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Anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination in Europe

Abstract

Europe is a continent of immigration, emigration and internal migration. In this chapter, we review recent literature that demonstrates that immigrants to Europe face prejudice, discrimination, and violence. Levels of prejudice, discrimination and violence targeted at immigrants vary between European countries, over time and the particular immigrant group under scrutiny. Classical psychological explanations regarding causes and reasons for rejection are supported in the European context: These include dispositional influences, such as right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation; situational influences, such as high nationalistic identification, intergroup anxiety and threat, lack of contact; and macro-level influences, such as politics and media coverage. Based on the reviewed literature, we propose a model of micro-macro influences on prejudice, discrimination, and violence against immigrants that organizes the existing research and reveals important areas for future research, especially research investigating micro-macro interactions. Looking into the future, we criticise that the continuation of the current walling of Europe against immigrants will reinforce future processes of devaluation and dehumanisation.

Keywords

Europe, immigration, prejudice, discrimination, micro-macro influences

The history of recent immigration to Europe

Europe has always been a continent of migration. At the end of World War II, large movements of people took place both to Europe, as refugees and expelled people returned, and within Europe (Hoerder, Lucassen, & Lucassen, 2010). This was followed by people from former European colonies who immigrated after their independence, e.g., to France, the Netherlands and Great Britain. After the fall of the Communist Eastern Block in the late 1980s, about two million people stemming from the former Soviet Union were given permission to relocate to Germany because they were of German heritage – a process grounded in the specific German understanding of citizenship (see below; Dietz, 2010). Migration within Europe was particularly noteworthy in the 1950s and 1960s. The faster growing northern European states hired people from the European South, including Turkey, as ‘guest workers’ (“Gastarbeiter”), as they were called in Germany, usually with the expectation that people later returned to their countries of origin (Hoerder et al.,

2010). However, many of these guest workers remained in the countries they migrated to. With the decision of the European Community for free movement of workers in 1968, allowing Community Member citizens free access to the labor market in all member states, an additional new labor migration emerged and is continuing to this day.

The migration described above primarily refers to labor migration, that is, the motive behind the mobility is to get access to better working conditions. In addition to labor migration, Europe has long been a destination for refugees who fled wars and civil wars in their home countries (BAMF, 2019). In the last decades, this especially concerned refugees from the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. More recently, in the second decade of the 21st century, refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Ukraine, Syria and North and Central African countries have arrived in Europe seeking refuge from war, persecution, and economic and ecological disasters in their regions of origin. This refugee migration reached its preliminary peak in 2015, with about 1.2 million people applying for asylum in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016). In policy and public debate, this still ongoing process is described as the “refugee crisis”. The distribution of these immigrants between European countries is extremely uneven: In 2016, 60% of all asylum seekers to Europe applied for asylum in Germany (Sola, 2018).

Currently, Europe is “defending its borders”. In practice, this means that European states are trying to prevent and dissuade people, especially from the Levant and Africa, from entering the European continent and crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Coastguard policing and so-called repatriation agreements have been made with numerous African and Asian countries, and refugees have been allocated in Turkey and North African states. As a consequence, large-scale refugee camps have emerged in Turkey and North Africa, but also in Greece, with at least partially unacceptable living conditions and heavy violation of Human Rights (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2019). Additionally, thousands of deaths have been documented in the Mediterranean Sea – estimates for 2016 counted more than 5,000 casualties (International Organization for Migration, 2019).

There is little doubt that the history of migration to and within Europe is also the history of prejudice, discrimination and violence against immigrants, making these topics ripe for social psychological analysis. In the remainder of this chapter, we review social psychological and related work that deals with this important issue, preferentially incorporating studies that aim at recent immigration to the European continent. In accordance with the public and political debate, we thereby primarily focus on the rejection of people with migrant background in general, i.e., immigrants who themselves or whose parents immigrated after the 1960s, including labor migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This overall perspective might lead to an inadequate generalization of findings, as the different subgroups (e.g., labor migrants versus refugees) may differ substantially in the perceived subgroup traits as well as in structural factors, such as the liberty of movement within a country or the representation in the labor market or social systems. However, this summarizing of different groups reflects the European social psychological research, which usually focusses on the rejection of immigrants without differentiation between the different groups (for some of the few exceptions, see Kotzur, Forsbach, & Wagner, 2017). In addition, very little social psychological research focuses on immigrants from within Europe. The few available studies demonstrate the existence of ethnic hierarchies

with immigrant groups from Europe at the top and groups from the Middle East and African countries at the bottom (Hraba, Hagendoorn, & Hagendoorn, 1989; Snellman & Ekehammar, 2005).

