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Explaining Attitudes towards Immigration: New Pieces to the Puzzle

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Discussion Papers

484

Ingrid Tucci*

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New Pieces to the Puzzle

Berlin, April 2005

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Abstract

This paper deals with two hypotheses about factors influencing attitudes toward immigration in Germany. The first looks at how individuals' perceptions of their financial and job situation affect public opinion on immigration. The second hypothesis tests how these attitudes are affected by the beneficial/detrimental effect of immigration on the individual and constitutes the paper's central contribution to the literature. The findings presented here offer *direct* evidence through the use of data from the German Socio-Economic-Panel (SOEP), in contrast to the *indirect* measures such as education and income employed in most empirical tests to date.

Keywords : SOEP, immigration, opinion formation, self-interest

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1 Introduction

Research on immigration and especially on the integration of immigrants deals with numerous issues surrounding the ability of immigrants to adapt culturally and socially to the “receiving” society. However, integration does not necessarily mean that the effort should come solely from the immigrants. Rather, it should be seen as a sort of business undertaking, which is governed by the principle of reciprocity and in which both groups (immigrants and native population) adapt and change. This point of view has been developed in concrete terms at the institutional level in the conclusions of the European Council of November 2004. The ministers of Justice and Home Affairs formulated eleven basic principles for the integration of immigrants. One of these focuses on the idea that both agents in this process – natives and immigrants – have to contribute to integration (Council of the European Union 2004). Country-specific attitudes toward immigration in general, and towards specific immigrant groups in particular, may even influence the process itself or the willingness of some immigrants to integrate. According to Swiss sociologist Hoffmann-Nowotny, the willingness of guest workers to assimilate and the assimilation process itself are primarily a function of the willingness of the receiving country to foster their integration (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1987).

The integration willingness of a society can be measured using different indicators, for example, how open or closed the social classes of the host society are, in order to determine whether and to what extent immigrants and their children are able to improve their social situation in the receiving country. The degree of acceptance among natives toward immigration and immigrants also provides information about the willingness of the receiving society to incorporate them. The way immigrants and their families are viewed by the majority group may play a determining role in integration, affecting the aspect of identification in particular. The native population’s acceptance/rejection of immigration and their opinions on issues related to immigrants are hence important aspects of the integration debate. This paper offers new pieces of the “successful integration puzzle” that can help us to analyze and interpret factors that promote the acceptance of immigration by the native population.

Extensive research on opinion formation has been conducted in a variety of countries, mostly by sociologists and political scientists. In this tradition, the present study deals with two aspects that may play a determining role in immigration opinions. The *first* is based on the so-

called “modernization losers hypothesis”, which states that population groups with a low social status tend to be more right-wing politically and, as a result, more reluctant to accept immigrants and immigration. For them, immigrants may be direct competitors, for example on the labour or housing market. In this paper, we extend the hypothesis to include the aspect of subjective perception, assuming that the way people perceive their own lives is important in explaining their negative or positive attitudes toward immigration.

The *second* aspect is whether people perceive immigration as producing advantages or disadvantages for them personally. The assumption is that direct profiting from immigration by benefiting from cheap immigrant labour – in particular services – has a positive impact on opinion formation and attitudes toward immigration. Furthermore, people who think they are disadvantaged personally by immigration will tend to harbour reservations about it. The central issue in this hypothesis is whether or not self-interest interacts with opinion formation on immigration.

This paper contributes to the existing literature with a more *direct* test of the hypothesis on how benefits/detriments resulting from immigration affect acceptance/rejection of immigration than is known in the current literature. Whereas most empirical tests can use only indirect measures for benefits such as education and income¹, the data used in this paper from the German Socio-Economic-Panel (SOEP) allow us to use more direct indicators. Although even these indicators are not ideal, they provide meaningful results for future in-depth research.

The paper starts with a short description of immigration in Germany, followed by a discussion of some related empirical findings from the research on opinion formation. The theoretical framework and the hypotheses on determinants of immigration acceptance are then described. The last sections of the paper present and discuss the research results.

¹ Foreign immigrants are on average less qualified, and those who are highly qualified often face the problem of the non-transferability of their human capital on the labour market of the receiving country. In this sense, natives have an advantage as far as their human capital is concerned. As to the effects on income, immigration leads to the reassignment of the nationals to more attractive sectors, which results in better-paid employment (OECD 2001).

