Published in final edited form as:

Ethn Racial Stud. 2017 ; 40(3): 353–368. doi:10.1080/01419870.2016.1227078.

Race and ethnicity in context: International migration, political mobilization, and the welfare state

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Abstract

This manuscript reviews the literature on race and ethnicity in the political context. It discusses the most important scholarship on international migration, political mobilization, and the welfare state to date, to identify current gaps and emerging lines of inquiry. Future studies are needed to better understand the mobilization of immigrants by political parties, the role of local politics for a national electoral mobilization, and the relationship between local and national political areas for policy development.

Keywords

international migration; political mobilization; welfare state; welfare chauvinism; race; ethnicity

Introduction

The refugee crisis shows the conflicting ideas governing the immigration debate. Immigration is central to the future of welfare states in Western societies (Skeldon 2013; OECD 2014). It simultaneously constitutes a controversial issue mobilized by certain political forces trying to capitalize both on anti-immigrant feelings, and/or on attitudes reluctant to social protection and redistribution through state intervention. While the demographic characteristics of advanced economies (ageing populations, low fertility rates, decreasing activity rates, etc.) stress the need for international migration to equilibrate present and even more pressing future imbalances (and their effects on the financial sustainability of welfare programs), academic and political debates about immigration and welfare remain compartmentalized. This article reviews these debates, points out their weaknesses, and proposes an integrated approach to study their interrelations.

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State regulations of international migration rely on two conflicting notions of the migrant individual: a) as labor, b) as a resident with a well-defined set of rights. States have traditionally managed international migration in utilitarian terms. For decades, this rationale encouraged guest-worker programs across Europe, North America, and the Gulf (Castles and Miller 1993; Geddes 2003; Piore 1979; Sassen 1988; 1999), and still influences immigration policy today. Yet, a functional management of international migration is insufficient for social cohesion. Thus, destination countries have traditionally implemented policies to incorporate immigrants in cultural, political, and socio-economic terms. Immigrants' entitlement to welfare state protection constitutes one of such forms of incorporation.

The tension between international migration and the welfare state is rooted in the institutionalization of nation-states, which have historically relied on homogeneous populations (Wimmer 2002, Alessina et al. 1999). Already thirty years ago, scholars like Walzer (1983) claimed that a system of generous welfare support is only possible in a context of strict border controls. Similarly, Freeman (1986) argues that national welfare states constitute, by nature, closed systems with clearly defined boundaries aimed at distinguishing insiders from outsiders. The justification of social protection schemes support a hierarchical organization of rights, and have often been wrapped up in a rhetoric of "national solidarity" (Barry 1991), "community of solidarity" (Faist 1995), and "rights of citizenship" (Brubaker 1992).

Universalist arguments encourage States' receptivity of international migrants and the extension of social entitlements to all residents, regardless of their nationality (and occasionally, even their legal status). These circumstances would be fundamentally explained by the transposition of international conventions to national legislative frameworks (Soysal 1994; Jacobson 1996), by the intervention of national judicial systems, especially the constitutional and supreme courts (Joppke 1999), and/or by the action of bureaucracies responsible for the implementation of social protection programs (Guiraudon 2000). Destination countries have traditionally responded to this dual paradigm by being forced to extend rights to their immigrant population (Soysal 1994). Today, the management of immigration is far more complex.

The actual welfare entitlements of migrant populations in receiving societies seem to lie in an intermediate position within the aforementioned debate. This review aims to synthesize extant scholarship on the relationship between international migration and the welfare state, from three different perspectives: 1) political mobilization; 2) regulations of welfare entitlements for foreign migrants; and 3) welfare chauvinism.