Prejudice, discrimination and violence against immigrants

Prejudice is defined here as a derogatory social attitude or cognition system against members of a group on account of their membership of that group (cf. also Brown, 1995). Prejudice against immigrants varies across the European countries. A reliable comparison of the levels of rejection of immigrants between different European states is a methodologically ambitious task (Davidov, Cieciuch, & Schmidt, 2018). Nevertheless, a cursory overview of the assignment of the different European states according to their acceptance and rejection of immigrants can be made on the basis of the European Social Survey (ESS) data, a biannually conducted survey composed of representative samples from 21 European countries. Schnaudt and Weinhardt (2017) used the ESS 2014 data set. Respondents were asked how many members of different immigrant groups (same ethnic group, different ethnic group, from a poor country within Europe, from a poor country outside of Europe) should be allowed to immigrate into their own country. Based on a composite index of the four questions, considerable differences emerged between countries, with Hungary, Great Britain, and Finland emerging as the most rejecting, and Sweden, Germany and Norway as the most welcoming countries (see also Heath & Richards, 2016).¹

Levels of prejudice against immigrants varies not only between European regions, but also over time. Evans and Kelley (2019) analyzed the change in prejudice between 1981 and 2014 for the different European countries on the basis of composite scores of various representative population surveys. They found a significant decrease in 40% of the countries (strongest decreases in Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia) and an increase in 45% of the countries (strongest increases in Belarus, Georgia and Russia), while four countries (Sweden, UK, Denmark, and Spain) remained constant during this time period. Even during the recent period of stronger refugee immigration, prejudice seems to develop differently in different European regions: For example, prejudice against immigrants has decreased in the United Kingdom since 2014 (Blinder & Richards, 2018), while prejudice against immigrants increased from 2016 to 2018 in Germany (Zick, Küpper, & Berghan, 2019).

Discrimination against immigrants describes the unequal and more unfavorable treatment of immigrants in comparison to non-immigrants. Discrimination can go back to structural influences and individual discrimination. An example for *structural discrimination* is the uneven access of immigrant children and adolescents in the

¹ Additionally, remarkable differences can arise even between regions within countries. The ongoing difference between West- and East-Germany, representing two different states before the re-unification in 1990, is infamous. East-Germans express higher prejudice (Wagner, van Dick, Pettigrew, & Christ, 2003) and violence against immigrants (Wagner, Tachtsoglou, Kotzur, Friehs, & Kemmesies, 2020) than West-Germans, also after controlling for relevant structural and demographic differences.

school system. This becomes especially vivid in the German education system, which separates students into different educational tracks already after elementary school at the age of ten or eleven. Students with migrant backgrounds are significantly overrepresented at the lower educational tracks aiming at blue collar labor, and underrepresented among those progressing toward a high-school diploma (Beicht, 2011). Research in different European states shows that immigrants are additionally discriminated in the job and housing market when applying for a job or an apartment (Weichselmauer, 2015; Horr, Hunkler, & Kronenberg, 2018). This is probably also a consequence of *individual discrimination*, i.e., individual behavior grounded on personal prejudice of human resources staff and landlords. Finally, also in everyday interactions, immigrants suffer from discrimination. For example, Choi, Poertner and Samabanis (2019) show that in Germany, the probability of receiving bystander support when being involved in an everyday misfortune (e.g., losing goods from a shopping bag) is reduced for immigrants, even if they had demonstratively adhered to German norms (e.g., sanctioning another person for littering). This discrimination is especially pronounced if the person in need can easily be recognized as a Muslim by wearing a headscarf (see also Hellmann, Berthold, Rees, & Hellmann, 2015).