2 Immigration to Germany and attitudes towards immigration

Germany has always relied on immigration, and its importance increased in the late 1950s and 60s. Given the country's demographic deficit but high potential for economic growth, labour shortages in the industrial sector necessitated the recruitment of foreign workers to Germany, leading to bilateral agreements with a number of Mediterranean countries such as Italy in 1955 and Turkey in 1961. About 740,000 labour migrants from Turkey were recruited by German firms between 1961 and 1963 (Worbs 2003). Economic recession in the 1970s led to a halt on immigration in 1973. Since then, only immigration to achieve "family reunification" has been allowed, and many of the so-called "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) have settled permanently in Germany with their families. Refugees also have made up a large part of the immigrant inflow to date. During the war in the former Yugoslavia, more refugees came to Germany than to any other European country. In 1992, more than 400,000 refugees immigrated to Germany, while in 2003, there were only 50,000 (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2004; Tranoes and Zimmermann 2004).

Furthermore, Germany is a special case in the sense that not all immigrants hold foreign citizenship. In fact, during the second half of the 20th century, about 20 percent of immigrants were of German origin (Maschke 2003). The so-called "ethnic Germans" (*Aussiedler/Spätaussiedler*) who came from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union automatically received German citizenship if they could prove German descent. The inflow of ethnic Germans of course increased dramatically after the fall of the Iron Curtain. At present, more than 4.3 million ethnic Germans have returned to settle permanently in Germany, the largest group from the former Soviet Union (BVA 2003).

A total of 7.3 million foreigners live in Germany, with people of Turkish and Yugoslavian origin comprising the largest groups (BAMF 2004).² Due both to its current lack of qualified workers in technical fields and to the harmonization of immigration policies within the EU, Germany has been forced to make difficult decisions on its future immigration policy. In 2004, the different political parties were finally able to agree upon and to vote in the new immigration law, which includes both new regulations on immigration and the recruitment of highly qualified workers, and also integration measures for immigrants. At the end of the

² About 26 % of the foreign citizens are of Turkish origin.

1980s, there was a high demand for specialists in the IT sector, and the so-called “Green Card” program opened the way for about 20,000 of these specialists to move to Germany between 2000 and 2003. Only 14,144 temporary work permits were granted, however (Tranoes and Zimmermann 2004). Recent developments in German immigration policy show that despite measures designed to attract highly skilled immigrants, in 2003, low-qualified seasonal workers made up the largest immigrant group, with about 90% of them working in the agricultural sector (Migrationsbericht 2004). At the European level, the member states are moving towards limiting the immigration of people who are not immediately “advantageous” to the society, letting only people in who can contribute directly to economic growth. The idea of installing checkpoints in the North African countries for individuals seeking asylum in one of the EU member states highlights the fact that Europe is becoming more and more a fortress.

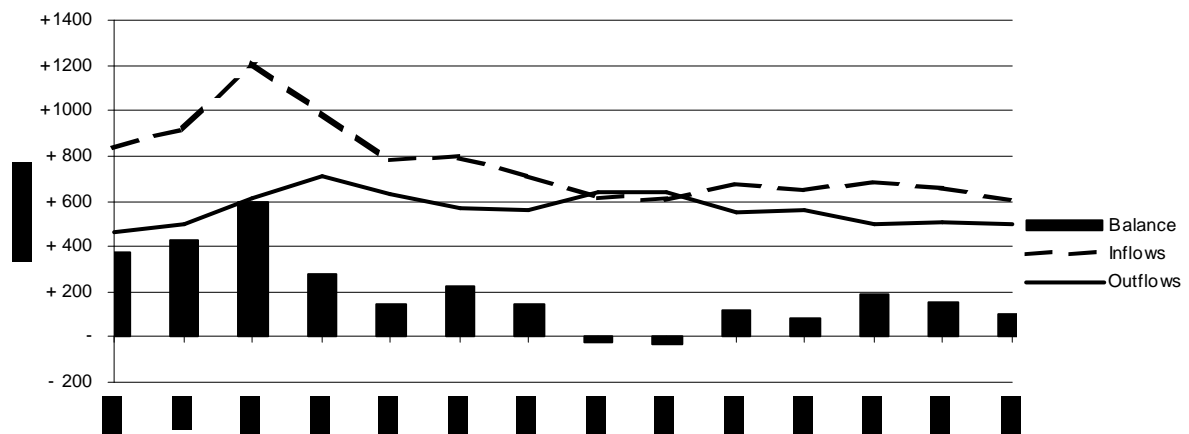


Figure 1: Inflows and outflows of foreigners to / from Germany between 1990 and 2003

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2004

As the figure above demonstrates, the number of immigrants of foreign origin decreased continuously between 1992 and 2003. Given the sharp restrictions on immigration, the inflow of foreign immigrants will never reach post-WWII levels despite the opening of borders to the East. The will of the German government to attract high skilled immigrants depends largely on the public opinion on immigration. According to results from the Flash Eurobarometer 155 “Justice and Home Affairs”, less than one in two persons in Germany agree that the economy

needs immigrants to work in some sectors (European Commission 2004). Furthermore, one in two persons in Germany agree that legal immigrants should have exactly the same rights as native Germans, against two in three persons on average in the EU15.

