methodological weaknesses challenge the advancement of this research program. This piece has reviewed

the most important contributions of previous studies in this field, identified its main weaknesses, and proposed solutions.

Theoretically, we have argued that the growth of the anti-foreigner sentiment literature has been based on statistically significant variables, rather than on the mechanisms that underlie each distinctive explanation. Moving forward, we encourage scholars to synthesize prevailing explanations around causal mechanisms with empirically testable hypotheses. This review has tried to take one step in this direction by stressing the need to rethink and re-evaluate the diversification of current scholarship.

Methodologically, the extant literature suffers from endogeneity, difficulties to determine causality, and operationalization. We have proposed to address these limitations with the development of panel studies, analytical approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative data, and increase the robustness of findings by testing hypotheses with more than one independent and dependent variable, as some studies have already done (for instance, Sides and Citrin 2007).

Overall, efforts to improve existing theoretical and analytical approaches are expected to benefit this body of scholarship as well as its policy implications.

Biographies

Anna Zamora-Kapoor is a sociologist with an interest in structural processes and their effects on citizens' perception of immigration. After receiving her Master of Arts (2008), and Master of Philosophy (2009), she is currently writing her dissertation under the direction of Prof. Saskia Sassen. Her thesis reveals the mechanisms underlying anti-foreigner sentiment (or the lack thereof) in two multi-ethnic and multi-national welfare states: Belgium and Spain. Anna has received funding from the Fundación Caja Madrid, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University, the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Alliance Française, Talentia – Junta de Andalucía, and the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and she has been a visiting scholar at the Université Paris 1, and at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington.

Petar Kovincic is PhD candidate at the Université de Liège. He is working on immigration and interethnic relations, within the research program *Transnationalism, Identities' Dynamics and Cultural Diversification in Urban Post-migratory Situations* (TRICUD), under the supervision of Marc Jacquemain.

Charles Causey is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Washington. He holds a BA in psychology from Virginia Tech, an MA in psychology from the College of William and Mary and an MA from the University of Washington. He has also studied Arabic at the University of Jordan in Amman. His current research focuses on information flows and information technology in large-scale collective action both as facilitators and as forms of social control. He has published previously in *Sociology Compass*.

References

- Bail C. The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries against Immigrants in Europe. *American Sociological Review*. 2008; 73(1):37–59.
- Billiet J, Maddens B, Beerten R. National identity and attitude toward foreigners in a multinational state: a replication. *Political Psychology*. 2003; 24:241–257.
- Bohman A. Articulated Antipathies: Political Influence on Anti-immigrant Attitudes. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. 2011; 52(6):457–477.
- Brenner, J.; Fertig, M. [Retrieved on 20 February 2012] Identifying the Determinants of Attitudes towards Immigrants – A Structural Cross-Country Analysis. RWI Discussion Paper No. 47. 2006. from: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp2306.pdf>
- Brooks, C.; Manza, J. *Why Welfare States Persist: The Importance of Public Opinion in Democracies*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; 2009.
- Brubaker R. Ethnicity, Race and Nationalism. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2009; 35:21–42.
- Ceobanu A, Escandell X. East is West? National feelings and anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. *Social Science Research*. 2008; 37(4):1147–1170. [PubMed: 19227696]
- Ceobanu A, Escandell X. Comparative Analyses of Public Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration Using Multinational Survey Data: A Review of Theories and Research. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2010; 36:309–328.
- Citrin J, Sides J. Immigration and the imagined community in Europe and the United States. *Political Studies*. 2008; 56(1):33–56.
- Chandler C, Tsai Y. Social Factors Influencing Immigration Attitudes: An Analysis of Data from the General Social Survey. *The Social Science Journal*. 2001; 38(2):177–188.
- Coenders, M.; Castelli-Gattinara, P. The Political and Institutional Context of Ethnic Exclusionism: Integration Policies, Political Climate and Majorities Reactions to Immigration; 18th International Conference of Europeanists; June 20–22; Barcelona, Spain: Council for European Studies; 2011.
- Coenders M, Scheepers P. Changes in Resistance to the Social Integration of Foreigners in Germany 1980–2000: Individual and Contextual Determinants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2008; 34(1):1–26.
- Coenders M, Scheepers P. The effect of education on nationalism and ethnic exclusionism: an international comparison. *Political Psychology*. 2003; 24(2):313–343.
- Côté R, Erickson B. Untangling the Roots of Tolerance: How Forms of Social Capital Shape Attitudes toward Ethnic Minorities and Immigrants. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 2009; 52(12):1664–1689.
- Dancygier, R. *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2010.
- Dunaway J, Branton R, Abrajano M. Agenda Setting, Public Opinion, and the Issue of Immigration Reform. *Social Science Quarterly*. 2010; 91(2):359–378.
- Durlauf S. The Case “Against” Social Capital. *Focus*. 1999; 20(3):1–5.
- Eller A, Abrams D. Come Together: Longitudinal Comparisons of Pettigrew’s Reformulated Intergroup Contact Model and the Common Ingroup Identity Model in Anglo-French and Mexican-American Contexts. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 2004; 34(3):229–256.
- Escandell X, Ceobanu A. Nationalisms and Anti-immigrant Sentiment in Spain. *South European Society and Politics*. 2010; 15(2):157–179.
- Espenshade T, Hempstead K. Contemporary American Attitudes toward U.S. Immigration. *International Migration Review*. 1996; 30(2):535–570. [PubMed: 12291753]
- Favell A, Hansen R. Markets against Politics: Migration, EU enlargement, and the Idea of Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2002; 28(4):581–601.
- Fetzer J. Economic self-interest or cultural marginality? Anti-immigration sentiment and nativist political movements in France, Germany and the USA. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2000; 26(1):5–23.
- Gorodzeisky A, Semyonov M. Terms of Exclusion: Public Views towards Admission and Allocation of Rights to Immigrants in European Countries. *Racial and Ethnic Studies*. 2009; 32(3):401–423.