Many Western countries have developed norms against discrimination. One consequence is that people withdraw from open discriminatory behavior. Aversive racism theory (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004) proposes that people usually suppress discriminatory behavior; however, if there are justifications available which can be seen to give reason for discrimination, people tend to show such behavior. In accordance with aversive racism theory, Wojcieszak (2015) provided evidence from Spain showing that a Mexican immigrant job applicant is not discriminated against compared to a Spaniard if the résumés reveal a clearly excellent qualification of the Mexican applicant; however, the Mexican applicant is hired less often than the Spaniard if both their qualifications are unclear and of medium quality.

Hate crimes, i.e., *violence against immigrants* because of their group membership, can be observed in many European states. Statistics show for example 62,685 registered cases of hate crimes against people of a different race in England and Wales in 2016-7 (Home Office 2018). The police reported 1,190 violent attacks against immigrants and their properties for Germany in 2016 (Statista, 2019a). This extreme difference in registered hate crimes illustrates the different definitions of hate crimes against immigrants, which makes it impossible to compare between the European countries. Even within a geographical region, the numbers are unclear: The Amadeo Antonio Stiftung (2019), an NGO, counted 3,769 cases for Germany for 2016, which is more than double the number of cases registered by the police and which shows that counts of hate crimes against immigrants are extremely unreliable. What is obviously needed is a common standard to detect hot spots of hate crimes and to act against them accordingly.

The foregoing overview shows that there is prejudice, discrimination and violence against immigrants in different places in Europe². Prejudice, discrimination and

² It is noteworthy that there are also examples of help and support for immigrants in many European states. Data for Germany, e.g., show that during the height of the 2015 immigration to Europe, more than 10% of the German population were engaged in active support for new arriving refugees (Ahrens, 2015; for the

violence against immigrants are in addition related to each other. For example, Ramos, Pereira, and Vala (2019) deliver evidence for the co-variation of prejudice and discrimination tendencies on the basis of the 2015 European Social Survey data: Highly prejudiced European citizens also tend to actively oppose immigration. Shepherd, Fasoli, Pereira, and Branscomb (2018) present similar findings on the basis of British and Italian respondents. An example of the co-variation of prejudice and violence is the correlation of both on the regional level: For example, East-Germans have repeatedly shown higher levels of prejudice than West-Germans (Wagner et al., 2003). The same difference can be demonstrated for the number of hate crimes against immigrants (see Wagner et al., 2020), which speaks for a relationship between prejudice and violence, at least on the aggregate level.

Recent research shows that the extent to which immigrants are faced with rejection is also contingent upon the groups which immigrants are assigned to. The 2014 European Social Survey asked which groups of migrants should (not) be allowed to come “to live here”. The lowest rate of restriction was found for people of the same race or ethnic group (about 7% rejection rate), followed by people of a different race or ethnic group (13% rejection), people from poorer countries in Europe (14%), poorer countries outside of Europe (20%), and Muslims (27%). This shows that in predominantly Christian Europe, Muslims are a strongly rejected group connected with immigration – even if they have lived in a European country for a long time (see also Anderson & Antalikova, 2014). Kotzur et al. (2017) demonstrate for German respondents that the evaluation of refugees depends on their label: Immigrants denoted as “refugees” and “war refugees” are considered warmer and elicit more positive emotional reactions than “economic refugees” (see also Kotzur, Friehs, Asbrock, & van Zalk, 2019). Further, research shows that rejection and acceptance of immigrants is associated with the attributes assigned to them, e.g., the values they purportedly endorse. For example, the acceptance of immigrants by British respondents is higher if they are perceived as holding high self-transcendence values and low self-enhancement values (Wolf, Weinstein, & Maio, 2019).

Thus, it can be concluded that prejudice, discrimination, and violence against immigrants in Europe are strongly interrelated phenomena that vary between European states, as well as over time. In addition, prejudice, discrimination and violence against immigrants is target group specific, with people from poorer countries outside of Europe and Muslims being most strongly rejected. Next, we turn to the question of how contemporary psychological and related research explains the emergence of prejudice, discrimination and violence in Europe.