Finally, not only are immigrants in Germany currently being subjected to negative stereotyping due to the ongoing political debate on how much immigration Germany can tolerate, they have also suffered outright racist attacks on repeated occasions over the last 15 years. In the 1990s, hundreds of Turkish immigrants and asylum seekers were victims of severe hate crimes by right-wing extremist groups (Bade 1994).

3 Explaining attitudes towards immigration

Research on attitudes towards immigration in general and toward certain immigrant groups in particular is a vast field of sociological and political study, and some of the most important hypotheses formulated and empirically tested to date are briefly discussed in the following.

The contact hypothesis, which is the most controversial, assumes that social contact between majority and minority groups reduces prejudice. However, this occurs only when contact is made under specific circumstances such as equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation and support from authorities (Allport 1954). More recently, Amir (1998) found in his study on intergroup relations that contact conditions are particularly important. Contact may, for example, lessen the stress between ethnic groups when based on cooperative activities and when occurring with higher-status people, and may thus lead to an improvement of one's view of the other group. Inversely, contact based on competitive activities may have a negative effect on intergroup relations. Nevertheless, according to Amir, contact *per se* cannot always lessen conflicts. In fact, opponents to the contact hypothesis such as Studlar (1977) found that contact has no influence at all on racist attitudes in Britain.

Hypotheses from the sociotropic literature deal with macro-level factors. These hypotheses assume that the perception that one's country is experiencing economic recession and increasing unemployment can make natives reluctant to accept immigration. In fact, there is no reason why the overall effect of immigration on native employment is necessarily negative, but many people believe that this is automatically the case. In a cross-national analysis of 12 OECD countries, Bauer et al. (2000) found for example that about 45% of German natives think that immigrants take their jobs. In the United States Espenshade and Hempstead (1996)

studied the relationship between unemployment and attitudes of Americans toward immigration. Their study shows that higher annual unemployment rates lead to greater opposition to immigration. In contrast, those who believe in the power of the U.S. economy are especially likely to support higher levels of immigration. Citrin et al. (1997) also found a positive relationship between pessimism about the national economy and anti-immigration opinion. They argue, however, that these judgments on the state of the national economy and their effect on opinion formation may in fact be indirect expressions of personal concerns. Comparing nativism in France, the US and Germany, Fetzer (2000) found that in contrast to France, perceptions of the national economy have no influence on attitudes towards immigration in Germany and the US.

Some other researchers have highlighted the role of cultural motivations and concerns about the state of the nation in explaining opinions on immigration. Cultural threats may thus explain negative views towards immigration (see Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004 for the Dutch case). Furthermore Citrin and Sides (2004) found that Europeans who are attached to their nation are more reluctant to allow immigrants and refugees to enter their country.

The present paper does not offer a revision of the contact hypothesis nor does it test the sociotropic hypothesis in the German context. The influencing factors studied here are related to the impact of 1) individual dissatisfaction and social situation (*deprivation / dissatisfaction hypothesis*) and 2) self-interest (*benefit / disutility hypothesis*) on opinion formation.

In Germany, research on pocketbook issues attempts to explain the voting behaviour of Germans, in particular voters for right-wing parties, through the influence of their social situation. In the literature on racism and xenophobia in Germany, it is argued that the conservative attitudes of individuals are linked to their social situation: working poor and unemployed people and those belonging to lower social classes will thus tend to hold right-wing extremist attitudes because they cannot adapt themselves to the social, cultural and economic change confronting modern societies (Klein and Falter 1996). The assumption here is that the so-called losers of modernization tend to be more negative toward immigration. Furthermore opinion formation may also depend on people's perception of their own everyday lives. This paper shares the assumption that people experiencing financial and job worries will tend to be more hostile toward immigration than those who feel financially secure and do not fear job loss.

The benefit hypothesis underlines the effects of personal profit from immigrant labor – in particular services – on opinion formation. In Germany, many immigrants work in sectors like agriculture, construction, and gastronomy, and a large number of women with a migration

background are hired to care for children or to clean houses. As noted by Smith and Edmonston (1997) with regard to the U.S. economy, the presence of immigrants in a country results in a reallocation of labor across different sectors, producing a fall of the price of the goods and services because of the lower overall price of immigrant labor. Their conclusion is that households benefit quite uniformly from lower prices due to immigrant labor, but that rich households with highly educated members benefit most. Household services and food are two of the commodities on the basis of which Smith and Edmonston analyse the share of consumption expenditures attributable to immigrant labour. This paper also assumes that the profit individuals derive from immigrant labour is translated into attitude patterns characterised by a higher acceptance of immigration. In addition, we will test the effect of disutility on opinion formation.

