

Opinion Climates and Immigrant Political Action: A Cross-National Study of 25 European Democracies

Comparative Political Studies

2014, Vol. 47(7) 935–965

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DOI: 10.1177/0010414013488555

cps.sagepub.com



Aida Just¹ and Christopher J. Anderson²

Abstract

We develop a model of immigrant political action that connects individual motivations to become politically involved with the context in which participation takes place. The article posits that opinion climates in the form of hostility or openness toward immigrants shape the opportunity structure for immigrant political engagement by contributing to the social costs and political benefits of participation. We argue that friendly opinion climates toward immigrants enable political action among immigrants, and facilitate the politicization of political discontent. Using survey data from the *European Social Survey* (ESS) 2002 to 2010 in 25 European democracies, our analyses reveal that more positive opinion climates—at the level of countries and regions—increase immigrant political engagement, especially among immigrants dissatisfied with the political system. However, this effect is limited to uninstitutionalized political action, as opinion climates have no observable impact on participation in institutionalized politics.

Keywords

immigrant political participation, opinion climates, anti-immigrant attitudes, political grievances

¹Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey

²Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:

Aida Just, Department of Political Science, Bilkent University, 06800 Bilkent, Ankara, Turkey.
Email: aidap@bilkent.edu.tr

International migration has manifold, complex, and profound effects on the migrants as well as migrant sending and receiving countries. In Europe as elsewhere, one important issue in debates on immigration has been whether immigrants do or should have opportunities to express their views and how they make use of these opportunities. To date, however, we have little systematic research on what encourages migrants to engage in political action and the role that host country's environment plays in this respect.

This article develops a model of immigrant political action that connects individual motivations to become politically involved with the sociopolitical context in which political participation takes place. We posit that a country's opinion climate in the form of hostility or openness toward immigrants is a critical determinant of immigrant political engagement. Specifically, a friendly opinion climate is an important stimulant of immigrant participation in two ways: first, openness toward immigrants reduces the social costs of political action among immigrants and enhances their perception that political action will be acceptable and efficacious; second, in reducing the social costs of participation, a positive opinion climate facilitates the translation of political discontent into political engagement among immigrants.

We test these arguments using cross-national and individual-level data from the *European Social Survey* (ESS) collected in 25 European democracies from 2002 to 2010. Our analyses reveal that more positive opinion climates toward immigrants increase foreigners' political engagement, and this effect is particularly strong among those who are dissatisfied with the political system. However, the effect is limited to uninstitutionalized political action, as the opinion climate has no observable impact on participation in institutionalized politics.

Our article contributes to research on anti-immigrant attitudes and immigrant political participation in several ways. First, on a theoretical level, we highlight the critical and complex role that the sociopolitical context in the form of public opinion toward immigrants plays in shaping immigrant political engagement. In doing so, we go beyond existing research on formal institutions and political actors and investigate a central, but hitherto underexamined aspect of the broader social environment—captured at national and regional levels—that shapes immigrant political engagement. Second, we seek to combine the study of anti-immigrant opinion with the study of immigrant political participation by considering anti-immigrant attitudes as a key independent, rather than dependent, variable. Third, by distinguishing theoretically and empirically between different types of political acts, we extend the scholarly focus beyond electoral participation—a type of participation many immigrants are not entitled to—and develop a more comprehensive view of the role that sociopolitical context and individual-level

determinants play in shaping immigrant political engagement. Finally, our analysis goes beyond the most heavily studied case of immigrant participation—the United States—and puts existing arguments to a test against a varied and extensive sample of European nations with diverse immigrant populations.

Macro Context and Political Participation

While the social and political environment has long been known to systematically shape people's political engagement (Huckfeldt, 1986; Zuckerman, 2005),¹ most existing research focuses on the consequences of individual characteristics and the immediate political environment. Few studies have considered how the wider political community, or macro sociopolitical context, influences people's political engagement. This is perhaps not surprising, given that most studies of political participation have been conducted in single-country settings where the macrocontext is held constant.

The use of a single-country design has two important drawbacks, however; for one, it is difficult to establish whether the individual-level factors that drive political behavior in one country also play a role in other countries. It is easy to imagine that such factors may have dissimilar effects on individuals exposed to different political, social, and cultural contexts. But more importantly, for the purpose of this analysis, single-country studies cannot systematically assess the consequences of countries' macroenvironment for people's political engagement.

Within the literature on immigrants, researchers have argued that standard explanations of political behavior, such as the socioeconomic model, are helpful but insufficient for understanding immigrant political behavior (Cho, Gimpel, & Wu, 2006; Ramakrishnan, 2005). This is because being an immigrant means having a set of experiences with country of origin and host country (e.g., Fennema & Tillie, 1999; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; White, Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil, & Fournier, 2008). However, little systematic cross-national research exists on the consequences of sociopolitical environment for immigrant political action due to the fact that most studies focus on only one or few countries (or cities) in their analyses.

The general question we seek to answer below, then, is how immigrants' exposure to their environment, measured at the levels of countries and regions, affects the patterns of immigrants' political engagement. Specifically, does hostility toward immigrants breed political mobilization or apathy among foreigners? And do opinion climates affect various participatory acts differently? We contend that opinion climates matter to immigrants'

engagement in politics and the reasons have to do with the costs and benefits of political action.

Opinion Climates and Immigrant Political Action

It has been long known that people's political ideas, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of what others do or think (Cooley, 1956; Mutz, 1998). Individuals constantly (and to a large extent unconsciously) scan their environment to assess which opinions the majority may come to favor and which ones might lead to social exclusion (Scheufele & Moy, 2000). In her classic work on the spiral of silence, Noelle-Neumann (1974, 1993) argued that people become less likely to express their political views as they perceive themselves to occupy a more extreme minority position in the population (see also Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997). Consistent with this perspective, a number of studies have shown that opinion polls affect voter turnout and vote choice (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Atkin, 1969; de Bock, 1976; Lavrakas, Holley, & Miller, 1991; Skalaban, 1988; West, 1991), and that electoral behavior is sensitive to exit polls and early election returns (Delli Carpini, 1984; Sudman, 1986) as well as voters' perceptions of the popularity of the candidates (Bartels, 1988).