Causes and reasons for prejudice, discrimination and violence

Dispositional influences

Personality psychology delivers evidence that stable dispositional differences between people may help to understand differences in the levels of rejection of

explanation of this kind of behavior, see Becker, Ksenofontov, Siem, & Love, 2018; Kende, Lantos, Belinszky, Csaba, & Lukas, 2017; Thomas, Smith, McGarty, Reese, & Kende, 2019).

immigrants. These variables include, among others, perpetrators' political conservatism: Banton, West, and Kinney (2019) show in a survey that highly conservative British respondents, compared to people low in conservatism, tended to infra-humanize immigrants more strongly, i.e., deny them the key attributes that constitute humanity. Wolf et al. (2019) discuss results also from British participants demonstrating that favorability toward immigrants is associated with respondents' high self-transcendence values (e.g., equality) and low self-enhancement values (e.g., power).

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1998) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) are two prominent predictors of prejudice, discrimination and violence. People high in RWA endorse conventionalism, authoritarian submission and authoritarian aggression, whereas people high in SDO prefer intergroup hierarchies and rank social groups in a superior–inferior hierarchy. Research shows that RWA and SDO are associated with higher prejudice against immigrants in France (Cohu, Maisonneuve, & Teste, 2016) and Italy (Caricati, Mancini, & Marletta, 2017). Variables which are assumed to promote pro-immigrant attitudes and behavior are allophilia, i.e., the general appreciation of diversity (Barbarino & Stürmer, 2016), and multiculturalism, i.e., the fostering of understanding and appreciation of ethnic diversity by acknowledging and respecting minority group identities (Verkuyten, 2005).

Dispositional influences predict attitudes and behavior towards immigrants; often, however, in interaction with situational influences. This can be observed when considering trait pro-diversity beliefs (Kauff, Stegmann, van Dick, Beierlein, & Christ, 2019). Pro-diversity beliefs describe a habitual preference for diversity as long as diversity is seen as useful for the ingroup. Thus, people high in diversity beliefs show positive attitudes and behavior in interaction with immigrants, as long as the situation signals that heterogeneity is useful. If the situation does not promote positive consequences of heterogeneity, immigrants are devaluated and discriminated against even by high diversity belief respondents (Kauff et al., 2019).

Situational influences

At least three social psychological mechanisms are known to predict outgroup rejection as a consequence of specific situational antecedent conditions: Ingroup identification, feelings of threat connected with the outgroup, and the lack of intergroup contact. In the following, we present empirical studies testing whether these processes are also valid for explaining rejection of immigrants in Europe.

To reject an immigrant presupposes that he or she is recognized as an outgroup member. The rejection of groups is psychologically based on humans' ability to categorize the world (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1964) and to identify with a specific ingroup. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) proposes that group memberships give information about a *member's identity*, his or her social identity. Social identity theory in addition assumes that people strive for a positive social identity. The combination of these processes, categorization, identification and striving for positive self-evaluation, implies a motive to positively distinguish the ingroup from relevant outgroups – which often leads to outgroup derogation.

The strength of the effect of group identification on outgroup derogation depends on two moderators: The salience of a specific group membership in a situation – the sudden recognition that an interaction partner is a member of a specific immigrant group can change an interaction dramatically from one minute to the other – and the degree of identification with an ingroup. Thus, based on social identity theory, one can propose that the more salient national or ethnic group membership in a situation and the more individuals identify with a national or ethnic ingroup, the stronger their rejection of immigrants.

Research on national identification enriches the above described influence of identification on the rejection of immigrants by differentiating between specific kinds of identification with one's own national or ethnic group. Nationalistic identification focusses on the comparison between the national ingroup and relevant outgroups, whereas patriotic identification is a kind of critical loyalty with the ingroup that aims at improving the ingroup according to its standards and norms (e.g., Wagner, Becker, Christ, Pettigrew, & Schmidt, 2012). Grigoryan and Ponizovskiy (2018) recently confirmed this differentiation on the basis of survey data with Russian participants and show that nationalism really goes along with anti-immigrant attitudes, whereas political patriotism is linked to more positive outgroup attitudes. Kende, Hadarics, and Szabo (2019) replicated these findings with Hungarian respondents. In addition, they found that European glorification can increase negative attitudes against immigrants and Muslims. Wagner et al. (2012) demonstrated on the basis of German panel data that there is in fact a causal effect of nationalism and patriotism on immigrant rejection.