4 Research method and data

German natives' acceptance of immigration is analysed here using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel SOEP (Wagner et al. 1993). The SOEP is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households. It provides information on all household members, who may be Germans living in the old and new German federal states, foreigners and recent immigrants to Germany. The collection of panel data started in 1984 and in certain years, the questionnaire has focused on specific additional issues (Burkhauser et al. 1997; Schupp and Wagner 2002). In 2000, the survey was given to more than 12,000 households, with a total of more than 24,000 individuals.³ The dependent variable is derived from the question "What is your attitude towards the following areas - are you concerned about them? Immigration to Germany".⁴ Possible responses are: very concerned / somewhat concerned / not concerned at all. As the dependent variable is an ordinal scale, ordered probit models are used. For the dependent variable, attitudes unfavourable to immigration are coded with higher values so that positive coefficients of the independent variable indicate a tendency to hold negative attitudes toward immigration.

³ The Socio Economic Panel is becoming more and more analyzed by political scientists (e.g., Kroh and Zuckerman 2004; Zuckerman 2005)

⁴ The respondents are asked about their concerns in different fields such as criminality, environmental protection, job security, personal economic situation and general economic development.

To test the *dissatisfaction hypothesis*, indicators on worries about one's own financial situation and job security⁵ are used. The *benefit hypothesis* is tested first using two direct indicators available in the SOEP data on 1) the frequency of dining out and 2) the regular employment of a maid in the household. Since many of the cheap restaurants in Germany are run by immigrants⁶, those who dine out frequently show average gains from immigration. Households hiring a maid in Germany may also benefit from these price effects because many maids are of foreign origin.⁷ Because we do not observe whether respondents like to eat in restaurants owned by foreigners or whether the maid they employ is of foreign origin, our indicators are not totally perfect. But they are direct measures in the sense that they allow us to distinguish the well-educated respondents and those with high income and to see the effect of profiting from immigrant labor. The counterpart of the benefit hypothesis – the *disutility hypothesis* – is tested by using an indicator of possible disadvantage related to the high concentration of people of foreign origin in an area. It is assumed that parents whose children go to school with a large number of children of foreign immigrants will tend to be more negative toward immigration. Many German natives believe that a high share of students of foreign origin in their children's schools affects the learning performance of native children negatively.⁸

Because the level of education can be assumed to affect employment status, occupational status, and the financial situation, it is controlled for in all statistical models. Demographic variables such as age, gender are also tested as predictors. In the model testing the profit from immigration, marital status is controlled for as the frequency of dining out, for example, is expected to be greater for those who are single and live alone. In order to account for the

⁵ For employed respondents only.

⁶ Mostly immigrants from the recruitment countries such as those of Italian, Turkish and Greek origin.

⁷ An analysis with the SOEP-data indicates that about 4 Mio. households in Germany "employed" regularly or occasionally maid in the year 2000 (Schupp 2002). Furthermore, according to a razzia that was initiated in Frankfurt among a total of 350 private households and apartments, about 60 % of them illegally employed maids of foreign origin (Alt 2004).

⁸ What is in fact more problematic is the process of gentrification of some urban areas of Germany. The high concentration of students of foreign origin in some schools results partly from the fact that many middle-class families have moved away to areas that are not socially and economically disadvantaged.

regional differences in Germany that might affect opinions and competition on the labour market, dummy variables are created for each federal state and for the type of municipality, i.e. rural or urban, and introduced in all models.

The results are based on the years 1998 and 2000 of the SOEP data. It was necessary in some cases to link the 2000 with the 1998 wave because information on the “dining out” indicator is only available for the year 1998. A total of 10,314 respondents holding German citizenship are available. German citizens born abroad are not included in the analysis because most are so-called ethnic Germans who are immigrants themselves. To test the effect of the concentration of foreign students on parents’ opinions toward immigration, only parents are included whose children responded the SOEP questionnaire at the age of 17.⁹

5 Descriptive results

Table 5.1 presents some descriptive statistics about opinions on immigration according to individual characteristics of the respondents. Negative attitudes toward immigration are less widespread among women, while immigration concerns are more widespread among German natives living in rural areas than among Germans living in larger cities.

There is a much higher share of untrained, trained, or skilled blue-collar workers who consider immigration to be a kind of threat than white-collar or self-employed workers or civil servants. About the half of the natives belonging to the category of the trained blue-collar workers are very concerned about immigration. This is approximately twice the level among the unemployed. People who do not worry about their economic condition or are not afraid of losing their job are less concerned with immigration issues than those who have no worries about these issues. