

# Comparative Analyses of Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration Using Multinational Survey Data: A Review of Theories and Research

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## Abstract

This article critically reviews the intersectional locus of public opinion scholarship and immigration studies that make use of data from multinational survey projects. Specifically, it emphasizes current cross-national research seeking to understand the causes, manifestations, and implications of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration in economically advanced countries of the world. Despite rapid expansion, the field suffers from several methodological challenges and theoretical constraints. A succinct exposure of trends and patterns is followed by presentations of influential theoretical perspectives and established individual- and contextual-level determinants. The review suggests that strengthening the conceptual apparatus and enlarging the analytical focus are priorities. It concludes with some observations on how to circumvent these problems and to bridge current research with future explorations of the embedded nature of such public attitudes.

## INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of people from all continents relocate to one of the economically advanced states of the world (UN Popul. Div. 2009), bestowing on international migration the status of a pressing social, economic, and political issue. Recent data (OECD 2008) reveal considerable immigrant concentrations in both settler societies, where immigration is a quintessential part of the national ethos, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, and nontraditional immigration destinations, such as the Western European states or, less so, Japan and Korea (Citrin & Sides 2008, Kivisto 2001). Regardless of the host society, migrants often face the hurdles of restrictive immigration regimes (Hollifield 2000) and widespread resistance from national publics (Messina 2007).

Immigration affects the domestic landscape of receiving countries in many ways. The proliferation of antiforeigner rhetoric in the media, popular support for restrictive policy initiatives (e.g., the new immigration measures in Italy, based on detention camps and deportation), or increasing visibility of openly xenophobic right-wing political parties (Golder 2003, Lubbers et al. 2002, Rydgren 2007) are examples in this respect. Ineffective population inflow controls (Cornelius & Rosenblum 2005) and the vast diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds from which migrants originate have propelled immigration to the center of heated debates in receiving societies. Furthermore, immigration to economically advanced states has catalyzed the emergence of transnational ethnic minorities with hybrid identities and split allegiances that directly challenge traditional notions of citizenship (Bloemraad et al. 2008, Kivisto 2001) and strain relations between native inhabitants and newcomers. Discourses on immigrants and immigration usually bring forth very strong public responses, especially when politicized or when intersecting with other pressing issues, such as fears of globalization and terrorism (Esses et al. 2002). These situations describe a novel phenomenon (Kivisto 2001, p. 550),

rendering the study of the causes, manifestations, and implications of public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (ATII, hereafter) in these societies a necessary endeavor.

Our literature review suggests that much of the research (*a*) suffers from terminological ambiguity, (*b*) has remained fixated in the theoretical soil of competitive threat (individual- and group-level), and (*c*) needs to move beyond this situation by strengthening the conceptual apparatus and expanding the theoretical range and analytical focus. Research has yet to provide a clear picture of the institutional and sociopolitical macro-level factors that affect the emergence and manifestation of ATII. We argue for further exploration of the social embedding of ATII by using longitudinal data and diversifying the contextual-level measures, expanding the number of countries and levels of analysis (data permitting), and improving on the specification of existing analytical models.

After examining patterns and trends in ATII and critically evaluating the sources of cross-national data, we inspect the lexicon used by scholars to describe the phenomenon under investigation. The current situation of diverse terminologies is due to researchers' independent quest to identify the determinants of ATII, which, in spite of generating important findings, can hardly be a palliative for inconsistent conceptualization and operationalization. We then briefly expose the main sociological theories informing this research, as well as key findings, and argue that overreliance on the tradition of competitive threat has stunted the growth of alternative explanations and the development of theory-building inferences (but see Bail 2008, Hopkins 2010). Therefore, future research would do well to move beyond the prevailing perspective and to propose analytical models that will enhance our understanding of the relationship between micro-, meso-, and macro-level layers informing ATII.

## PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN ATII

Prompted by increasing access to comparable data from multi-country survey projects, the

number of cross-national examinations of ATII has grown substantially since Quillian's (1995) study of anti-immigrant and racial prejudice.<sup>1</sup> This body of research has consistently documented strong public reactions to immigrants and immigration in advanced economies, spanning from reluctant acceptance to outright rejection. Apart from certain cross-national variation<sup>2</sup> and despite clearly different immigration policies and histories,<sup>3</sup> unfavorable ATII are widespread and strikingly similar occurrences across receiving societies (Citrin & Sides 2008, Zick et al. 2008). Such a pattern is observable for different attitudinal constructs and for data derived from several multi-country survey projects, such as the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). **Figure 1** depicts such a trend for several countries with very distinct immigration trajectories, at two points in time (1995 and 2003).

Even though there are differences in the mean level of preferred immigration across the countries represented in **Figure 1**, the general pattern for both years is toward a reduction in the number of admitted immigrants. In both settler societies and in many recent immigrant-receiving countries, the mean levels for 1995 are at par. In line with previous research documenting a lack of American exceptionalism (Citrin & Sides 2008), U.S.

citizens' preferred level of immigration is quite similar to that of many European publics (and remains so over the years). Although public opinion toward immigration in Canada and the United States has closely followed the macro-economic context (Cornelius & Rosenblum 2005, Espenshade & Hempstead 1996, Palmer 1996), a common pattern for these neighboring states is absent: North Americans have become more supportive of immigration as time has passed (Facchini & Mayda 2008, Wilkes et al. 2008), but the attitudinal gap between the two national populations persists. The publics of Australia and New Zealand, another pair of settler societies, have also favored less restrictive immigration over time. Whereas Australians' opinions have shifted toward steady levels of immigration, those of New Zealanders have continued to denote a preference for reduced levels. However, a recent study has found that New Zealanders harbor more favorable views toward immigrants than either the Europeans or Australians (Ward & Masgoret 2008), which suggests that attitudes toward immigration may follow dynamics very different from those of attitudes toward immigrants.

Among nontraditional countries of immigration, Eastern Europeans tend to endorse reduced levels of immigration to a greater extent than Western Europeans (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Coenders et al. 2009, Kunovich 2004), although their inflows of newcomers are much smaller, comparatively. More recently, these attitudinal differences have become less conspicuous, as there has been a shift toward interregional convergence (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008). **Figure 1** further shows that the rise in endorsement of restrictive immigration is a feature of nonsettler countries outside Europe, too, such as Japan.

Because the overwhelming majority of multinational investigations of ATII use cross-sectional data, the depiction of patterns is far more complete than that of trends. **Table 1** summarizes the few cross-national studies that have explicitly employed a longitudinal (repeated cross-sectional) design, thereby permitting assessments of ATII dynamics.

<sup>1</sup> Such studies draw from the experience of at least two national publics, with the purpose of explaining similarities and differences in the forces behind ATII.