Feelings of *intergroup threat* cover the expectations that outgroups threaten an individual's (personal threat) or his/her group's (group threat) material resources (the individual's or the group's economic prosperity – realistic threat) or values (the individual's or the group's way of life – symbolic threat; cf. Stephan & Renfro, 2002). Intergroup threat is known to contribute to outgroup rejection. The current political debate in Europe is dominated by controversies about the danger that recent immigrants, predominantly young and male, bring to Europe and the unjustified economic advantages they receive. Accordingly, Ramos, Pereira, and Vala (2019) show on the basis of data of the European Social Survey that for Europeans, threat is also a strong predictor of the rejection of immigrants. *Intergroup anxiety* as an additional facet of intergroup threat describes the expected worry about negative interactions with an outgroup member (Stephan, 2014). Shepherd et al. (2018) manipulated threat experimentally in studies with British and Italian respondents. Their data also confirm the assumption of a causal effect of threat on the agreement with political measures withdrawing support for immigrants. Lastly, *relative deprivation*, i.e., feelings of being disadvantaged as an ingroup member compared to an outgroup (Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012), is also known to be associated negatively with attitudes towards immigrants.

Landmann, Gaschler, and Rohmann (2019) recently extended Stephan and Renfro's (2002) classification scheme on the basis of qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data. They revealed that immigrants and immigration to Germany are connected to Germans' feelings of symbolic threat (i.e., concerns about cultural differences), realistic threat (i.e., financial strains), safety threats (i.e., concerns about criminal acts), apprehension about increasing xenophobia, cohesion threat (i.e., being concerned about increasing conflicts within society) and altruistic threat (i.e.,

being concerned about refugee care). All types of threat correlated positively with indicators of immigrant rejection, such as prejudice against immigrants.

Bukowski, de Lemus, Rodriguez-Bailon, and Willis (2017) show how outgroup rejection can facilitate coping with adverse societal conditions. They found that attributing the economic crisis in Spain to immigrants restored feelings of personal control among their Spanish participants. In other words, scapegoating immigrants for societal problems improves a sense of personal control among the scapegoaters. Sometimes, however, loss of control can also lead to solidarity effects and lower prejudice against other disadvantaged groups like immigrants (see Bukowski, de Lemus, Rodriguez-Bailon, Willis, & Albuquerque, 2019). Whether it comes to devaluation of immigrants or solidarity with immigrants as a consequence of feelings of uncontrollability might depend upon new self-categorization processes: If the national ingroup and the ethnic outgroup are considered as composing a new common ingroup which is affected by the same economic crisis, solidarity with the outgroup instead of outgroup devaluation can be expected.

Immigrants and their (presumed) behaviors influence the attitudes and behaviors of receiving society members. At the same time, the welcoming of the receiving society affects new immigrants' attitudes and behaviors. Thus, interactions between immigrants and the already present population can produce mutual threats and therefore have a strong influence on mutual attitudes and future behavior. In this sense, Vezzali (2017) shows that if Italian respondents are experimentally induced to believe that African immigrants have a positive image of the Italians, they expect more positive interactions. Similar results were found with Italian students (Matera, Stefanile, & Brown, 2015). Experimentally induced concordance in preference for intergroup contact both in the ingroup as well as in the outgroup leads to more positive attitudes towards immigrants. Christ, Asbrock, Dhont, Pettigrew, and Wagner (2013) analyzed the relationship of attitudes and expectations of receiving society members and immigrants. They revealed that in German districts, the strength of immigrants' focus on their ethnic ingroup's culture (see Berry, 1997) correlates positively with the level of prejudice of receiving society members against immigrants. In other words: The greater immigrants focus on their ethnic heritage, the stronger they face rejection from the receiving society – and/or vice versa. The interactive character of the perceived behavior “of the other side” becomes also vivid after events of extraordinary conflictual interactions. Coahu et al. (2016) show how prejudice against immigrants increased in the French population after the 2015 Muslim terrorist attacks in Paris, compared to the prejudice levels before the attacks.

Intergroup contact is known to help reduce intergroup prejudice and discrimination (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). This implies that *lack of intergroup contact* is also an explanation for the emergence of prejudice. In accordance, Wagner et al. (2006) demonstrated that living in an ethnically homogeneous German district reduces the chances of coming into contact with immigrants. Low level contact with immigrants in turn is associated with higher level of prejudice. Wagner et al. (2020) show similar patterns for the covariation of ratio of immigrants (as a proxy for contact opportunities with immigrants) on the district level and xenophobic violence in the district. The lower the number of people of foreign origin, the higher the number of hate crime attacks against immigrants. Finally, contact not only affects prejudice, but prejudice is also related with the avoidance of contact. Accordingly, Schlueter, Ullrich, Glenz and Schmidt (2017) show on the basis of experimental surveys that Germans tend to

avoid renting an apartment or sending their children to a school if these are presented as being located in neighborhoods with substantial immigrant population levels. This avoidance of contact is especially pronounced if respondents had no or only few previous contact experiences with immigrants.

To summarize so far, research focusing on the rejection of immigrants in Europe supports a range of social psychological findings elsewhere, in particular the United States (Roberts & Rizzo, 2020) about the causes of prejudice, discrimination and group-related violence (see also Pettigrew, Wagner, & Christ, 2007). Individual rejection is influenced by ingroup identification processes, feelings of threat, anxiety and being disadvantaged, as well as lack of contact with immigrants.

Macro-level explanations: The influence of politics and the media

Psychologists in general tend to explain phenomena on the basis of theories that locate the phenomena and their explanation at the same level of analysis. For example, to understand an individual's behavior, his or her attitudes are taken as an explanatory variable (see, e.g., the description of the prejudice-violence correlation above). However, as social individuals, human beings are embedded into a social context which also influences their pattern of thinking and behavior (Pettigrew, 1997, 2021). This implies that in order to understand intergroup relations, macro-context influences like the political and media environment, in addition to the psychological processes within the individual, are relevant.

As demonstrated above, the rejection of immigrants varies between the different European states and over time. The question is: How can this be explained? Heinzmann and Huth (2019) show on the basis of the 2014 European Social Survey data that different European countries vary in their mean degree of feelings of threat associated with immigration, with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria at the top of countries with high feelings of threat, and Sweden, Switzerland and Germany with lowest threat perceptions. These differences in feelings of threat might, at least in part, help to understand the differences in rejection of refugees in the different European states.

Karpiński and Wysieńska-Di Carlo (2018) propose a normative theory of group relations. The theory predicts that immigrant integration policies in a country deliver a normative framework, thus contributing to attitudes towards immigrants in the receiving societies. If a country's policy signals the welcoming of immigrants, this should go along with positive attitudes of society members, whereas more restrictive and exclusive policies should co-vary with higher levels of rejection and prejudice. The authors analysed the 2002-2014 European Social Survey data and combined these individual data with a macro-index, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Migrant Policy Group, 2019), which assesses countries' offers for immigrants to participate in the society. Karpiński and Wysieńska-Di Carlo's (2018) data support their assumptions: The more positive and inclusive the integration policy in a country, the more positive consequences inhabitants associate with immigration and the lower their rate of rejection of immigrants in the population. Similar results were found by Bello (2016). These results demonstrate how macro-variables, here the political climate in a country, contribute to the receiving society members' attitudes towards

immigrants and immigration (for the influence of the local social climate on the acceptance of immigrants, see Christ et al., 2014)

Jäckle and König (2017) show that politics not only have an influence on citizens' attitudes, but also on society members' behavior. They found that the strength of extreme right-wing parties in different districts in Germany is positively correlated with the number of hate crime attacks in the districts. However, due to their correlational character, these results as well as the other examples of macro-level influences on individuals' attitudes and behavior leave the question of causality unanswered: Is it the policy that determines attitudes and behavior, or is it the individual rejection of immigrants that make voters prone for supporting specific policies, especially those from extreme right-wing political parties? Both processes seem plausible and can – in principle – work simultaneously.

Immigration to a country and contact with immigrants, especially if they arrived recently, are usually not directly and equally experienced by all receiving societies' members. On the contrary, information is mostly indirect through the media system and the interpretations delivered there. Thus, the perception and interpretation of immigration and immigrants strongly depend on media influences. Two processes are of relevance here. First, how politics and the media depict immigrants, their behaviors and the expected impact of immigration on the future, and secondly, the delivery of possible behavior alternatives to solve the problems connected with immigrants and immigration.

Visintin, Voci, Pagotto, and Hewstone (2017) show, on the basis of a correlational study incorporating Italian participants, that exposure to negative reports about immigrants in television and films is associated with higher levels of prejudice. Graf, Linhartova, and Szesny (2019) provide evidence that there is a causal effect from the reception of negative media presentations of immigrants to the rejection of immigrants. Three experimental studies in the Czech Republic and Switzerland reveal that negative and positive media reports shape the audiences' prejudice in the respective directions. Schemer (2013) supports these results, based on data of a three-wave panel analysis with Swiss participants: The more frequently respondents were exposed to negative news portrayals of asylum seekers, the more negative were their attitudes toward this group (see also Theorin, 2019, for similar results with Swedish respondents). Finally, Azevedo, De Beukelaer, Jones, Safra, and Tsakiris (2019) found experimental evidence with subjects from different European states showing that visually presenting immigrants in large groups moving to Europe leads to more dehumanized perceptions of refugees compared to images depicting small groups.

The media system might not only influence attitudes of the audience, it also can affect their behavior, especially by delivering role models and behavioral scripts. A demonstration of this effect was found by a longitudinal study of Brosius and Esser (1995) in Germany, taking data of the 1990s riots against refugees from the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The authors found that whenever television and print news reported heavy violent attacks against refugees, the number of hate crimes against immigrants increased in the following weeks - presumably due to model learning processes (Bandura, 1977). Similar processes can be assumed to play a role when politicians deliver public political statements about immigrants and thereby hint at possible violent "solutions": Such public and published declarations can contribute to

a shift in perceived public norms about thinkable behavior alternatives on the societal level, which might influence individual society members' behavior. To our knowledge, research about such political and media influences, especially through the internet, does not exist yet in Europe and would be urgently needed.

Policy and the media do not only influence individual immigration rejection directly, they also affect the above described social psychological preconditions of immigrant rejection, namely stable dispositional and (perceived) situational influences. Wagner et al. (2006) have shown that the presence of immigrants in a district where the non-immigrant survey respondents lived (macro-level) influences respondents' intergroup contact (micro-level), which in turn affected their prejudice against immigrants. Czymara and Dochow (2018) demonstrate a similar influence of macro-level conditions on micro-level social preconditions of immigrant rejection. On the basis of longitudinal data from 2001 to 2015, they show that in times of high salience of immigration-related issues in the media, German majority members were more concerned about immigration than in years of lower media attention to immigration.

A micro-macro interaction perspective on the rejection of immigrants

Adopting Coleman's (1986) idea of the connection of micro-macro processes³, Figure 1 delivers a multi-level framework synthesizing what we have discussed so far about the phenomenology and the causes of prejudice, discrimination and violence against immigrants in Europe, and shows in which areas we feel social psychological research is particularly lacking. We started with results summarized in line 1, showing that immigrant rejection varies between different European states and (not reproduced in Figure 1) over time. Our summary of psychological research shows that immigrant rejection is determined by stable differences between individuals and situation influences which the individual is or perceives to be confronted with (see line 2). In addition, we reviewed data supporting that nation states' policies and the media influence individual immigrant rejection (see line 3). And, finally, we presented some recent research demonstrating how social psychological preconditions of outgroup rejection (dispositional influences and situational influences) are connected with macro-level influences (line 4).

Figure 1 about here

Psychological processes are not only influenced by macro-level processes, micro- and macro-level processes also interact with each other (see line 5, also Pettigrew, 2021). However, there are very few studies on macro-micro interactions with a special focus on the rejection of immigrants in Europe. An example of macro-micro interactions on individual immigrant rejection is the already described media analysis by Czymara and Dochow (2018). They show that respondents are affected by the coverage of immigrant issues in the media. If media salience of immigration-related issues is high, readers report a higher concern about immigration. This effect, however, is moderated by an individual-level variable: The effect of the media system

³ We assume partial mediation, i.e., we do not propose that all macro-level effects are completely explained by micro-level processes.

is especially strong if the number of immigrants in the respondents' district is low, in other words, if respondents had no opportunity to buffer media effects by personal contact experiences. Respondents living in districts with high ratios of immigrants show reactions contingent upon media coverage to a significantly weaker degree than respondents living in districts with lower immigrant ratios (see also the surveys with Italian respondents presented by Fuochi, Voci, Veneziani, Boin, Fell, & Hewstone, 2019).