- Hainmueller J, Hiscox M. Educated preferences: explaining attitudes toward immigration in Europe. *International Organization*. 2007; 61(2):399–442.
- Hayes B, Dowds L. Social Contact, Cultural Marginality or Economic Self-Interest? Attitudes towards Immigrants in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2006; 32(3): 455–476.
- Herreros F, Criado H. Social Trust, Social Capital and Perceptions of Immigration. *Political Studies*. 2009; 57:337–355.
- Hjerm M. National identities, national pride and xenophobia: a comparison of four Western countries. *Acta Sociologica*. 1998; 41:335–347.
- Hjerm M. Education, xenophobia and nationalism: a comparative analysis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2001; 27(1):37–60.
- Hjerm M. Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Cross-Municipal Variation in the Proportion of Immigrants. *Acta Sociologica*. 2009; 52(1):47–62.
- Karapin, R. Far Right Parties and the Construction of Immigration Issues in Germany. In: Schain, M.; Zolberg, A.; Hossay, P., editors. *Shadows Over Europe: the Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan; 2002. p. 187–220.
- Kesler C, Bloemraad I. Does Immigration Erode Social Capital? The Conditional Effects of Immigration-Generated Diversity on Trust, Membership, and Participation across 19 Countries, 1981–2000. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 2010; 43(2):319–347.
- Mayda A. Who is against immigration? A cross-country investigation of individual attitudes toward immigrants. *Review of Economics and Statistics*. 2006; 88(3):510–530.
- McLaren L. Anti-immigrant prejudice in Europe: contact, threat perception, and preferences for the exclusion of migrants. *Social Forces*. 2003; 81(3):909–936.
- O'Rourke K, Sinnott R. The Determinants of Individual Attitudes towards Immigration. *European Journal of Political Economy*. 2006; 22(4):838–861.
- Quillian L. Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Threat: Population Composition and Anti-immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe. *American Sociological Review*. 1995; 60(4):586–611.
- Pardos-Prado, S. PhD thesis, European University Institute. Doctoral Dissertation, unpublished manuscript. Cadmus: European University Institute Research Repository; 2010. Beyond Radical Right: Attitudes toward Immigration and Voting Behavior in Europe. Retrieved December 2 2011, from
- Pehrson S, Vignoles V, Brown R. National identification and anti-immigrant prejudice: Individual and contextual effects of national definitions. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 2009; 72(1):24–38.
- Pettigrew, T.; Tropp, L. *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact*. Florence, KY: Taylor and Francis; 2011.
- Putnam, R. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster; 2000.
- Rustenbach E. Sources of Negative Attitudes toward Immigrants in Europe: A Multilevel Analysis. *International Migration Review*. 2010; 44(1):53–77.
- Rydgren, J. *The Populist Challenge: Political Protest and Ethno-nationalist Mobilization in France*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books; 2003.
- Scheve K, Slaughter M. Labor market competition and individual preferences over immigration policy. *Review of Economics and Statistics*. 2001; 83(1):133–145.
- Schneider S. Anti-immigrant Attitudes in Europe: Outgroup Size and Perceived Ethnic Threat. *European Sociological Review*. 2008; 24(1):53–67.
- Shulman S. Challenging the Civic / Ethnic and West / East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism. *Comparative Political Studies*. 2002; 35(5):554–585.
- Semyonov M, Rajzman R, Gorodzeisky A. The Rise of Anti-foreigner Sentiment in European Societies 1988–2000. *American Sociological Review*. 2006; 71(3):426–449.
- Semyonov M, Rajzman R, Gorodzeisky A. On the Relations Between Right-Wing Parties and Antiforeigner Sentiment. Reply to Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris. *American Sociological Review*. 2007; 72(5):841–849.

- Semyonov M, Raijman R, Gorodzeisky A. Foreigners Impact on European Societies: Public Views and Perceptions in a Cross-National Comparative Perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. 2008; 49(1):5–29.
- Sides J, Citrin J. European Opinion about Immigration: the Role of Identities, Interests, and Information. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2007; 37(3):477–504.
- Wagner U, Oliver C, Pettigrew T, Stellmacher J, Wolf C. Prejudice and Minority Proportion: Contact Instead of Threat effects. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 2007; 69(4):380–390.
- Waldinger, R.; Lichter, M. *How the Other Half Works: Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 2003.
- Weber, M. *Economy and Society*. Roth, G.; Wittich, C., editors. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1978.
- Wilkes R, Guppy N, Farris L. No Thanks We're Full: Individual Characteristics, National Context, and Changing Attitudes toward Immigration. *International Migration Review*. 2008; 42(2):302–329.
- Wimmer A. The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*. 2008; 113(4):970–1022.