Three perspectives

Political mobilization

Immigration is a source of political mobilization and conflict. Lipset's landmark volume, *Political Man*, first published in 1959, was one of the earliest studies of democracy in Europe and in the United States. A key concern throughout that book was: How groups integrate into a larger society? and what's the relationship between their social integration

and their loyalty to the political system? Can one exist without the other? For Lipset, and many other social scientists concerned with problems of democratic development, democratic stability was directly related to questions of integration, but to the integration of an alienated working class. The movement of the working class toward full citizenship, both political (in terms of voting) and social (the development of the welfare state), resulted in the development of democratic regime stability. In the literature of this period, while considerable attention was devoted to social, economic, and political integration and to the impact on political behaviour and political stability, no attention was given to immigrants and immigration at a time when immigration in democracies as France and Germany was growing rapidly.

By the 1980s, immigration emerged as an electoral and policy issue. It was generally understood as a source of conflict, as well as a mean of electoral mobilization. Electoral mobilization can be understood in at least two different ways; as an issue to mobilize national voters against immigrants, or as a strategy to mobilize the immigrant electorate, as they become increasingly enfranchised. Previous studies illustrate how immigrants have been used to gain political advantage (Money 1999, Messsina 1989), change priorities for public policy (Geddes 2003), or increase support for the radical right (Carvalho 2014).

The second strategy, which focuses on mobilizing a new set of political actors, has been given considerably less attention. Understanding immigrant populations as potential voters has implications for policy, as well as organizational consequences for political parties (the choice of political candidates, for example). Recent studies indicate that whether and the extent to which immigrants can be mobilized is linked to patterns of socio-economic integration. Political reactions to growing immigrant populations tend to vary, not only cross nationally, but also by locality within countries (Dancygier 2010). However, the allocation of benefits (welfare and political) to emerging immigrant populations then leads to immigrant-native conflict since natives are likely to react to this shifting allocation by direct attacks on immigrants, usually in identity-based terms.

Dancygier argues that without electoral leverage, immigrants are even more likely to make welfare demands directly to state actors, often by direct action. Both types of conflict (immigrant-state, and immigrant-native) are more likely to occur when the state (as opposed to the market) is responsible for disbursement of scarce goods. On their own, “immigrants’ ethnic or religious backgrounds cannot explain the wide variation in both faces of immigrant conflict we observe within and across countries”, which appears to be related to the presence of immigrant populations at the local level, and to their ability to mobilize for electoral gains.

In the same vein, Rahsaan Maxwell (2012) has convincingly argued that groups that are better integrated on the social level tend to be less cohesive. Socially segregated groups may have problems in their interactions with mainstream society, but have developed greater capacity for group mobilization. That mobilization, he argues, can improve economic and political integration.

In contrast to Europe, the study of political mobilization of immigrants in the United States has been far more focused on the mobilization of immigrants as political actors. Daniel Tichenor has argued that two kinds of politics have driven open and expansionary immigration policies in the United States over time,

... one rooted in immigrant enfranchisement and competitive democratic elections, the other in the insulation of elite decision-makers from mass publics. The first kind of politics shaped pro-immigration politics in the United States for much of the nineteenth century. The second kind animated new refugee admissions and passage of the landmark Hart-Celler Act in the post-war era. Pro-immigration policies of the contemporary period have been fuelled by both kinds of expansive politics.

However, parallel to the politics of expansion has always been the politics of restriction and exclusion, rooted in identity, race, and more recently the politics of welfare. While restrictionists succeeded in closing the front gates from Europe and Asia in 1921, expansionists succeeded in keeping the back gates from the Western Hemisphere open, and then slowly opened the front gates through refugee admissions and the Hart-Celler Act in 1965. Since 1965, pro-immigration politics have dominated the political agenda (at least in terms of legal admission), but restrictionists have had some success as well. The difference in outcomes is based on the way that the issue is organized, framed, the kinds of voters that have been mobilized on each side.

Tichenor's analysis raises important questions for comparative analysis, questions that have implications for Europe, and that merit exploration, primarily why the expansive political pattern that he analyses has not found a counterpart in Europe. In the British case, for example, a set of conditions similar to the United States has not created a similar dynamic or a similar reproductive mechanism—generally quite the opposite.

In Britain, New Commonwealth immigrants arrived in large numbers, easily acquired voting rights, and were courted by some Labour MPs. At the very same time, however, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party proceeded to pass a series of laws that increasingly restricted entry for these very same immigrants. Moreover, the presence of a significant and growing number of ethnic voters appears not to have created a dynamic for more open policy at the national level. Some of this may be related to the problems, incentives and consequences of ethnic mobilization, as indicated by Dancygier and Maxwell, while other problems may be related to variations in the advantages and incentives for political parties to mobilize the emerging ethnic electorate.

Therefore, the puzzle is that, even where immigrant populations appear to be strong and mobilizable in Europe, they remain politically weak, if not irrelevant. John Mollenkopf has noted that we often “implicitly assume that immigrants can be potential actors in a democratic context.” However,

...a key challenge for student of immigrant incorporation in settings where parties do compete for immigrant electoral or political support is to understand the general conditions under which outsiders ... can begin to become political insiders, meaning that they become important to – and can therefore influence in some way —the governing coalition. (Mollenkopf 2013, 109)

For Europe, the best studies that we have on party strategies to mobilize immigrant-ethnic minority voters are at the local level. Comparisons of parties and elections in Britain and France clearly indicate that at the urban level, British parties have made a greater effort to mobilize immigrants than have their counterparts in France. The Socialist party in France has frequently resisted naming minority candidates both at the local (and national) level in order to maintain in place established local elites and the balance of power within the party. Even in comparison with the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party has been less disposed to see immigrant voters as a political resource, because decisions on candidates are made beyond the neighbourhood level, and are often dictated by national priorities (Garbaye 2005; Maxwell 2012; Dancygier 2013). Although studies of local politics have been analytically rich, however, they tell us only about those localities in which there are high concentrations of ethnic-minority populations. What is less clear is the impact of local mobilization on national politics.

Concentrations of immigrants are far more important and widespread in the United States than in most European countries; more than 35 percent (and growing) of US congressional constituencies have immigrant/ethnic populations of more than 10 percent, compared with 20 percent in the UK and 18 percent in France (Schain 2012). This implies that political parties in the US may have greater incentive to take into consideration immigrants' interests than their European counterparts, particularly in elections for the Senate and the presidency, where mobilized immigrant populations have the most leverage.

In the British case, the influence of these voters can be contained more easily in relatively small constituencies, much as this influence is contained in elections for the House of Representatives in the United States. Since immigrant/ethnic voters are concentrated in fewer constituencies than they are in the United States, they tend to weigh less heavily in major party decisions on immigration policy.

The British case also demonstrates that political parties can and do use the presence of immigrant/ethnic voters to frame the immigration issue in different ways. Thus, while Labour MPs who represent constituencies with large numbers of ethnic voters have tended to support relatively open immigration policies, Conservative MPs from similar constituencies have framed the issue of immigration in terms of national identity, and have supported highly restrictive policies. The decision of both British parties to converge and compromise on the issue of immigration, and neutralize their extremes, has generally served to minimize the influence of immigrant groups at the national level (Schain 2012 182–89; Frazier 1971).

In the French case, where at least half of the 18 percent of constituencies with concentrations of immigrants are dominated by political parties of the Right, neither the Left nor the Right has been much responsive to the potential of an immigrant vote on the national level. The availability of this electorate has been somewhat delayed by French citizenship law, and their concentration in relatively few constituencies makes them less important than comparable voters in the United States. Although immigrants are capable of providing marginal votes in presidential elections, candidates in a succession of presidential elections

have either ignored their potential as voters, or have tried to appeal to anti-immigrant voters, in reaction to the increasing popularity of the National Front (Schain 2012 118–19).

In the United States, on the other hand, the tendency by national political parties to view ethnic/immigrant voters as a political resource grew after 1965. Even when there were reactions of identity politics in the Republican presidential races of 2006, 2012 and 2016, this issue was framed in terms of undocumented immigrants, rather than the rising level of legal immigration. This tendency has supported relatively open immigration policy through good and bad economic times. Moreover, the electoral balance has tended to tip toward immigrant interests. Ethnic/immigrant populations are concentrated in States that are increasingly critical in presidential races (including New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada and Florida), but their electoral importance has now spread well beyond these States, to more than a third of the States, and more than a third of congressional districts.

Research on mobilization has therefore focused on several issues that are intertwined. First, work on electoral mobilization has focused mostly on anti-immigrant mobilization, but there are far fewer studies of the mobilization of immigrants by political parties to gain political advantage. Similarly, although there are abundant studies of mobilization of anti-immigrant populations around issues of welfare politics, there are fewer on direct action by immigrant populations for policy objectives. Thus, the “impact” of immigration on political mobilization, is generally understood as the impact of immigration on the political field rather than the impact by immigrants. Finally, and most important, studies of electoral mobilization of immigrant-ethnic populations have been concentrated at the local level. However, what are missing have been studies that analyse the importance of local politics for national electoral mobilization, and the relationship between the local and national political arenas for the development of policy. In other words, even if ethnic minorities are successful in gaining local office, or even national office, how does this relate to public policy favourable to immigrant communities?

Regulation of international migration and welfare entitlements

Immigration flows challenge the ability of receiving States to effectively regulate them and to manage their main social and political consequences (Messina 2007). This question relates to issues of State power, government’s autonomy in relation to domestic organized interests (employers, trade unions, human rights organizations, etc.), and international and supranational pressures (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005). Scholarship examining States “losing” or “re-asserting” control over their borders miss an important point: immigration control does not necessarily take place at the border. Previous studies have emphasized the shifting loci of immigration control to the gates of welfare programs, both formally (Cohen et al. 2002) and informally (Ford 2015).

The economic and social dimensions of immigration policy are independent from one another: strict border controls do not necessarily lead to more inclusive welfare policies (Money 1999)². Nevertheless, the issue of immigration traditionally featured high in the political discussions about the welfare state in Scandinavian societies (Hagelund 2003), and social protection schemes have often been used to justify the need for strengthening border control policies in those countries, thus facilitating the adoption of a combination of hard

border controls and relatively flexible access to social protection schemes (Brochmann 2011). At the same time, the use of welfare policies to implement internal immigration controls seems to work more effectively in Corporatist Welfare Regimes, since its occupational logic more directly excludes those considered “undeserving” (most notably undocumented migrants) from social protection schemes.

It appears clear that classic Welfare Regime typologies do not totally grasp the internal complexity of this policy area, or its implications for the establishment of mechanisms to issue welfare entitlements in each country. Nevertheless, Welfare Regime ideal-types certainly condition the debates on the links between immigration and welfare sustainability.

The relationship between international migration and the welfare state is clearly heterogeneous. It concerns, first of all, the definition of an array of categories of foreigners (first-generation economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, ethnic minorities with full citizenship rights, etc.) each with different degrees of access to welfare entitlements, variable by country, but also across time. Welfare states contribute to the drawing of the line between “wanted” and “unwanted” populations (Geddes 2004; Schain 2013). Nation-States have historically-driven understandings of who constitutes the national community, which, in turn, influence policy paradigms (Brubaker 1992; Favell 1998). In European countries, these “paradigms” aspire to a greater homogeneity of the national community, and frame the policy-making environment in which States regulate the relationship between international migration and the welfare state.

Countries have been clustered around the organizing principles, ideological underpinnings and/or cultural commonalities that have conditioned the evolution of their Welfare Regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996). Welfare clusters have also been associated to specific immigration policy regimes focusing on their impact in the definition of immigrant’s social rights (Sainsbury 2012).

The institutional arrangements that define the equilibriums between the State, the market and civil society in the regulation, financing and provision of welfare programs constitute the specific “Welfare mix” that characterizes each country. While Liberal Welfare Regimes are generally built on the assumption that individuals must be fundamentally responsible for their own wellbeing, and that the intervention of the State must play only a residual role (associated to a notion of solidarity with the underprivileged), the essentially universalistic Social-democratic Regime assumes the central role of the State in the domain of welfare for all citizens (often operationalized under the category of “legal residency” in the country) (Dorr and Faist 1997). Once again, insufficient attention has been paid to the potential role of those welfare equilibriums in the space open for extension of social rights for foreigners, and on the politicization of immigrants’ welfare entitlements.

²The examples used by Money (1999) are Germany, as a nation that has permitted a high level of resident alien admissions (soft on the outside) but considers those population to be “foreign” (hard in the inside), the U.S, with relatively restricted flows but a relatively easy incorporation pattern through naturalization (hard outside-soft inside), Japan as a nation with low levels of resident aliens and difficult integration (hard outside-hard inside), and finally Australia with high levels of resident aliens and relatively welcoming integration policies (soft outside-soft inside).

The eligibility criteria of a Welfare Regime is grounded on the basic “philosophy of deservingness” condensed throughout the process of articulation of that Regime. Thus, social insurance models built on entitlements linked to labour market participation may leave little room for the politicization of access of foreigners to social protection programs, since those entitlements are generally associated to previous contributions. On the other extreme, universalistic programs based on citizenship may considerably increase the space for the politicization of immigrant’s welfare rights. Insufficient attention has been paid to the analysis of the extent to which Welfare Regimes, with their different “philosophies of deservingness”, may affect the extension of social rights to foreigners, or vary in the type and dimension of the windows of opportunity they open to the politicization of immigrant’s welfare entitlements.

The definition of the “deserving community” constitute an additional matter of controversy. Without a clear analysis of the mechanisms that may account for the existence of a causal link between ethnic diversity and citizen’s support for welfare programs, the ethnic composition of a society has been considered a key factor in explaining the perceived correlation between those phenomena (Alesina et al. 1999). The argument that Social-democratic Welfare Regimes emerged in ethnically homogeneous societies with the goal of protecting members of the “national community”, or that the Liberal Welfare model best fitted the development of the United States’ social protection system due to the complex “racial history” of this country, clearly fit within this pattern of interpretation. Recent research has expanded on the exploration of the causal links behind this hypothesis through the study of inter and intra-group cooperation dynamics, and of the structures that favor altruistic strategies (Habyarimana et al. 2007). Further research is needed to disentangle the role of the national community in the extension of welfare entitlements, the politicization of immigrants’ access to welfare programs and for the emergence of “welfare chauvinism”.

Welfare chauvinism

Welfare chauvinism claims that autochthonous populations are more entitled to receive welfare support than their immigrant counterparts because they constitute the “polity” (Freeman 2009; Svallfors 2012; Van der Waal et al. 2010). This line of inquiry addresses the relationship between international migration and the legitimacy of key institutions of liberal democracies.

How can ethnic diversity be compatible with solidarity? Previous studies suggest that increasing international migration discourages public support for redistributive policies, and reduces social cohesion (Brady and Finnigan 2013; Eger 2010; Fox 2012). The underlying assumption comes from the social capital literature: immigration reduces social trust by decreasing citizens’ identification with one another (Putnam 2007). As international migration increases cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial diversity, it is expected to weaken social cohesion, and, in turn, reduce public support for economic redistribution policies.

The empirical evaluation of this claim has generated conflicting findings. Historical-comparative analyses of a single country seem to provide evidence to support Putnam’s argument. The increasing size of the immigrant population in Sweden encouraged citizens’

support to welfare retrenchment (Eger 2010). Similar research conducted by Fox (2004, 2012) in the US shows that the most reluctant attitudes towards welfare redistribution emerge in the most ethnically diverse localities, notably those with a higher concentration of African Americans and Latinos.

Increasing ethnic diversity within a country may potentially induce “welfare chauvinism”, but the mechanisms underlying these associations remain unclear. Cross-national comparative research shows that increasing immigrant population decreases social cohesion in some countries, while it increases it in others, thus challenging Putnam’s argument (Kesler and Bloemraad 2010). The cross-national study of diversity and social cohesion is certainly problematic, due to the country-specific understandings of inter-ethnic relations. Future research needs to specify the extent to which “welfare chauvinism” responds to international migration flows of the first, second, or third generations, versus alternative understandings of “ethnic minorities”. While Putnam’s (2007) argument may be useful to explain the rise of “welfare chauvinism” in some countries, it may not necessarily account for cross-national differences in citizens’ attitudes towards immigration, immigrants, or economic redistribution.

This contested line of inquiry reveals the significance of the institutional environment in the relationship between international migration and public attitudes towards redistribution (Joppke 2007; Svallfors 2012; Van Oorschoot and Uunk 2007). Although extant studies do not agree on the specific conditions that are more likely to discourage “welfare chauvinism”, they indicate some of the trade-offs that characterize current immigration policy frameworks and their potential impact on inter-ethnic relations (Banting and Kymlicka 2007). Further research is needed to examine immigration policy frameworks from a comparative perspective in order to generate findings that can be generalized across countries. To accomplish this goal, it is essential to better assess the direction of causality between citizen’s attitudes and public policies (Brooks and Manza 2008). Evidence of the processes underlying welfare chauvinism is expected to strengthen the theoretical advancement of this literature and its policy significance.

Previous studies have examined the rationale behind the cross-national variation of institutional frameworks regulating immigrants’ access to welfare, public attitudes toward immigrants’ access to welfare entitlements, and the significance of institutional environments in the relationship between immigration, social cohesion, and public opinion. However, the specificities of each country’s institutional environment limit the extent to which findings from one country can be generalized into a transnational theory of welfare chauvinism.

Discussion and conclusion

Prevailing debates on the relation between immigration and welfare cover a wide range of elements related to the interaction between these dimensions but, unavoidably, leave other important aspects outside of their analysis. The conceptualization of the Welfare Regime of a country simply as a combination of social protection schemes that could be dismantled fails to capture the profound embeddedness of social policies with the economy of a country,

the definition of membership of the national community, and the role of membership in the support of economic redistribution policies (Pierson 2000). The regulation of labor market relations, as a key element of a national economic model, constitutes another deeply interconnected system that evolved over a long period of time as a result of complex socio-political negotiations within each society. Immigration constitutes an element that intervenes over those previously mentioned dimensions, since it constitutes a process by which the socio-demographic composition of a society is transformed. Taking into consideration the impact of immigration on the Welfare State requires an increasingly complex approach to the analysis of institutional equilibriums.

A key to better understand the complex interactions between immigrant populations and social protection schemes would be a more sophisticated analysis of the multidimensional impact of immigration in the economy. In the previously mentioned debates, a basic cost-benefit estimate of that impact (in terms of taxes paid and services received by immigrants) is generally at the core of these arguments. Nevertheless, and due to the complexity of taking into consideration the plurality of dimensions actually involved in that process, those estimates tend to provide an overly simplistic conceptual model. A more accurate depiction of that impact would require taking into consideration a long list of dimensions, including the economic activity directly generated by immigrant populations (ethnic entrepreneurship, trade flows channeled by these groups, etc.), their role in maintaining economic sectors strongly exposed to international competition (generally labor intensive sectors at risk of disappearing for lack of competitiveness in global markets), their contribution to the aggregated demand in the receiving society, their impact in the housing market (generating rents to owners of semi-derelict housing stocks, increasing demand for housing boosting construction and prices, etc.), the financial resources taken away from the local economy to be sent abroad as remittances, to mention just a few. These types of analysis are rare today, but their development could benefit prevailing gaps in the scholarship on international migration and the Welfare State.