The effect of individual immigrant rejection in a nation state or in a specific region (line 6) as well as the interaction of micro- and macro-processes (7) on aggregated immigrant rejection is also under-researched. Usually, a nation's degree of prejudice, discrimination and violence is inferred from the aggregation of individual rejection drawn from representative surveys. Such a procedure can, however, be questioned. There is good reason to assume that immigrant rejection varies, e.g., from the perspective of immigrants themselves, depending on whether rejection is perceivably shared by all members of society or whether part of the receiving society rejects immigrants and another part accepts and welcomes them (see footnote 1).

A negative perspective for the future of an immigrant-rejecting Europe

Our overview demonstrates that at least parts of the European people are prejudiced, discriminate and behave violently against immigrants and immigration. This individual rejection is associated with general anti-immigration policies within Europe with some variation between the different European countries. The European community as well as European national states enforce the walling of the continent. Consequences are that refugees are forced to live in reception camps in North Africa and Greece, often under unacceptable living conditions, with insufficient health care and threatened by abuse and rape (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2017; Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). Estimates assume that between 2015 and 2018, nearly 15,000 refugees died while "illegally" crossing the Mediterranean Sea (Statista, 2019b). In 2018, the European community withdrew coastguard patrol ships from the Mediterranean Sea, which had rescued thousands of refugees from drowning before.

Many of the measures of the European walling against immigrants incorporate violations of Human Rights, such as the right to apply for asylum (see Wagner, 2020). European citizens are aware of that – and nevertheless, the majority supports the described policy of exclusion. Little is known about the consequences of such a contradiction between political practice and individual moral and ethical aspirations, often relating to the European Enlightenment. The belief-in-a-just-world theory (Lerner, 1980) as well as system justification theory (Jost, 2017) predict an attribution of responsibility to the people suffering, in this case refugees, if observers do not see opportunities to overcome the suffering. Consequently, this would mean that continents, nations and societies which constantly exclude others from participation and expose these others to intensive suffering will change their internal values and norms into a direction of hardness and relinquishment of empathy. We propose that the continuous violation of Human Rights and central Western values will contribute to a societal and political development in Europe (and other regions confronted with the same problem) that moves us into a direction of rejection which justifies a differentiation between those who belong to the ingroup and those who don't and who therefore cannot request Human Rights, justice and equal opportunities. In other

words: The societal and political handling of immigration will not only affect immigrants, but also immigrant receiving societies (for a classical American view on this question, compare Myrdal, 1944) via individual justifications – an example of a micro-macro influence process (see lines 6 and 7 in Figure 1).

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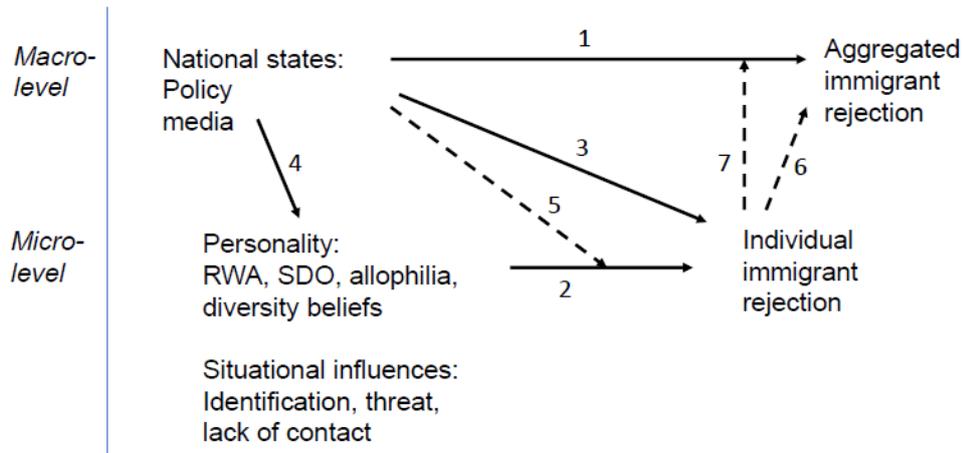
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Figure 1: Multilevel influences on immigrant rejection – a Coleman bath tube perspective



Cf. also Coleman, J.S. (1986). Social theory, social research, and a theory of action. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 1309-1335

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