<sup>2</sup> Cross-national differences in attitudes may be due to idiosyncratic interpretations of what constitutes an immigrant. In countries where citizenship is granted to anyone born there (the principle of *jus soli*), an immigrant is someone born abroad. However, in countries where citizenship is linked to ethnicity (e.g., Germany until 1999), an immigrant is someone with a different ethnicity, irrespective of birthplace. Under strict interpretation of the German citizenship law, repatriated ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) are not immigrants, though a second-generation Turk born on the federal territory is an immigrant.

<sup>3</sup> Unlike settler societies, immigration to Europe is a more recent phenomenon that directly challenges the prevailing national identity (Citrin & Sides 2008). Therefore, from its onset, European immigration "has been constructed and framed as a problem and often perceived as a threat" (Zick et al. 2008).

**Table 1** A summary of cross-national studies on ATI with a longitudinal (cross-sectional) dimension

Region(s)	Construct	Trend	Years	Data set	Predictors	Study
Western Europe <sup>a</sup>	Antiforeigner attitudes	Increase	1988, 1997	Eurobarometer	Individual	Gang et al. (2002)
Western Europe <sup>b</sup>	Attitudes toward immigration <sup>c</sup>	Stable	1988, 1992, 1993, 1997	Eurobarometer	Individual, structural	Lahav (2004b)
Western Europe <sup>d</sup>	Attitudes toward minorities	Stable, increase <sup>e</sup>	1997, 2000, 2003	Eurobarometer	Individual, structural	Coenders et al. (2005)
Western Europe <sup>f</sup>	Multiple <sup>g</sup>	Peak in the mid-1990s, level off by 2000	1988, 1991–1994, 1997, 2000	Eurobarometer	Individual	Kessler & Freeman (2005)
Western Europe <sup>f</sup>	Antiforeigner sentiment	Increase	1988, 1994, 1997, 2000	Eurobarometer	Individual, structural	Semyonov et al. (2006)
Western and Eastern Europe <sup>h</sup>	Anti-immigrant sentiment	Stable in Western Europe, slight decrease in Eastern Europe	1995, 2003	International Social Survey Program	Individual, structural	Ceobanu & Escandell (2008)
Multiple <sup>i</sup>	Proimmigration opinion <sup>j</sup>	Slight increase <sup>k</sup>	1995, 2003	International Social Survey Program	Individual, structural	Facchini & Mayda (2008)
Western Europe <sup>f</sup>	Proimmigration opinion <sup>j</sup>	Stable	2002, 2004	European Social Survey	Individual	Malchow-Møller et al. (2009)
Europe <sup>m</sup>	Attitudes toward immigration	Decrease from the peak in mid-1990s <sup>n</sup>	2002, 2004, 2006	European Social Survey	Structural	Meuleman et al. (2009)

<sup>a</sup>Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the UK.

<sup>b</sup>Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the UK.

<sup>c</sup>Whether or not respondents personally found the presence of people of another nationality disturbing in their daily lives.

<sup>d</sup>Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany East, Germany West, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

<sup>e</sup>Stable: resistance to multicultural society, opposition to civil rights for legal migrants; increase: limits to multicultural society, favor of repatriation policies for legal migrants, insistence on the conformity of migrants to law.

<sup>f</sup>All 15 member states of the European Community (European Union) before the 2004 extension.

<sup>g</sup>Evaluation of the extent of non-EU immigrants; acceptance of immigrants from south of Mediterranean for work; disturbed by foreigners' presence.

<sup>h</sup>Western Europe: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, West Germany; Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia.

<sup>i</sup>The 1995 sample included Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, East Germany, West Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the United States; the 2003 sample included Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, East Germany, West Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the United States.

<sup>j</sup>With respect to the number of immigrants to [country].

<sup>k</sup>Although hostility to immigration stayed high.

<sup>l</sup>Consenting to immigrants from poorer non-European countries.

<sup>m</sup>Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK.

<sup>n</sup>Also, that substantial attitudinal variation exists between clusters of countries (e.g., respondents from Northern and Scandinavian countries hold more positive views than those from Southern and Eastern European countries).

Of the nine studies listed, seven describe situations of either increased or stable negative ATII (especially in Western Europe), with only two depicting more positive tendencies in such attitudes. The entries in the third column of the table show considerable variation in the trends of negative ATII. This is not simply the result of the sample of countries selected or the time frame used; it is also the result of several factors subsequently addressed in this review: the source of the data, the attitudinal construct under investigation, and the predictors used.

## METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Two Types of Attitudes

As indicated above, two broad types of such public views can be identified: attitudes toward immigrants and attitudes toward immigration. The two constitute distinct domains of study, despite the tendency of some scholars to address them together (e.g., Esses et al. 1998, 2001; Simon & Lynch 1999), presumably because of their confounding impact on political responses and legislative measures. Some proposed constructs have merged attitudes toward immigrants and those on immigration in the form of multi-item indices, a procedure with potentially serious consequences for the validity and value of such research. Some overlap of the two types of public views is expected, as all attitudes “swim around in the same heads” (Schuman 2000, p. 304). Nonetheless, such an amalgamation exposes the researcher to an array of daunting methodological problems regarding the relationship between views on immigrants and those on immigration. The two forms of attitudes may be intermingling in rather complex ways (Bauer et al. 2001), with one possibly supporting the other (e.g., when anti-immigrant feelings trigger a change in public views toward the perceived societal impact associated with immigration), or, alternatively, a connection between the two may be absent (e.g., when support for less restrictive

immigration policies is not visibly tied up with the absence of immigrant exclusionism or derogation of foreigners). The distinction between the two is further impeded by the fact that, even when the two mental constructs are treated as if they reflect different notions or ontological entities, one as reactions toward people and the other as reactions about the phenomenon of immigration, the analytical models predicting the determinants of such attitudes have been premised on very similar theoretical propositions.

In instances when the two types of attitudes are approached as distinct objects of study, the literature illustrates a heightened interest in public views toward immigrants and a comparatively diminished focus on reactions to immigration (Meuleman et al. 2009). Such an imbalance is accentuated by scholars’ predilection to investigate attitudes toward immigrants by drawing upon the vast literature on racial prejudice (for a review and critique of influential perspectives about contemporary forms, see Quillian 2006), in terms of predicting factors (nonattitudinal and attitudinal) and terminology: “ethnic prejudice” (Hello et al. 2002), “ethnic exclusionism” (Coenders & Scheepers 2003, Scheepers et al. 2002a), “anti-immigrant prejudice” (Kunovich 2002, 2004; McLaren 2003; Quillian 1995), “ethnic discrimination” (Coenders & Scheepers 1998), or “prejudice against ethnic minorities” (Scheepers et al. 2002b). An overview of the survey items used by researchers reveals, however, that not all immigrant-related attitudes have an explicit ethno-racial component. By comparison, the conceptual grasping of attitudes toward immigration has not been as heavily influenced by the prejudice literature, as the original questionnaire items tap into very different stories, such as evaluations of immigration policies or perceptions about the consequences of immigration for the receiving societies.

### Terminological Diversity

Cross-national studies on ATII are premised on the (quasi-) equivalence of meanings and scores

for the underlying theoretical constructs. Various countries exemplify different migration histories and policies, which make it difficult to assume that the concepts of immigrants and immigration are understood uniformly by various national populations. The problem is further compounded by the realization that specifying who is an immigrant varies greatly among the constituents of a national and political community (Pettigrew 1998b), and over time.<sup>4</sup> Irrespective of these variations, immigrants are often viewed as outsiders by the majority populations in their respective societies of settlement (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009).

Most cross-national studies on ATII rely on the aggregation of questionnaire items into summative or averaging indices, after systematic checks for measurement invariance. Given that one survey item alone can hardly represent an attitude toward an object of interest, such as immigrants, the usage of composite measures seems appropriate in cross-national research. But the production of multi-item measures has generated great diversity, as seldom the construct from one group of authors finds correspondence in that advanced by another team in terms of both substance (items used) and underlying notion (terminology). The haziness owing to particularistic conceptualizations and operational modes is furthered by the different labeling of the composite measures derived from the same set of items. Additionally, the double-barrel character of some survey items makes adjudication problematic. For instance, the statement “[Country] should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants” may actually measure attitudes toward actions taken by the government (e.g., if appropriate measures to curb illegal immigration have already been implemented) instead of (sympathetic) opinions toward undocumented immigrants (Berg 2009, p. 54).

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<sup>4</sup>The different connotations for the word immigrant have prompted the designers of the European Social Survey (ESS) module on attitudes toward immigrants to use the formulation “people who come to live in [Country] from abroad” (Card et al. 2005, p. 12).

This inconsistent terminology has drawbacks, as reported findings are not always directly comparable. The different labels that have been proposed expose the range of traditions embraced: “ethnic exclusionism” (Coenders & Scheepers 2003, Scheepers et al. 2002a), “ethnic discrimination” (Coenders & Scheepers 1998), “anti-immigrant prejudice” (Kunovich 2002, 2004; McLaren 2003; Quillian 1995), “xenophobia” (Hjerm 1998, 2001, 2007), “prejudice against ethnic minorities” (Scheepers et al. 2002b), “immigrant derogation” (Schlueter & Wagner 2008), “anti-immigrant sentiment” (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007), “ethnic prejudice” (Hello et al. 2002), “antiforeigner sentiment” (Gang et al. 2002; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007; Wilkes et al. 2007), or “anti-minority attitudes” (Semyonov & Glikman 2009). These concepts have often been used interchangeably, and systematic attempts to delimit the logical universes of related terms are few and only of recent date. An example is offered by Gorodzeisky & Semyonov (2009), who distinguish the bidimensional concept of support for exclusion from other attitudes toward out-group members. Complementing this is the attempt of Gorodzeisky (2010) to clarify the notions of perceived threat and prejudice by distinguishing their foundations and manifestations. Efforts such as these are critical for remapping the field and must be carried on in the future with a sense of priority.

Beyond the results of various studies, the question of which conceptualization process and mode of operationalization are most suitable still lingers, for it gets to the heart of how (a) ATII should in fact be measured, (b) the findings from the literature should be interpreted, and (c) different dimensions of ATII should be termed in light of future efforts at theory testing and consolidation. Notoriously sensitive to societal events, ATII represent a set of mostly evaluative statements (Ajzen 2001) about different objects (e.g., immigrants or immigration, national minorities or ethno-racial groups). Their complex nature entails conceptualization by postulation through several concepts of

intuition, such as evaluations, feelings, norms, preferences, or cognitions (Hox 1997), the latter of which are derived from survey questions (Saris & Gallhofer 2004, pp. 241–49).

To circumvent lexicon enlargement, scholars could anchor the proposed multi-item constructs around older and more established concepts (Morawska 2008). Alternatively, we suggest labeling the multi-item constructs in reference to the most relevant indicator or indicators. Irrespective of terminology and despite wide applicability in cross-national research on ATII, the usage of multi-item measures comes with caution: The aggregation of individual items may obscure important within- and between-country variation in the nature of object-specific survey questions. Put differently, the determinants of the constitutive items of an index may not be uniform across the populations under investigation. In such a situation, unmixing the items could, in fact, further our understanding of the foundation and consequences of ATII, although validity and reliability are stringent issues in the case of single-item attitudinal variables.

### Cross-National Survey Projects Used in ATII Research

The most widely used data sources for studying ATII cross-nationally are the following: ISSP (mentioned above), the World Value Survey (WVS), the Eurobarometer, and the European Social Survey (ESS). Data from these standardized survey projects have been used to establish comparisons among countries and to measure change over time.

The ISSP has carried out annual surveys on various topics since 1985, with the intention of replication every five years or more (<http://www.issp.org>). Two rounds of the module “Aspects of National Identity” (containing questions on immigrants and minorities) have been completed—in 1995 (23 participating countries) and 2003 (33). From the perspective of cross-national research on ATII, a drawback of the ISSP is the limited number of relevant items, given this module’s

focus on localism, ethnic belonging, and national identity. Nonetheless, these data have generated an important body of studies (e.g., Bauer et al. 2001; Coenders et al. 2004; Facchini & Mayda 2008, 2009; Hjerm 1998; Knudsen 1997; Kunovich 2002, 2004; O’Rourke & Sinnott 2006; Raijman et al. 2008).

A second data source is the WVS (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>), which consists of five waves for the years 1981–1984, 1989–1993, 1994–1999, 1999–2004, and 2005–2008. Given the manifest interest in moral and social values, the WVS’s main drawback is the paucity of relevant items for the study of ATII (only two questions make specific reference to immigrants). As such, the WVS has yielded only a few comparative examinations of public views toward immigrants (e.g., Mayda 2006) and European Muslims (Strabac & Listhaug 2008).

The Eurobarometer surveys ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion)) represent an important third source for cross-national data. Conducted biannually by the Gallup Organization for the European Commission since 1973 in the member states, as well as, for a limited time, in the candidate countries, these surveys have been considered a staple of attitudinal research in Europe. Although ample data on issues of public interest are available, including immigrants and immigration, the series suffers from several shortcomings. First, its geographical reach is limited to the European continent. Second, the series is the principal tool for the European Commission for sequentially gathering information on the unification process and can hardly accommodate more academically driven explorations of social issues. Third, changes in question wording over the years impede undertaking research on attitudinal trends (Lahav 2004a, p. 233). Lastly, the Eurobarometer series is known less for its methodological rigor (especially during its pioneering period) and more for the breadth of covered topics (O’Shea et al. 2002, p. 5). Despite these limitations, the Eurobarometer surveys have been used extensively in the investigation of ATII across countries (e.g., Boeri & Brücker 2005; Gijsberts et al. 2004b; Kehrberg 2007; Kessler

& Freeman 2005; Lahav 2004a,b; Leong & Ward 2006; McLaren 2001, 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007).

A fourth and recent source is the ESS (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>), data from which are available for four rounds. Building on previous experiences, the ESS has set from its inception very high methodological standards in terms of questionnaire construction, sampling techniques, and data collection. The survey instrument of each round includes a core set of questions and two or three rotating modules on diverse topics. Covering 22 countries, its first edition (2002–2003) contains a battery of 58 questions about immigrants and immigration, which have generated ample scholarship on ATII (e.g., Card et al. 2005; Davidov et al. 2008; Green 2009; Malchow-Møller et al. 2008, 2009; O’Connell 2005; Schlueter & Wagner 2008). Even though it is the sustained emphasis on methodological rigor that sets the ESS project apart, the span of cross-country comparisons is confined to the European context.<sup>5</sup> Part of a wider flow of studies on intergroup dynamics in Europe (Zick et al. 2008), the recent surge in ATII research has opened up a much-needed dialogue with the rich literature on intergroup beliefs and relations that has been of central interest to U.S. scholarship for a long time.

Apart from these survey series, other data sources that have been drawn upon in ATII research include the Religious and Moral Pluralism (RAMP) project and even national surveys (see Hello et al. 2002, Scheepers et al. 2002b, Evans & Need 2002). Typically, researchers have relied on a single data source (but see Boeri & Brücker 2005, Facchini & Mayda 2009, Mayda 2006). This situation is not completely unrelated to the lack of

item comparability across various attitudinal projects and speaks to the need for survey instrument cross-fertilization.

The overrepresentation of the European countries in recent research on ATII is explained by the substantial intracontinental heterogeneity in national contexts, ethnic minorities, and migration histories, all of which presumably make Europe an attractive ground to study intergroup dynamics (Zick et al. 2008). This commendable interest in Europe has not been paralleled by a similar focus on other economically advanced states, although some authors have opted for samples of countries<sup>6</sup> from at least two continents (e.g., Bauer et al. 2001; Citrin & Sides 2008; Facchini & Mayda 2008, 2009; Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007; Mayda 2006; O’Rourke & Sinnott 2006). The overbalance on the European national contexts is tied to the availability of cross-national data, and comparative scholarship would benefit from opening up the research to new collaborative efforts worldwide.

## THEORETICAL ANCHORS INFORMING CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH ON ATII

Despite the terminological challenges that scholars studying ATII confront, the sheer number of studies is a testimony of this field’s vitality. The research has drawn inspiration from grand and mini theories developed in various social disciplines. The preferred road for studying ATII has been through the vast literature on intergroup beliefs and attitudes, prejudice toward minority groups, and racial policy opinions. An important driver of the sociological investigation of attitudes toward out-group members is represented by the discipline’s long-standing interest in examining

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<sup>5</sup>One exception to this is the U.S.-based Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) project (<http://www.uscidsurvey.org>), which builds on the ESS survey from round 1. The replication of the original ESS questions expands the number of countries available to 23, although, strictly speaking, the differences in response format between the CID and ESS surveys render some of the items not truly comparable (see Citrin & Sides 2008, p. 54).

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<sup>6</sup>Our review revealed researchers’ preference for a larger sample of countries ( $n \geq 10$ ), although several studies are based on a smaller number of cases (3–5) for the purpose of emphasizing differences across national contexts (e.g., Fetzer 2000a,b; Hjerem 1998; Rajjman et al. 2008; Simon & Lynch 1999; Simon & Sikich 2007).



the relationship between individual and societal processes (Allport 1954, Blumer 1958). Thus, widespread consensus exists that the theoretical propositions reflecting attitudes toward out-group members emphasize either the individual characteristics and predispositions or the larger sociopolitical and historical context (Quillian 1995). We follow in this section the micro-macro taxonomy to outline several influential individual-level and contextual theories informing cross-national research on ATII.

### Individual-Level Theories of ATII

Three prominent micro-sociological perspectives used in the study of ATII have highlighted the role of (a) socioeconomic correlates and self-interests, (b) identities and values, and (c) contact with out-group members. One strand of micro theories has explored the role of socioeconomic correlates and self-interests, premised on the putative influence exerted by individual trajectories, fear of competition, and rational calculations on the expression of ATII. Results from various studies (e.g., Pettigrew 2000, Sides & Citrin 2007) have revealed the remarkable predictive consistency for several indicators of one's socioeconomic location and interests. As rational actors, natives pursuing their own well-being develop unfavorable attitudes in order to legitimate their social positions when competing with foreigners over jobs or residential space (Olzak 1992), especially during times of economic recession (Burns & Gimpel 2000).

Another micro-sociological theoretical perspective posits that opinion formation is likely influenced by symbolic interests such as values and personal identifications with a group (e.g., Davidov et al. 2008, Sides & Citrin 2007). At the epicenter of this approach lies social identity theory (Tajfel 1982, Tajfel & Turner 1986), which states that individuals tend to think favorably about themselves and the groups to which they belong. A person's positive identification with his or her own group is thought to be accompanied by a simultaneous process of differentiation from outsiders (Mummendey et al. 2001) through the expression of unfavorable

attitudes, although several studies report otherwise (Billiet et al. 2003, Maddens et al. 2000). Fused with the vast literature on nationalism, this theoretical tradition has led to extensive examination of the relationship between various individually held national (and supranational) attachments and exclusionary attitudes (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, De Figueredo & Elkins 2003, Hjerm 1998, Luedtke 2005). However, a common criticism of this theory relates to the actual causal mechanisms implicating ATII and identities, i.e., whether identities determine attitudes or vice versa.

Cross-national analyses have also drawn upon the contact theory (for review, see Pettigrew 1998a) to further assess the impact of individual factors on ATII. In the form of a "contact hypothesis," this perspective builds on Allport's (1954) proposition that contact generally fosters more favorable attitudes toward out-group members. Allport's (1954) original formulation outlined four basic conditions for successful intergroup contact (equal status, cooperation, similar goals, and official endorsement), although determining which conditions are essential as opposed to merely sufficient remains a topic of controversy (Brewer 1996, Pettigrew 1998a). While confirming the positive effects of having friends and acquaintances among minorities, comparative studies fall short in addressing the nature of contact among individuals with status differentials and the implications of contact when not all of the optimal conditions are met (Escandell & Ceobanu 2009, McLaren 2003) because of data constraints. Despite being less prominently featured in the research, there exists evidence that symbolic factors and personal contact may have a more consequential influence on ATII than socioeconomic aspects or material interests (McLaren 2003, Sides & Citrin 2007, Wilkes et al. 2008).

### Contextual-Level Theories of ATII

Complementing micro-level explanations of ATII are the theories focusing on structural conditions, which offer insights into why particular groupings of people are prone to

developing certain views toward out-group members. Among the perspectives that assume that structural conditions affect the expression of ATII, the widest used is the intuitively attractive theory of group threat (Blumer 1958, Coser 1956). This approach views the intergroup competition that leads to unfavorable attitudes as a zero-sum scenario. Debates exist on whether the circumstances favoring intergroup hostility need to be real (Bobo 1988, 2000; LeVine & Campbell 1972; Quillian 1995) or just imagined. Regardless of the competition's actual or perceived nature, natives' reactions of exclusion and prejudice are expected to become manifest when their collective economic, cultural, or religious interests are threatened (Fetzer 2000b, Jackson et al. 2001, Scheepers et al. 2002a).

Perceived group deprivation can be as powerful a trigger of hostile attitudes as actual group deprivation, especially when tangibles are at stake, such as economic interests and scarce material resources. But this perspective also finds applicability for nonmaterial issues, in instances in which threat is culturally determined and/or targets some form of collective identity. Thus, fears that immigrants could alter the prevailing way of life or the foundation of national identity reflect a sense of group positioning (Blumer 1958, Bobo 1999) and a desire to preserve the symbolic boundaries between groups (Bail 2008).

Extending earlier formulations on the interlock between contrived and real circumstances, some authors view perceived group competition as being determined by the actual one (Coenders & Scheepers 2003). Therefore, even when perceived threat appears to be a driver of ATII, a look into the actual circumstances seems unavoidable. In the form of realistic group conflict, the theory of competitive threat has been a major tenet of current research on ATII.

### **An Observation**

Either at the individual level or group level, the theory of competitive threat has been a widely used explanation of ATII. Virtually all studies

based on cross-national survey data have included predictors informed by this perspective, and the evidence supports rather strongly the idea that threat stands behind unfavorable views. However, recourse to the competitive threat perspective is unproductive, for the current explanatory models provide only a partial picture of the causes of ATII. The vast literature that the competitive threat theory has generated should be paralleled by a comparable number of studies anchored in different and/or complementary perspectives. The work of Scheepers, Coenders, and colleagues (e.g., Coenders et al. 2008, Scheepers et al. 2002a) provides an example in this respect, as it attempts to synthesize the theoretical traditions of social identity and realistic conflict in the form of a new paradigm. Recent studies (e.g., Kunovich 2009, Meuleman et al. 2009) further evidence that it is at the contextual level (rather than individual) where research on ATII has been most innovative and where it may draw more theoretical inspiration. Future efforts would do well to concentrate on the theory-driven exploration of the structural conditions favoring such attitudes, while also integrating various perspectives into comprehensive models.

## **DETERMINANTS OF ATII IN CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH**

Early attempts to map out the predictors of ATII have drawn from individual-level theories and relied, for the most part, on single-country analyses. Subsequent studies have expanded the investigation to more than just one setting (e.g., Pettigrew 2000), although Quillian's work (1995) remained singular in disentangling the effects of micro- and macro-level factors for several years. It was not until the early 2000s that this new level of complexity came to permeate the field of ATII in a decisive manner, despite the fact that debates regarding the appropriate multilevel model for cross-national research based on large-scale attitudinal data have surfaced (Meuleman et al. 2009). In what follows, we present an overview of key micro- and macro-level determinants of ATII.

## Micro-Level Nonattitudinal Predictors

Which respondents are prone to developing negative ATII? Research investigating the role of personal attributes on attitudes toward out-group members has ascertained that, on aggregate, a higher educational level deters the expression of anti-immigrant and anti-immigration attitudes (e.g., Quillian 1995, Wagner & Zick 1995). In fact, the inverse effect of higher education on negative ATII, which shows up even when controlling for other indicators of social position (Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007, Hello et al. 2002),<sup>7</sup> is a remarkably consistent finding (see also **Figure 2**). This effect tends to be more pronounced when education is measured by a set of categorical indicators than when it is expressed as the total number of years of formal schooling (Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007). Among the possible reasons that, in general, better educated individuals hold more sympathetic opinions of immigrants and immigration frequently mentioned is education's liberalizing effect,<sup>8</sup> namely broader knowledge, increased reflexivity, a more critical stance, greater personal and familial security, substantial exposure to foreign cultures, higher acceptance of diversity, or the generation of cosmopolitan social networks among the young adults living in urban settings (Chandler & Tsai 2001, Coenders & Scheepers 2003, Gang et al. 2002).<sup>9</sup>

Cross-national analyses of ATII routinely include education among the predictors, although few studies have specifically investi-

gated its effects (but see Coenders & Scheepers 2003, Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007, Hello et al. 2002). This line of research reports that the impact exerted by education varies across national settings and clusters of countries owing to differences in national systems of education and socialization modes (Hjerm 2001, 2007). Therefore, the effect of education is smaller among the former communist countries of Europe compared with the established democracies from the same continent (Coenders & Scheepers 2003).

Closely related to education are labor force status and occupational classification, two indicators of social standing that have shown some constancy in predicting ATII (e.g., Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Kunovich 2004, Semyonov & Glikman 2009, Schneider 2008). A combination of several variables encompassing labor force status and occupational classification (for those currently employed) is typically used to further espouse the role of social stratification (Scheepers et al. 2002a), although a single dichotomized indicator (such as "unemployed") may be preferred for accentuating the differences between contrasting groups (e.g., Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008). Because most immigrants in economically advanced societies are nonspecialists (Scheve & Slaughter 2001), natives from lower socioeconomic strata or in vulnerable situations (e.g., the unemployed, pensioners, or unskilled/low-skilled manual laborers) are more inclined to express negative ATII than are those in the higher strata or with a comparatively more secured status. This occurs, presumably, because of the increased competition they face from immigrants with similar (lower) statuses (Esses et al. 2001; Quillian 1995; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008). However, the relationship between social standing and ATII may be influenced by certain unfavorable circumstances at the contextual level (Kunovich 2004), such as massive unemployment during periods of economic recession. In this scenario, the difference in unfavorable reactions expressed by natives from lower social strata and those from higher strata may be less visible.

<sup>7</sup>Nonetheless, studies in labor economics (Mayda 2006, Scheve & Slaughter 2001) suggest otherwise: The effect of education on ATII is significantly larger for the respondents who are part of the active workforce than for those who are not.

<sup>8</sup>In Europe, the liberalizing effect of education is smaller among the countries of the East than for those of the West (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Kunovich 2004).

<sup>9</sup>Contrasting this is a study by Jackman & Muha (1984), which posits that better educated people may have developed a sense of awareness that it is socially reprimandable to hold prejudiced views rather than necessarily that they are more understanding of out-group members.

Many studies on ATII have also included personal (or household) income among the predicting micro-level variables. Compared with education or labor force status, the effect of income is less straightforward. Thus, several studies present evidence of a statistically meaningful impact (e.g., Coenders et al. 2008, Jackson et al. 2001, Kehrberg 2007), whereas other analyses do not report such a finding (e.g., Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007; Wilkes et al. 2007). As with education and social standing, income has greater predictive power in Western Europe than in the Eastern region (Kunovich 2002, 2004). Given that education, labor force status, occupation, and income are all intertwined, it is rather difficult to ascertain whether the suppressing effect exerted by, for instance, the variable “lower professionals” occurs because of these individuals’ education, occupational category, income, or a combination of the three. This example illustrates a more persistent problem in attitudinal research, namely that the dependent variable may be informed in more complex ways than is generally assumed [telling in this respect is the study by Mayda (2006), in which education was used to tap skill level].

Cross-national investigations have considered other individual-level characteristics thought to influence expressed ATII. Often, after introducing the indicators of socioeconomic standing as key predicting factors, model specification proceeds with demographic variables, such as age, sex, or type of residence (e.g., urban or rural). Unlike the relatively steady influence of the achievement-based variables, the effect of demographic factors on ATII is less stable. Several studies have found that older respondents, men, and those residing in rural areas are more likely to hold negative ATII than are younger individuals, women, and those living in urban areas (e.g., Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Quillian 1995). When controlled for, being married is a rather poor predictor (e.g., Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Semyonov et al. 2008), although married respondents appear to be more likely to endorse sending back immigrants (Jackson et al. 2001) and to express immigrant

prejudice (Kunovich 2004) than nonmarried ones, perhaps due to greater responsibility for their family members’ well-being.

Also inconclusive is the impact of religion-based variables (such as religious denomination and church attendance) on ATII (e.g., Scheepers et al. 2002b). These inconsistencies may explain, in part, researchers’ reluctance in undertaking additional explorations of the relationship between religion and ATII. In light of religion’s salience in immigrant-receiving societies and the need for better model specification, this situation is unsatisfying.

### Micro-Level Attitudinal Predictors

Stemming from the theories exposed earlier, studies of ATII have also employed a number of micro-level attitudinal predictors. These may be divided into four categories: (a) perceptions about the consequences of immigration,<sup>10</sup> (b) perceptions about the size of the immigrant population, (c) attitudes measuring political-ideological orientations (e.g., left-right political stance), and (d) different forms of attachment to and identification with the national community or with a supranational entity, such as the European Union (EU).

Especially when migratory flows increase, some key concerns of natives relate to immigrants’ impact<sup>11</sup> on and/or integration into the receiving societies. Empirical studies examining independently or in combination the perceived economic and cultural consequences of immigration have uncovered the strong predictive power of such perceptions on anti-immigrant

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<sup>10</sup>Although perceptions of the consequences of immigration have been used in the left-hand side of the equation (e.g., Semyonov et al. 2008), it is not entirely uncommon to find them in the right-hand one. As such, they are conceptualized as threats and modeled as intervening between micro predictors and prejudice toward immigrants (e.g., Jackson et al. 2001).

<sup>11</sup>Items associated with these attitudes deal, for example, with fears that immigration will negatively affect the quality of education, the social protection system, or the cultural unity of the nation (Citrin & Sides 2008, McLaren 2003, Sides & Citrin 2007).

feelings (Citrin & Sides 2008, De Figueredo & Elkins 2003, Raijman et al. 2008, Sides & Citrin 2007) or endorsement of exclusionary immigration policies (Jackson et al. 2001; McLaren 2001, 2003). This is also illustrated in **Figure 2** with cultural heterogeneity (tapping the willingness of respondents from receiving societies to help immigrants maintain traditions versus endorsing their blending into the larger society), a consistent and rather strong predictor of preferred level of immigration.

The expression of unfavorable ATII is also triggered by perceptions about the number of immigrants in the neighborhood or in the society at large (Hjerm 2007, Jackson et al. 2001, McLaren 2003, Semyonov et al. 2008). Ample evidence exists that conflated perceptions about the size of various immigrant and minority groups are significantly associated with more pronounced negative ATII (Green 2009, Scheepers et al. 2002a, Schneider 2008, Semyonov et al. 2006). Cross-national research has revealed a tendency to overestimate the size of the migrant populations in the countries where relatively few immigrants are present (Citrin & Sides 2008), as well as in those societies hosting numerically larger groups of culturally distinct non-EU migrants (Lahav 2004a). However, further testing is needed to elaborate on the specifics of these processes.

Many studies have determined that public responses to immigrants and immigration are likely influenced by personal political-ideological orientations (e.g., Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008; Sides & Citrin 2007). Such preferences are typically gauged through a left-right scale of ideological stance (De Figueredo & Elkins 2003), through a set of dummy variables tapping political orientation (Kunovich 2009), or as satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the functioning of the democratic process (Weldon 2006). The consensus is that people who identify with a conservative ideology or show affinity with a right-wing party are more likely to display closure and to oppose the presence of immigrants, be in favor of more restrictive immigration policies (Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007; McLaren 2001, 2003; Semyonov et al.

2006, 2008), and/or object to the allocation of equal rights to foreigners (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009). The effect of ideology appears to hold up even after controlling for several nonattitudinal and attitudinal predictors (Kunovich 2009, Semyonov et al. 2006). However, as illustrated in **Figure 2** and backing previous results (Citrin & Sides 2008), the conventional distinction between the political left and right is contested for a number of countries, as immigration is not a politicized or openly ideological issue in present-day Eastern Europe.

A fourth category of attitudinal predictors of ATII explores the effect of various attachments to the national community (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Coenders & Scheepers 2004, Gijsberts et al. 2004a, Kunovich 2009) or to supranational entities (Luedtke 2005). On the grounds that identification with a nation is complex and multidimensional (Jones & Smith 2001a,b), this stream of research has established that there are sharp differences in the effect exerted by the positive and negative dimensions of national belonging: Whereas the positive dimensions (together with supranational identity) are important deterrents, the negative dimensions represent key mechanisms informing negative ATII (De Figueredo & Elkins 2003, O'Rourke & Sinnott 2006, Raijman et al. 2008). Research has further shown that the theoretical distinction between the civic/Western and ethnic/Eastern forms of attachment to the nation is far from being fixed or absolute, at least with respect to public views toward immigrants and immigration (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Kunovich 2009). The two forms of incorporation into the community are symbiotic, as national sentiments premised upon democratic ideals and political voluntarism can coexist with exclusivist national feelings.

### Contextual Determinants of ATII

What contexts are especially conducive to the expression of unfavorable ATII? Although micro-level determinants of ATII are important in explaining the variation in public views, they offer only a partial picture of the correlates.

The relatively recent introduction of the contextual circumstances<sup>12</sup> via macro-level structural conditions into more complex analytical models has enabled the fleshing out of ATII's complex character.

Theoretically, the inclusion of macro-structural conditions allowed researchers to test an array of propositions about the embedded nature of public responses toward immigrants and immigration, while controlling for individual-level attributes. One line of inquiry has examined how visible a minority group is in a particular locality. This perspective postulates that minority presence is linked to unfavorable ATII, as a sizeable minority population more directly challenges the economic and political interests of natives and spurs increased competition for resources. Several studies have corroborated this assertion through a variety of measures tapping minority group presence (e.g., Kunovich 2002; Quillian 1995; Scheepers et al. 2002a; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008; Schneider 2008), although the reported effect decreases dramatically with the addition of the measures for contact. Studies have also found that the size of the immigrant group either is inconsequential (Hello et al. 2002, Hjerm 2007, Sides & Citrin 2007) or acts as a suppressor of perceived threat because of the intergroup contact it fosters (Schlueter & Wagner 2008). Along these lines, it is worth investigating the role that the rapid increase of immigration in traditional and nontraditional destinations plays in the emergence of ATII, as abrupt increases in the rate of immigration might be more relevant than the actual size of the immigrant population (Hopkins 2010, Zick et al. 2008).

Often modeled together with minority presence, economic condition has been another important macro-level predictor of ATII. In a context of macro-economic decline (e.g., increasing rates of unemployment), unfavor-

able attitudes are expected to flourish, whereas real or perceived competition is projected to become less intense during prosperous times (Coenders et al. 2008, Lahav 2004a, Semyonov et al. 2008). A sluggish economy is a good predictor of unfavorable attitudes, although this may not always be the case: Mayda (2006) has shown that opposition to immigrants may erupt in countries that are economically affluent. Some studies do not confirm the effect of economic condition on ATII (e.g., Hjerm 2007), although, on aggregate, the state of the economy appears to be a stronger predictor of ATII than immigrant concentration. In less affluent societies, such as those in Eastern Europe, harsh economic conditions impact negative ATII to a greater extent than in prosperous countries (Kunovich 2004). Beyond the competition model and group threat perspective, scholars have explored the effect of other contextual dimensions, thereby steering the literature in new directions. Some studies have focused on the role a liberal-democratic tradition plays in the emergence of exclusionary attitudes (Coenders & Scheepers 2003, Hello et al. 2002), while others have modeled immigration policy intentions (Hjerm 2007) or countries' religious heterogeneity (Hello et al. 2002). Focusing on the political-ideological climate, scholars have also assessed the aggregate effects of right-wing voting (Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007, 2008; Wilkes et al. 2007) and political-economic history across Western and Eastern Europe (Ceobanu & Escandell 2008, Scheepers et al. 2002a). It is within this context of ATII, which measures the effects of the political and social landscape, that future research needs to be directed.

## CONCLUSIONS: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

As long as immigration to economically advanced countries continues, cross-national research on ATII is a timely, yet daunting, endeavor. In this review, we have examined the current research on ATII and the theoretical, methodological, and interpretational

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<sup>12</sup>Even though context bears many connotations, the types of context that such analyses have been focused on are spatial (countries, states, communities, regions, etc.) and temporal (years, historical periods, etc.).

constraints scholars face as they undertake cross-country analyses and work with secondary data. Our examination indicates that, despite such challenges, researchers testing the group threat, social identity, and contact theories have overall obtained consistent results concerning the attitudinal and nonattitudinal predictors of ATII. Nonetheless, we argue that the potential for cross-national explorations of public views toward immigrants and on immigration has been constrained because of data limitations and reluctant extensions of the theoretical models researchers have traditionally relied upon. We believe that the most promising work in the area of ATII has been produced and will continue to emerge when micro-, meso-, and macro-level variables are modeled interactively. Several advancements in survey methodology are necessary to produce an in-depth understanding of the complex intersectional locus of immigration, public opinion, and cross-national research.

To enhance the knowledge of how ATII emerge and change, we offer a number of suggestions to help further the scholarship in this area. Pressing among these propositions is greater attention to the sociopolitical and institutional contexts in which negative attitudes surface. This may be accomplished in several ways. First, enhancing the very notion of context through the creation of new measures would allow better tapping of a country's institutional environment. For example, legal immigration regimes, the manner in which citizenship is granted, a country's welfare regime and its inclusion or exclusion of immigrants, the existence of labor unions with or without an immigration agenda, a rich civil society, and non-profit proimmigrant groups or their absence are among the macro-level predictors that ought to be modeled in future research. The operational refinement of context would help with model specification, thereby enabling the assessment of both direct and mediated effects.

A second suggestion concerns the need to invigorate the analytical models by using the unit of analysis represented by country in combination with other domestic political-

administrative divisions, such as municipalities or regions. The Eurobarometer survey, for example, is particularly suitable for this type of analysis because it uses stratified random samples that capture the heterogeneity at the regional level (NUTS2) and even at smaller geographic subdivisions (NUTS3). In addition, the use of longitudinal data should be further pursued as a methodological strategy for assessing ATII. Some recent studies have employed a multiple-group, multiple-indicator structural equation modeling to assess cross-national and over-time invariance of measures (e.g., Meuleman et al. 2009), and this method could be adapted to complex analytical models predicting ATII.

Third, tapping into the immigrant composition of the receiving society would help tease out negative attitudes toward particular groups. Parallel to the investigation of majority populations' attitudes, scholars should incorporate measures assessing the experiences and treatment of immigrant groups within the new society, if data permit doing so. An important gap in the literature is determining whether the presence of large domestic minorities shapes the responses toward new ethnic migrants.

Although economic explanations are featured rather prominently in the literature, cultural-symbolic factors such as identities and ideologies are more consequential motivations of ATII (e.g., Citrin & Sides 2008, Sides & Citrin 2007). Therefore, relying on policies aimed at creating economic prosperity to reduce the national publics' resistance to immigrants and immigration is unproductive. If negative attitudes stem from identities and ideologies rather than economic interests, then strategies such as public information campaigns could be highly effectual. And even if more investments in immigrants' adaptation are unpalatable for natives, social programs that target the newcomers are political priorities if a society is to avoid the much higher costs associated with unintegrated populations. These aspects gain importance in light of the recent debates in Europe about an optimal plan for harmonizing various immigration policies

at the country level, although these proposed policies are feasible only as long as the national publics agree with what is being offered to them.

The need for conceptual clarity and methodological firmness is long overdue. This will enhance our comparative understanding of the nature and consequences of ATII and help move beyond the current theoretical

fixation and methodological impasse. With respect to theory, it may be too early to discern the direction that scholars will follow in the years ahead or which “gates of understanding” (Allport 1954, p. 218) will be opened. However, with respect to methodology, categorizing the questionnaire items according to their true content is critical.