An additional line of research that would require further development in order to properly account for the relationship between immigration and the Welfare Regime of the receiving society is the impact of those social protection schemes in shaping the nature and composition of migration flows towards a certain country. As Faist (1995) points out, each type of welfare state has distinct consequences for the policies of selection, admission, and integration of migrants, and also gives rise to different politics of immigration. The most common approach towards this issue is the “welfare magnet” theory (Borjas 1999), according to which migrants make rational choices between potential receiving countries and choose those with the most generous welfare provisions. A related assumption is that low-skilled immigrants will be attracted to countries with more generous welfare benefits (“selection effect”), while the high taxes paid in generous States will function as a deterrent of high-skilled immigrants (“adverse selection effect”). Empirical analyses of the “welfare magnet” hypothesis are inconclusive (Pedersen et al. 2004; Zavodny 1999). Immigrants’ decisions to settle in a certain country seem to be fundamentally driven by differences in labor market regulation, migration policies that create specific niches for labor migrants, and networks of social support. Nevertheless, the interplay between immigration and Welfare

Regimes seems to be fundamental in defining integration opportunities, attracting a specific type of migrants, and incorporating them in specific niches within the labor market.

While Welfare and immigration Regimes may operate from different guiding principles, in fact, the specific relationships among similar regimes can take different forms, shaped by varying domestic coalitions, as well as by the structure and conjuncture of the economy. Nevertheless, regimes interact to the extent that the policy categories developed by one of them influences the other, and vice versa (Baldwin-Edwards 2002). However, little is known about how the exact mechanisms by which those two regimes interact with each other. The extent to which they form a coherent whole, with one distinct national institutional logic or, on the contrary, whether their logics and institutional mechanisms counterbalance each other, constitute a matter for further research.

To the extent that policies already in place structure politics, by activating some potential social identities and alliances of interests, and by politicizing certain conflicts, the degree of closeness of Welfare Regimes do not constitute a given. Welfare institutions can be better viewed as intervening variables that affect the definition of interests and coalition formation among citizens, which in turn has consequences for the size of budgets available for redistribution and the final degree of redistribution achieved (Korpi and Palme 1985).

As the literature analyzing the influence of immigration and Welfare Regimes is rather limited, a novel research agenda taking into consideration those limitations needs to be drafted. Migratory pressures are unlikely to decrease in the foreseeable future, and the level of politicization of immigration issues is also quite likely to increase in coming years, and with it the policy environment in which policy-makers have managed to “muddle-through” during the last years will be significantly transformed. In the middle of the refugee crisis in Europe, the room for the appearance of “xenophobic entrepreneurs” mobilizing anti-immigrant feelings, as well as for extreme right parties directly capitalizing on the issue of immigration (using welfare arguments), has clearly expanded, notably in those countries with higher concentrations of immigrants or where the flows of asylum-seekers are arriving in large numbers. The emergence of extreme right-wing and populist political actors with a strong discourse of opposition to immigration may produce a reaction of conservative parties, reinforce the cautious attitude of liberal and social democratic parties, as well as make left wing parties growingly confused in relation to this area of policy.

These developments have already appeared (in some cases simultaneously) in the political landscape of many European countries in recent years, and they have certainly conditioned the policy environment in which the access of populations of immigrant origin to Welfare systems has been defined. On the other hand, as we can see from the United States case, much may depend on the ability of immigrant/ethnic communities to mobilize and influence governments and political parties.

The initiatives of fiscal austerity introduced across Europe, combined with an atmosphere of stigmatization of population of immigrant origin, have materialized in initiatives aimed at restricting the access of these groups (including intra-European migrants) to many social protection schemes. The narratives of controlling “abuses”, and cutting-down costs, have

been used by many European governments to justify the reduction of social rights to immigrant groups, by accusing them of endangering the sustainability of those Welfare programs. The fight against discriminatory treatment will constitute not only a very important dimension in terms of social justice, but also a key aspect for the integration of second and subsequent generations of immigrants, and the future of destination countries.

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