Related research on social psychology reveals that individuals who belong to subordinate or less powerful groups are significantly more attuned to their environment and pay more attention to shifts even in the affective and non-verbal tone of dominant group members (Frale, 1997; Hall & Briton, 1993; Oyserman & Swim, 2001). Because immigrants perceive themselves to be in an inferior and stigmatized social position due to their outsider status in their host societies, we expect them to be especially sensitive to the social environment with important consequences for their political behavior.

We conceptualize the political climate that people experience as a social constraint that increases the costs of political participation. Such costs come in the form of the actual or perceived social acceptability of expressing a minority opinion and the consequences this entails (Muller & Opp, 1986; Opp, 1986). High social costs discourage immigrant political engagement, whereas reduced costs create incentives for political mobilization. We argue that immigrants are more likely to engage politically if they feel appreciated and welcomed by the native populations. In contrast, perceptions of hostility and stigmatized social status are likely to increase the social costs of participation, resulting in lower levels of participation.

By conceptualizing a country's opinion climate as a social constraint, we define it as separate from a country's formal institutions or policies. However, thinking of it as a constraint allows us to interpret opinion

climates within the framework of a country's political opportunity structure. Political opportunities—a concept developed most prominently in the literature on social movements—refer to “consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure” (Eisinger, 1973; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, Koopmans, Dyvendak, & Giugni, 1995; McAdam, 1982, 1996; Tarrow, 1998, pp. 76-77; Tilly, 1978). While political opportunities do not inevitably produce social movements, they often provide individuals with political grievances with strong incentives for political mobilization.² This is because favorable political opportunities increase the chances that even weak and less assertive movements will succeed (Amenta, 2005; Amenta, Carruthers, & Zylan, 1992; Amenta, Dunleavy, & Bernstein, 1994; Costain, 1992; Giugni, 2007; Kitschelt, 1986; Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, & Su, 1999).

Most scholars of social movements focus on formal state institutions and elite alignments to conceptualize and measure a country's or region's political opportunity structure (McAdam, 1996; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). In line with this tradition, researchers of immigrant political engagement have argued that a country's legal and institutional framework—particularly citizenship and residency laws—as well as political parties, trade unions, and other interest groups supportive of migration create opportunities for newcomers' political engagement (Ireland, 1994, 2000; Koopmans, 1999, 2004; Koopmans & Statham, 2000; Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005; Soininen, 1999; Statham, 1999; Togeby, 1999).

Though less commonly, informal features of the political opportunity structure have also been used in previous research. For example, Gamson and Meyer (1996) consider the public opinion climate—or what they refer to as the cultural climate, *zeitgeist*, or national mood—as an important element of the political opportunity structure for the emergence and success of social movements. Scholars of women's movements argued that public opinion toward gender equality is part of the “gendered opportunity structure” that played an important role in women's movements' efforts to achieve their policy goals (Soule & Olzak, 2004). Similarly, public discourse on migration and ethnic relations in printed media has been treated as an indicator of the political opportunity structure for immigrant claim-making in several European countries and cities (Cinalli & Giugni, 2011; Koopmans, 2004).

Because the various elements that constitute a country's political opportunity structure act as external constraints to political action (Kitschelt, 1986; Tarrow, 1998), we expect that foreigners are more likely to engage in collective action if they perceive their political environment to be favorable to their concerns—that is, if the goals of participation are more likely to be realized.

Thus, countries that provide more opportunities for immigrants to express their grievances and to contribute to collective policy decision-making are likely to have more politically involved foreigners. In contrast, states that are hostile or closed to the expression of immigrants' concerns are more likely to produce apathetic and alienated immigrants, whose grievances might occasionally manifest through violence or crime among poor immigrants, and the return home or further migration to another location among highly skilled foreigners.

While the opportunity structure perspective suggests that openness begets immigrant engagement in politics, several single-country studies show that migrant mobilization often takes place under threatening circumstances. In the United States, for example, anti-immigrant legislation in the mid-1990s, which sought to restrict immigrant access to welfare benefits, had a positive impact on voting turnout among first- and second-generation immigrants (Pantoja, Ramirez, & Segura, 2001; Ramakrishnan, 2005, especially chap. 6; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001). More recently, a study of Arab Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 reported that perceptions of threat associated with the Patriot Act legislation and incidents of racially motivated discrimination and violence significantly increased voter registration among more educated Arab immigrants (Cho et al., 2006). Similarly in France, the political mobilization of Black Africans has been attributed primarily to their efforts to defend housing rights (Péchu, 1999), while in Belgium immigrant groups mobilized and rallied fiercely for their enfranchisement in response to growing anti-immigrant sentiment in electoral competition (Jacobs, 1999).

The two apparently contrasting perspectives—that hostility toward immigrants can mobilize or demobilize immigrant political action—may not be incompatible, however. After all, as Goldstone and Tilly (2001) point out, threat cannot be treated merely as a flip side of opportunity as increased threat does not always mean fewer opportunities.³ In other words, perceptions of threat to one's rights or entitlements—or dissatisfaction with the political process more generally—are likely to have a different effect on political mobilization depending on the existing political opportunity structures. As a result, we expect that dissatisfaction with the political process is more likely to translate into political action under conditions of favorable opportunity structure, whereas political frustrations are likely to remain unexpressed in an environment of closed or restricted opportunities. Put differently, the political opportunity structure should be particularly important in mobilizing immigrants for political action if it is connected to the expression of political discontent. This expectation is consistent with Tarrow's argument that

the concept of political opportunity structure emphasizes resources *external* to the group. Unlike money or power, these can be taken advantage of by even weak or disorganized challengers . . . Contentious politics emerges when ordinary citizens . . . respond to opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies, show where elites and authorities are most vulnerable, and trigger social networks and collective identities into action. (Tarrow, 1998, p. 20)

Welcoming environments should therefore encourage migrants to engage in politics, in particular because members of minority groups, such as immigrants, are more likely to become inhibited in expressing themselves and engaging in politics as the spiral of silence theory suggests (Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Scheufele & Moy, 2000). We therefore hypothesize that the macrosocial context in the form of a country's opinion climate toward immigrants will have a contingent effect on political participation. Specifically, positive opinion climates toward immigrants should increase political participation among foreigners, but more powerfully among those with political grievances.

Opinion Climates, Discontent, and Varieties of Political Action

While early studies of political participation in democracies focused mostly on understanding standard modes of political engagement, such as electoral participation, the scope of inquiry into political engagement widened considerably in the aftermath of popular unrest during the 1960s and 1970s, as researchers began to take into account a broader repertoire of political acts, including protest behavior. This expansion of the empirical terrain considered by behavioral researchers brought with it the conceptual distinction between the traditional conventional, institutionalized acts of participation on one hand, and unconventional, uninstitutionalized, action on the other (Barnes et al., 1979; Muller, 1979). Institutionalized action is defined as involving routine political acts (mostly) oriented toward electoral processes, while uninstitutionalized participation is conceptualized as occurring outside of electoral politics and involving often more spontaneous, episodic, and disruptive political acts (Kaase, 1989).

Considering the options available to individuals for engaging in politics, one important question is what motivates any particular act. Traditionally, in the context of established democracies, conventional political activities such as voting have been viewed as acts that affirm individuals' allegiance to the political system. Consistent with this view, considerable evidence shows a strong correlation between positive attitudes about politics and the political

system (civic orientations) on one hand and participation in conventional political activities on the other (Finkel, 1985; Leighley, 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). While political trust, combined with a strong sense of efficacy, encourage what Gamson and others have called “allegiant activity” by way of conventional access to governmental institutions and actors, a number of studies have found that mistrust and political dissatisfaction increase engagement in unconventional political acts (Gamson, 1968; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Muller, 1977). Moreover, the connection between dissatisfaction and unconventional participation appears to be particularly pronounced among political and ethnic minorities (Craig & Maggiotto, 1981; Shingles, 1981). This finding is consistent with the idea that unconventional politics provide an outlet for disadvantaged minorities, as well as other groups that lack access to politics through conventional channels and are alienated from the established political order (Dalton, 2006, pp. 62-63). This means that, among immigrants, levels of unconventional participation should be higher than levels of conventional participation.

In light of these findings, we test several hypotheses below. First, we posit that dissatisfaction with the political system should be an important driver of political action among immigrants, and we expect it to be a more important determinant of unconventional than conventional political participation among foreign-born individuals. Second, if the opinion climate functions as part and parcel of a country’s opportunity structures, it should be a valuable catalyst for connecting immigrant discontent and unconventional political action. This means that we expect the impact of political dissatisfaction on participation to be especially powerful in countries that are marked by positive opinion climates vis-à-vis immigrants, particularly with respect to less institutionalized political acts.

Data and Analysis

Our general model of political action contains two basic elements: individual motivations and social context. First, we posit that, to understand immigrant political engagement, we require information about individuals’ motivations to participate; second, to understand cross-national and cross-regional differences in the levels of immigrant participation, we need to know the environment in which immigrants choose to engage in politics. Our model posits that these factors interact in shaping political action among immigrants: Those who are motivated to express political discontent are more likely to do so in environments characterized by a friendlier opinion climate toward them.

We estimate our models using data collected at the level of individuals from the ESS conducted from 2002 to 2010 (four-round cumulative file).

The ESS project is known for its high standards of methodological rigor in survey design and cross-national data collection (Kittilson, 2009).⁴ This project is also the only set of cross-national surveys that include questions about people's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, questions designed specifically for foreign-born, as well as standard items measuring political participation (it also is the only set of surveys that ask these questions in identical format across a range of countries). The relevant survey items were available for 25 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.⁵

Dependent Variables

Institutionalized participation in politics is an additive index based on the following three activities respondents reported having engaged in during the past 12 months: contacted a politician, government, or local government official; worked in a political party or action group; and worked in another organization or association.⁶ Uninstitutionalized political participation is similarly based on whether a respondent reported having signed a petition, taken part in a lawful demonstration, and boycotted certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (cf. de Rooij, 2012). Both indexes yield scales ranging from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more political engagement.

The descriptive statistics show that while the overall levels of political participation among foreigners are low, they are not very different from participation levels among natives. As expected, immigrants are more likely to engage in uninstitutionalized than in institutionalized political acts: The average scores among foreigners are .42 and .24, respectively.⁷ Looking at the underlying distribution of reported acts, 81.3% of foreign-born reported that they had not engaged in a single institutionalized act, while 18.7% said they participated in at least one. Similarly, about 71% of foreign-born respondents said they had not engaged in any uninstitutionalized acts, 19% indicated they had participated in one, and 2.3% reported that they been involved in all reported unconventional activities.

Independent Variables

Opinion Climates. Our key independent variable—the opinion climate toward immigrants—is based on three survey questions (cf. Schneider, 2008). Respondents were asked whether immigration was bad or good for their

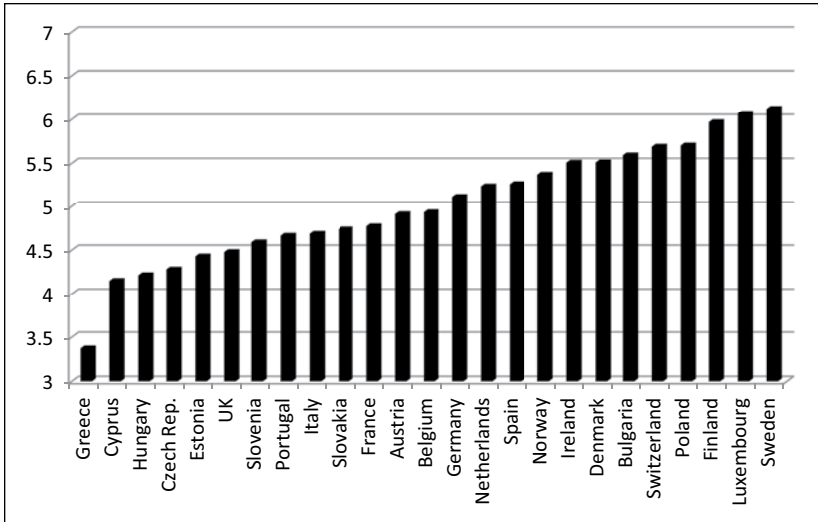


Figure 1. Pro-immigrant opinion climate in 25 European Democracies, 2002 to 2010.

country's economy, whether immigrants undermined or enriched the country's cultural life, and whether immigrants made the country a worse or better place to live. Using answers to these questions measured on a scale from 0 to 10, we first calculated an average score for each respondent,⁸ and this score was then used to compute a country mean among natives (calculated for each ESS round). To be able to generalize beyond the national-level indicator, we also calculated a regional measure of opinion climate toward immigrants.⁹

Figure 1 shows the average levels of national openness toward immigrants in 25 European countries. Theoretically, the scale ranges from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating more favorable opinion climates toward immigrants. We find that the numbers in our sample of European countries range from 3.37 in Greece to 6.12 in Sweden, with an average value of 5.02. New democracies—Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Estonia—exhibit more anti-immigrant climates than other countries, but they are not much behind the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Italy. At the upper end of the distribution, we find not only some Scandinavian countries, such as Finland and Sweden, but also Poland and Bulgaria.

Foreign-Born. To identify foreigners in the ESS data, we relied on the survey question: "Were you born in this country?" Respondents who did not give a

positive response were coded as foreign-born. Pooling data across countries generates a sample of 11,985 foreign-born individuals (7.34% of all survey respondents).¹⁰ Because our individual-level analyses are based on samples of foreign-born respondents only, we sought to establish to what extent these samples matched the characteristics of the populations under investigation by conducting several analyses. First, we calculated the percentages of foreigners in the survey sample and compared these with data measuring the actual percentages of foreigners collected by the European Union's statistical agency, *Eurostat*.¹¹ The Pearson correlation between the two measures was .97, indicating an extremely close fit between survey and official statistics. Second, using a question indicating respondents' country of origin, we investigated the extent to which our samples of foreign-born were representative of populations in the countries under investigation by calculating the percentages of individuals from different regions of the world: Africa, Asia, the Balkans, East Central Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and Western Europe. The Pearson correlation was .90, indicating yet again a very close fit between survey and official statistics.¹²

Political Dissatisfaction. To measure immigrants' political grievances, we relied on the following survey question: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?" To facilitate the interpretation of our results, we reversed the original survey scale, ranging from 0 to 10, so that higher values indicate higher levels of dissatisfaction with democracy. Using Easton's categories, this indicator has been validated as a measure of support for the performance of the political regime, rather than support for democracy as an ideal (cf. Klingemann, 1999; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Norris, 1999).

Control Variables

Our multivariate analyses include a range of control variables past research has identified as consistent determinants of political engagement. At the level of individuals, we include a standard set of demographic variables (age, gender, marital status) as well as measures of people's socioeconomic resources and status (income, education, and employment). We also control for social connectedness, union membership, political interest, as well as experiences of discrimination and crime. To capture immigrant-specific experiences, we used democracy level in the respondent's country of origin, duration of stay in the host country, and citizenship status. At the macro level, we control for a country's economic prosperity and growth, the size of foreign-born

population, participation levels among natives, and democratic experience. Finally, because we rely on a four-wave cumulative data, we include fixed effects for ESS rounds. Details on coding procedures for all variables are listed in the appendix.

Estimation and Results

Because our analysis requires that we combine information collected at the level of individuals and countries, our data set has a multilevel structure (where one level, the individual, is nested within the other, the country). To avoid a number of statistical problems associated with such a data structure (clustering, nonconstant variance, underestimation of standard errors, etc.; cf. Snijders & Bosker, 1999; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002), we rely on multilevel models. Because our lower unit of analysis (foreigner) is nested within two macrolevel units of analysis (foreigner's host country and country of origin), we estimated our multilevel models with crossed random intercepts.

Table 1 reports the results for institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political acts among foreign-born. The analyses reveal that foreigners who are dissatisfied with democracy and enjoy a more favorable opinion climate are more likely to engage in politics. The results are consistent using regional and national measures of opinion climates, but the impact is limited to uninstitutionalized political action. In other words, institutionalized political acts do not appear to be driven by a country's political climate toward migrants.^{13,14}

To assess how much opinion climates and dissatisfaction with democracy contribute to immigrant political participation in substantive terms, Figure 2 plots the marginal effects for uninstitutionalized participation, using national and regional measures of opinion climates. The black bars indicate the levels of uninstitutionalized acts among foreigners who are completely dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their host country, the white bars indicate participation among foreigners who are fully satisfied, when we compare countries with low and high levels of pro-immigrant opinion climate (calculated as 1 *SD* below and above the mean); the vertical lines mark the 95% confidence intervals.¹⁵

The results using the national opinion climate measure reveal that the uninstitutionalized participation score of a foreigner who is extremely dissatisfied with democracy and resides in a country with a relatively friendly opinion climate toward migrants is .255 higher than the participation score of an individual who lives in a similarly friendly environment but has no political grievances (.403 vs. .148). Moreover, a foreigner who is politically

Table 1. Multilevel Models of Institutionalized and Uninstitutionalized at the end Political Action Among Foreign-Born Immigrants in 25 European Countries, 2002 to 2010.

Independent variables	With national pro-immigrant opinion climate		With regional pro-immigrant opinion climate	
	Institutionalized action	Uninstitutionalized action	Institutionalized action	Uninstitutionalized action
Pro-immigrant opinion climate	-.046* (.026)	-.028 (.028)	-.048*** (.018)	.045* (.023)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-.018 (.018)	-.028 (.022)	-.011 (.017)	-.027 (.021)
Pro-immigrant Opinion Climate × Dissatisfaction With Democracy	.005 (.003)	.009** (.004)	.003 (.003)	.009** (.004)
Citizenship status	.042*** (.014)	.051*** (.017)	.043*** (.013)	.051*** (.017)
Discriminated against	.048*** (.016)	.103*** (.020)	.048*** (.016)	.100*** (.020)
Crime victim	.094*** (.014)	.163*** (.018)	.096*** (.014)	.160*** (.018)
Recent immigrant	-.040*** (.007)	-.067*** (.009)	-.039*** (.007)	-.068*** (.009)
Democracy in origin country	.000 (.001)	.003* (.002)	.000 (.001)	.003* (.002)
Political interest	.109*** (.006)	.138*** (.008)	.109*** (.006)	.138*** (.008)
Married	.006 (.012)	-.070*** (.015)	.005 (.012)	-.067*** (.015)
Male	.015 (.012)	-.045*** (.014)	.016 (.012)	-.046*** (.014)
Age	.002 (.002)	.006** (.003)	.002 (.002)	.005** (.002)
Age squared	-.000 (.000)	-.000*** (.000)	-.000 (.000)	-.000*** (.000)
Income	-.007 (.007)	.004 (.009)	-.006 (.007)	.006 (.009)
Education	.051*** (.005)	.059*** (.006)	.052*** (.005)	.058*** (.006)
Social connectedness	.023*** (.004)	.028*** (.005)	.022*** (.004)	.027*** (.005)
Unemployed	-.012 (.022)	-.070** (.027)	-.015 (.022)	-.066** (.027)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Independent variables	With national pro-immigrant opinion climate		With regional pro-immigrant opinion climate	
	Institutionalized action	Uninstitutionalized action	Institutionalized action	Uninstitutionalized action
Union member	.064 ^{***} (.014)	.116 ^{***} (.017)	.066 ^{***} (.014)	.116 ^{***} (.017)
GDP per capita	.004 (.002)	.001 (.002)	.004* (.002)	-.002 (.002)
Economic growth	.002 (.002)	.002 (.003)	.002 (.002)	.003 (.003)
% Foreign-born	-.326 (.224)	-.274 (.206)	-.320 (.224)	-.213 (.248)
Participation level among natives	.254 ^{**} (.107)	.547 ^{***} (.071)	.245 ^{**} (.108)	.491 ^{***} (.085)
New democracy	-.005 (.050)	-.061 (.050)	-.005 (.049)	-.109* (.056)
ESS round fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-.139 (.135)	-.300 ^{**} (.148)	-.134 (.115)	-.575 ^{***} (.139)
SD of random intercept: host country	.051 (.012)	.031 (.014)	.051 (.012)	.050 (.019)
SD of random intercept: origin country	.047 (.010)	.113 (.014)	.047 (.010)	.109 (.014)
SD of residuals	.541 (.004)	.675 (.005)	.540 (.004)	.673 (.005)
Number of observations	9,344	9,327	9,326	9,308
Wald $\chi^2(df)$	909.67(26) ^{***}	1,361.14(26) ^{***}	921.55(26) ^{***}	1,307.32(26) ^{***}

ESS = European Social Survey; GDP = gross domestic product. Results are multilevel linear regression (crossed random intercept) estimates (using STATA's `xtmixed` command).

Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors. The boldfaced values in the tables indicate the main findings.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

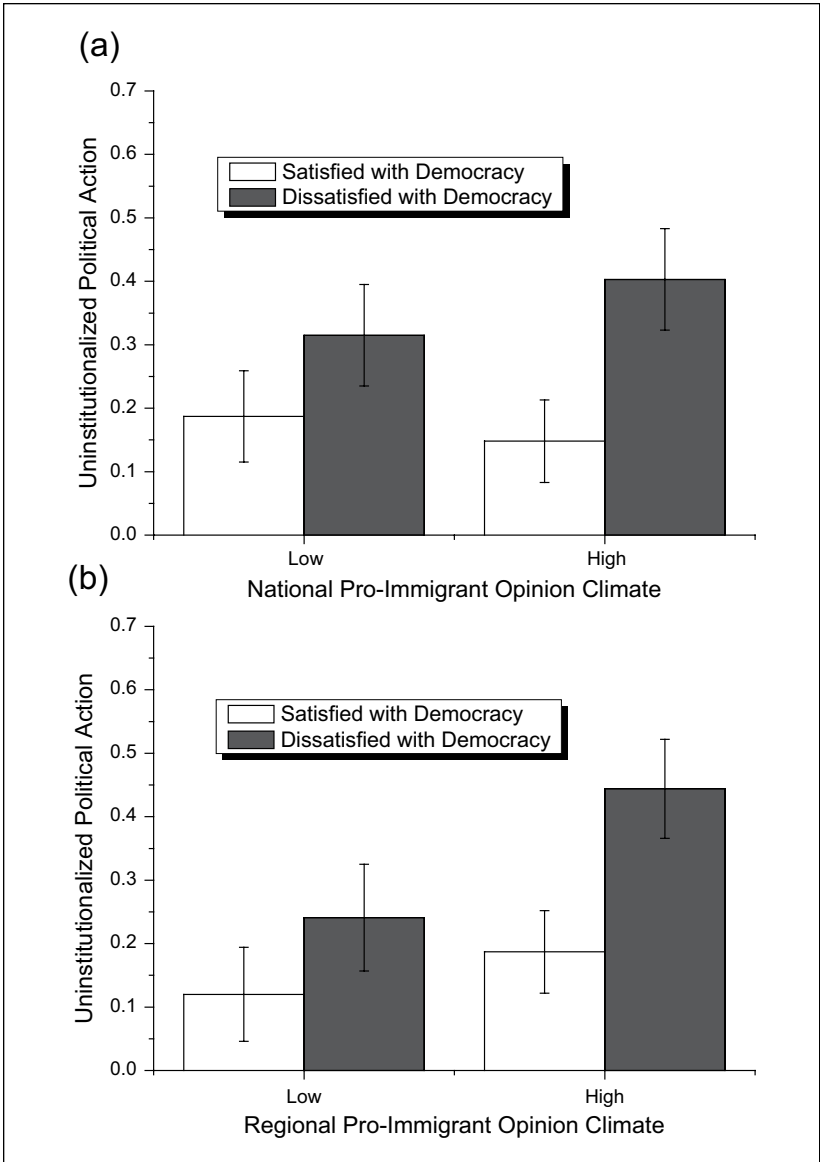


Figure 2. Marginal effects of pro-immigrant opinion climate and satisfaction with democracy among foreigners on their uninstitutionalized political action: (a) national and (b) regional.

Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

dissatisfied and resides in a country with pro-immigrant opinion climate is more politically engaged than a similarly dissatisfied foreigner living in a hostile climate: The respective scores are .403 versus .315. The pattern is even more pronounced when we consider the results with the regional opinion climate measure: The scores of uninstitutionalized political action among foreigners increase from .187 to .444 when we compare respondents with the lowest and highest levels of political grievances in regions with favorable opinion climates toward immigrants, while this difference is reduced to .121 among foreigners living in regions that are relatively unwelcoming to immigrants. Taken together, our results suggest that the opinion climate toward immigrants has an important mobilizing effect on uninstitutionalized political action among foreigners with political grievances, and this effect operates at the level of countries and regions in European democracies.

Robustness Checks: An Instrumental Variable Approach

One difficulty with estimating the effects of opinion climates on immigrant political engagement is that opinion climates might change as a result of immigrant political action, creating an endogeneity problem. Moreover, the relationship between the opinion climate and immigrant political action might be spurious, if some unobserved heterogeneity not captured by our data is driving both variables. To test the robustness of our findings, and hence to ensure that our results are not affected by endogeneity or omitted variable bias, we rely on a two-stage instrumental variable (IV) approach (Baum, 2006, chap. 8; Wooldridge, 2009, chap. 15). The IV approach works under the assumption that valid instruments can be identified. This means that instruments must have a significant partial correlation with opinion climate, controlling for all the other determinants of political participation, while being uncorrelated with the error term in the model of political participation.

We argue that unemployment levels and immigrant integration policies can be used as such instruments. Threat in labor market competition has been long thought to be a prime motivator behind anti-immigration attitudes (Fetzer, 2000; Money, 1999; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). We therefore include a percentage of unemployed to predict levels of pro-immigrant opinion climate, with an expectation that higher unemployment in an immigrant receiving country engenders more hostility toward newcomers than low unemployment.

Table 2. Predicting Pro-immigrant Opinion Climate Toward Immigrants in 25 European Countries, 2002 to 2010.

Independent variables	With national pro-immigrant opinion climate		With regional pro-immigrant opinion climate	
	% unemployed in host country	-.036**** (.002)	-.036**** (.001)	-.029**** (.002)
Citizenship policy index	.128**** (.002)	—	.125**** (.007)	—
MIPEX	—	.022**** (.000)	—	.022**** (.001)
Included exogenous individual-level regressors		Yes		Yes
Country fixed effects		Yes		Yes
ESS round fixed effects		Yes		Yes
Number of countries		25		25
Partial R ² for excluded instruments		.29		.06
F statistic for test of excluded instruments		1,924.7		211.1
F p value		.000		.000

ESS = *European Social Survey*; MIPEX = *Migrant Integration Policy Index*. The results are 2SLS first-stage coefficient estimates and their robust standard errors (in parentheses).

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

Existing research also shows that immigrant integration laws—most notably, citizenship policies—play an important role in shaping majority populations' attitudes toward ethnic minorities and migrants (Weldon, 2006). And while the relationship between institutions and opinion climate may not be unidirectional, existing evidence suggests that the main causal pathway runs from institutions to people's opinions about immigrants: State policy regimes communicate to majority populations values and norms regarding the position and expected behavior of migrants in their host society, and people tend to acquire these values through a process of socialization in the family, education system, workplace, and the media (Weldon, 2006).¹⁶ We use two measures of policy regimes: the Citizenship Policy Index (Howard, 2009) and the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), with an expectation that more liberal laws are positively linked to natives' opinion toward immigrants.

The first stage of the IV estimation predicts opinion climates toward immigrants using our instruments while controlling for all variables specified in the model of political participation among foreign-born. Because the IV approach does not allow for multilevel modeling, we include fixed effects for countries and ESS rounds, and estimate our models using robust standard errors (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009). The second stage then uses the

Table 3. Instrumental Variable Estimates of Institutionalized and Uninstitutionalized Political Action Among Foreign-Born Immigrants in 25 European Countries, 2002 to 2010.

Independent variables	Institutionalized action			Uninstitutionalized action		
	Satisfied with democracy	Disatisfied with democracy	Disatisfied with democracy	Satisfied with democracy	Disatisfied with democracy	Disatisfied with democracy
National pro-immigrant opinion climate (instrumented)	.104 (.064)	—	-.108 (.165)	—	—	—
Regional pro-immigrant opinion climate (instrumented)	—	.107 (.067)	—	-.156 (.200)	—	—
Citizenship status	.038** (.017)	.038** (.018)	.050** (.022)	.049** (.022)	.053** (.022)	.037 (.029)
Discriminated against	.027 (.023)	.021 (.023)	.084*** (.025)	.086*** (.025)	.087** (.028)	.094** (.031)
Crime victim	.079*** (.021)	.075*** (.021)	.109*** (.025)	.113*** (.026)	.198*** (.027)	.081** (.032)
Recent immigrant	-.045*** (.008)	-.045*** (.008)	-.037*** (.011)	-.034** (.011)	-.080*** (.011)	-.074*** (.015)
Democracy in origin country	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.002)	.001 (.002)	.005*** (.001)	.008*** (.002)
Political interest	.114*** (.009)	.113*** (.009)	.107*** (.011)	.108*** (.011)	.123*** (.010)	.173*** (.014)
Married	.029* (.016)	.033** (.016)	-.026 (.020)	-.030 (.021)	-.079*** (.020)	-.079** (.025)
Male	.019 (.015)	.021 (.015)	.010 (.018)	.009 (.018)	-.049** (.019)	-.042* (.024)
Age	.001 (.002)	-.000 (.002)	.005 (.003)	.005 (.003)	.008** (.003)	.003 (.004)
Age squared	-.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)	-.000*** (.000)	-.000 (.000)
Income	-.007 (.010)	-.005 (.010)	-.005 (.013)	-.007 (.013)	.008 (.012)	.013 (.016)
Education	.045*** (.006)	.044*** (.006)	.065*** (.008)	.066*** (.008)	.067*** (.007)	.060*** (.010)
Social connectedness	.027*** (.005)	.027*** (.005)	.016** (.006)	.016** (.006)	.028*** (.006)	.025*** (.007)
Unemployed	-.005 (.031)	-.007 (.031)	-.024 (.030)	-.027 (.030)	-.082** (.034)	-.042 (.043)
Union member	.078*** (.020)	.079*** (.020)	.047* (.025)	.044* (.025)	.105*** (.024)	.153*** (.031)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESS round fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-.776** (.391)	-.788** (.400)	.430 (1.007)	.715 (1.211)	-1.607*** (.502)	-3.669** (1.392)
Number of observations	5,742	5,726	3,602	3,600	5,716	3,594
Underidentification test (Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic)	649.8***	271.0***	166.7***	43.1***	270.9***	166.3***
Hansen J statistic	0.601	0.506	2.302	2.241	4.881	0.006
$\chi^2(1)$ p value	.438	.477	.129	.134	.027	.938

ESS = European Social Survey. The results are 2SLS second-stage coefficient estimates and their robust standard errors (in parentheses). Pro-immigrant opinion climate is instrumented using % unemployed and the Citizenship Policy Index (CPI; Howard 2009) in a host country's population.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

instrumented opinion climate as an independent variable in the models of political participation among foreign-born.¹⁷

As opinion climate is hypothesized to interact with dissatisfaction with democracy in shaping immigrant political action, we had to make one additional modification to our model. Both stages in the IV models are estimated simultaneously, preventing us from generating a multiplicative term with instrumented opinion climate produced between the two stages. An alternative way of dealing with independent variables that are hypothesized to have an interactive effect with another independent variable is to stratify the sample into two subsamples (Hanushek & Jackson, 1977, p. 101; Jusko & Shively, 2005). We therefore split our sample between foreigners who are satisfied with the way democracy works in their host country and those who are not, using the median value of this variable among foreign-born to ensure that both samples are of similar size.¹⁸ If our hypothesis of the interactive effect is correct, we should observe a positive and statistically significant effect of opinion climates on political participation among politically dissatisfied foreigners, especially with respect to uninstitutionalized political acts, and a smaller or insignificant effect among those who are satisfied with the political system.

The first stage of the IV estimations, reported in Table 2, indicates that all instruments have the anticipated signs and are significantly correlated with pro-immigrant opinion climates. We find that, controlling for all predictors of immigrant political participation as well as country and survey fixed effects, liberal immigrant integration policies contribute positively to a pro-immigrant opinion climate while unemployment undermines it. To systematically assess the validity of our instruments, we rely on several test statistics.¹⁹ First, the *F* statistic for the test of excluded instruments is equal to 1,924.7 in the model with national opinion climate, and 211.1—with regional opinion climate, and both are statistically significant at less than .001, indicating that our instruments are jointly significant. Furthermore, the Hansen *J*-test statistic in the models reported in Table 3 is statistically insignificant, showing that the instruments are appropriately uncorrelated with the error term in the second-stage estimations. Taken together, the results indicate that the selected instruments are relevant and statistically independent from the disturbance process, satisfying the key requirements of valid instruments of the IV approach.

The results of the second stage estimations, shown in Table 3, are in line with the multilevel results reported above. As before, we find that pro-immigrant opinion climates have a positive effect on immigrant political participation, but this effect is more pronounced among foreigners who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their host country. However, as before, we find that the impact of opinion climates is limited to

uninstitutionalized political acts. Finally, the results are consistent using national and regional measures of opinion climates, although the regional effect is slightly stronger than the national one. Taken together, the IV results confirm that the opinion climate toward immigrants has a genuine and robust effect on political action among foreigners.

Discussion

To better understand the consequences that a society's opinions about immigrants have on the patterns of immigrants' political engagement in European democracies, our article focused on several important but unanswered questions in previous research: Does political engagement among the foreign-born depend on the opinion climate toward immigrants in their host country? Does the degree of hostility or hospitality affect the kinds of political acts immigrants engage in? And, finally, does the opinion climate shape the extent to which political grievances translate into political engagement among foreign-born?

We argue that a more comprehensive explanation of political engagement among immigrants requires not only the consideration of information about individual attributes, experiences, and attitudes or formal political institutions, rules, and political allies, but also taking into account the social context in which immigrants engage politically. As such, this study builds on a growing body of literature that seeks to develop multilevel models of political behavior designed to systematically incorporate information about individuals and the context they are exposed to (Anderson, 2007) and contributes to it by focusing on informal, rather than formal constraints on political action. We argue that positive opinion climates toward immigrants—at the national and regional level—increase the willingness of foreigners to engage in uninstitutionalized political acts. Moreover, we find that the effect of opinion climates on uninstitutionalized participation is particularly pronounced among immigrants dissatisfied with the political system's performance in their country of residence.

The conclusion that a friendly environment fosters the translation of immigrants' political discontent into political action is limited to uninstitutionalized political acts. It also may not be congenial to everyone. But recall that the kinds of political acts analyzed here are legal and nonviolent. When aggrieved, immigrants appear to channel their frustrations into nonviolent, albeit uninstitutionalized political action, particularly in countries with majority populations who hold more positive opinions about immigrants. At a minimum, these results indicate that there is good reason to believe that a hospitable environment can counteract immigrants' political grievances from

going unexpressed, and this may ultimately prevent more violent expressions of such sentiments.

Appendix

Measures and Coding

Institutionalized political action. Additive index of three survey items:

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? 1) contacted a politician, government or local government official, 2) worked in a political party or action group, 3) worked in another organization or association?

The resulting ordinal variable ranges from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more involvement in institutionalized political acts.

Uninstitutionalized political action. Additive index of three survey items:

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? 1) signed a petition? 2) taken part in a lawful public demonstration? 3) boycotted certain products?

The resulting ordinal variable ranges from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more involvement in uninstitutionalized political acts.

National opinion climate toward immigrants. Country mean of three survey questions: (a) “Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country’s] economy that people come to live here from other countries?” (b) “Would you say that [country’s] cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?” (c) “Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?” (Each item ranges from 0 = “most anti-immigrant” attitude to 10 = “most pro-immigrant” attitude.) We first calculated an average based on these three items for each respondent; this individual average was then used to calculate the country mean (for each ESS round) among natives.

Regional opinion climate toward immigrants. Mean calculated as above, only at a regional level using ESS region variables (in each country and ESS round).

Dissatisfaction with democracy. “And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?” 0 = “extremely satisfied,” 10 = “extremely dissatisfied.”

Citizen. "Are you a citizen of [country]?" 1 = "yes," 0 = "otherwise."

Discriminated against. "Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?" 1 = "yes," 0 = "no."

Crime victim. "Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or assault in the past 5 years?" 1 = "yes," 0 = "no."

Recent immigrant. "How long ago did you first come to live in [country]?" 5 = "within the past year," 4 = "1 to 5 years ago," 3 = "6 to 10 years ago," 2 = "11 to 20 years ago," 1 = "more than 20 years ago."

Democracy in country of origin. Based on survey questions: "Were you born in [country]?" If a respondent said "no," then the follow-up question was "In which country were you born?" and "How long ago did you first come to live in [country]?" Information about immigrant country of origin and the recency of immigrant arrival were then matched up with the polity scores from the Polity IV data set <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/>. Because recency of immigrant arrival is a categorical variable that captures only approximate number of years in host country, the variable was calculated in the following way: If a survey was conducted in 2002, then those who arrived more than 20 years ago were assigned the average value of the 1972 to 1981 polity score in their country of origin; those who arrived 11 to 20 years ago, the 1982 to 1991 score; those who arrived 6 to 10 years ago, the 1992 to 1996 score; those who arrived 1 to 5 years ago, the 1997 to 2001 score; and those who arrived within the past year, the 2002 score. We then calculated values separately for respondents interviewed in 2003, 2004, etc. This resulting variable ranges from 0 "least democratic regime" to 20 "most democratic regime" (recoded from the original polity measure that ranges from -10 to 10).

Political interest. "How interested would you say you are in politics?" 0 = "not at all interested," 1 = "hardly interested," 2 = "quite interested," 3 = "very interested."

Married. 1 = "married," 0 = "otherwise."

Male. 1 = "male," 0 = "female."

Age. Number of years, calculated by subtracting respondent's year of birth from the year of interview.

Income. "Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?" 0 = "very difficult on present income," 1 = "difficult on present income," 2 = "coping on present income," 3 = "living comfortably on present income."

Education. The highest level of education achieved.

Social connectedness. "How often do you meet socially with friends, relatives, or work colleagues?" 1 = "never," 2 = "less than once a month," 3 = "once a month," 4 = "several times a month," 5 = "once a week," 6 = "several times a week," 7 = "every day."

Unemployed. Based on two survey questions: “Which of these descriptions applies to what you have been doing for the last 7 days?” (a) unemployed and actively looking for a job; (b) unemployed, wanting a job but not actively looking for a job. Dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if a respondent gave a positive answer to at least one question, 0 = otherwise.

Union member. “Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organization?” 1 = “is/was a union member,” 0 = “never been.”

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Based on purchasing power parity (PPP) in constant 2005 international dollars (in 1000s). *Source:* World Bank (2011).

Economic growth. Annual percentage growth rate of GDP per capita. *Source:* World Bank (2011).

% Foreign-born in host country. *Source:* Eurostat 2001 Census Data.

Participation level among natives. Country-round mean of institutionalized or uninstitutionalized political participation among natives.

% unemployed in host country. *Source:* World Bank (2011).

Citizenship Policy Index. *Source:* Howard (2009). Additive index based on whether a country grants jus soli citizenship, the minimum years of residency required for naturalization, and whether naturalized immigrants are allowed to hold dual citizenship. The variable ranges from 0 to 6, with higher values indicating more liberal citizenship policies.

MIPEX. Migrant Integration Policy Index (<http://www.mipex.eu/>) based on 148 policy indicators of immigrants’ access to political participation, labor market mobility, education, family reunion, long-term residence, citizenship, and antidiscrimination protection. The variable ranges from 0 (most restrictive immigrant integration policies) to 100 (most inclusive).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Because political engagement can be considered an individual act—individuals cast ballots—as well as a social one—individuals protest together—it is useful to think of individual and contextual variables that may shape participation.

2. While grievances are known to be a necessary condition for protest (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996), they are not sufficient: Only a small proportion of the people holding those grievances usually participate in a movement, as participation tends to be conditioned by individual characteristics (Dalton, 2006; McAdam, 1988), movements' nature, and political environment (McAdam, 1982; Meyer, 2006).
3. Goldstone and Tilly (2001) suggest defining "opportunity" as the probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving the desired outcome. In contrast, "threat" is best conceptualized as the costs that a social group will incur from protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action (p. 183).
4. It is based on hour-long face-to-face interviews using survey questions designed for optimal cross-national comparability and strict random sampling of individuals aged 15 or older regardless of nationality, citizenship, language, or legal status to ensure representativeness of national populations.
5. Israel, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine were excluded because of missing values on the immigrant integration policy variables.
6. Voting is not included because many foreign-born are not citizens and therefore do not have a legal right to vote in national elections.
7. The respective scores for natives are .45 and .34. Hence, uninstitutionalized participation is higher than institutionalized political acts among natives and foreigners, but the gap in the levels of these activities is higher among foreigners than among natives.
8. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .84.
9. Our measure of opinion climate toward immigrants can be seen as an "objective" measure in a sense that it is based on natives' attitudes, rather than immigrants' perceptions of those attitudes. We recognize that a more direct "subjective" measure of opinion climate would be more appropriate for our analyses. Unfortunately, such measure is not available in the *European Social Survey* (ESS) data, and we are not aware of any other survey that includes it.
10. Foreign-born with native-born parents were excluded from the analyses, although including them does not affect our findings.
11. We relied on the 2001 Census data, and compared it with the most proximate round of surveys—ESS1 collected from 2002 to 2003.
12. We are not the first to rely on the samples of foreign-born to study immigrant behavior: See, for example, Wright and Bloemraad (2012), de Rooij (2012), and Maxwell (2010).
13. To test the robustness of our findings, we reestimated our models using (a) opinion climate based on natives without second generation immigrants and (b) overall measure of openness toward immigrants based on the attitudes of natives and foreigners (results available upon request). Using these alternative measures of opinion climate does not change our findings appreciably and our inferences remain the same.
14. It is worth noting that this contrasts with the patterns of political engagement among natives among whom negative attitudes toward government go hand

- in hand with political disengagement. In our data set too, dissatisfaction with democracy is negatively correlated with institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political action among natives ($-.1$ for institutionalized and $-.07$ for uninstitutionalized engagement).
15. We hold other variables at their means and dichotomous variables—at their medians.
 16. Wright (2011) makes a similar argument when analyzing the consequences of liberal citizenship laws and welfare state on the conceptions of inclusive conceptions of national identity (see also Kesler & Bloemraad, 2010).
 17. The inclusion of country fixed effects requires that we drop substantive macro-level controls previously used in multilevel models due to collinearity.
 18. The median value is 4 on a scale from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating a more dissatisfied response.
 19. For a similar approach, see Gabel & Scheve (2007).

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Author Biographies

Aida Just is an assistant professor of political science at Bilkent University. Her academic interests focus on comparative political behavior, public opinion, and political parties, particularly with respect to issues of international migration, representation, and democratic legitimacy.

Christopher J. Anderson is a professor of government at Cornell University. His research and teaching are in the areas of political economy and political sociology.