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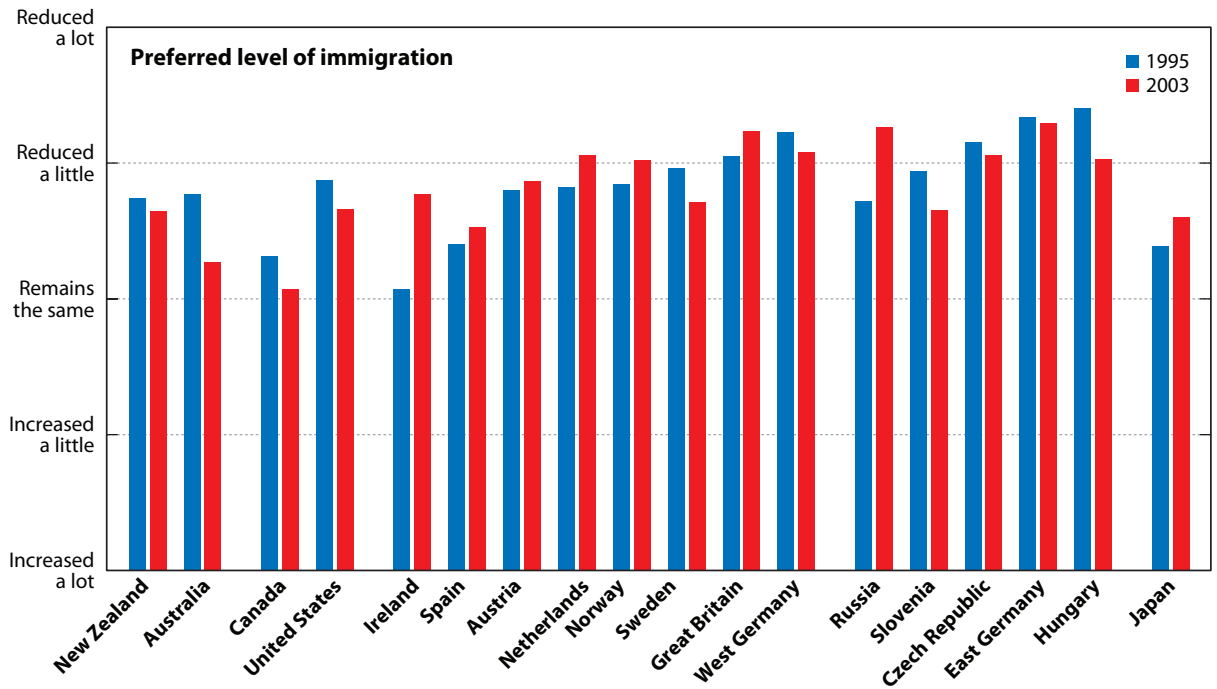


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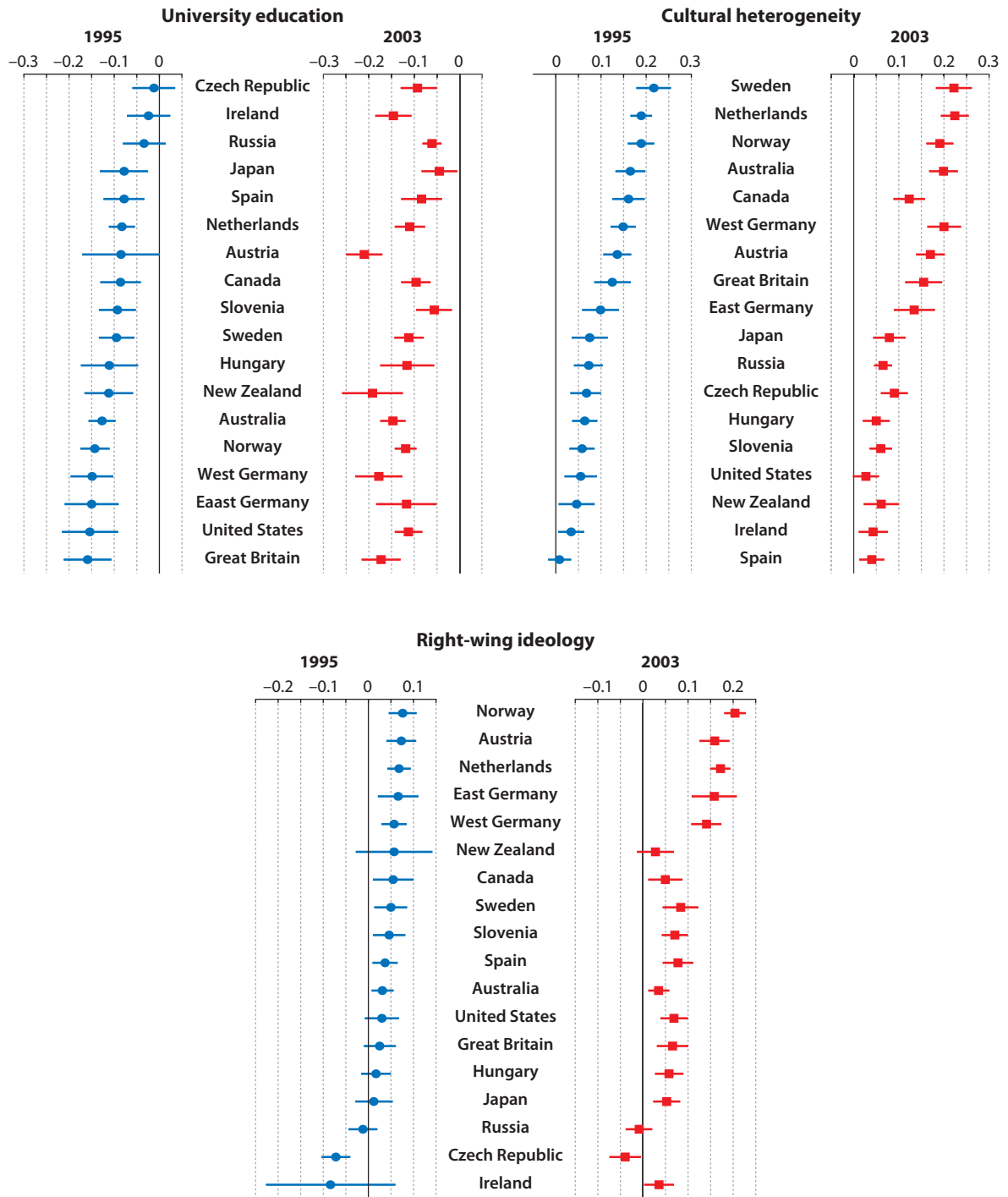
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**Figure 1**

The preferred level of immigration by country and clusters of countries. Source: International Social Survey Programme, 1995 and 2003.



**Figure 2**

Patterns of effects (magnitude and 95% confidence interval) of university-level education, cultural heterogeneity, and right-wing ideology on preferred level of immigration by country (International Social Survey Programme, 1995 and 2003).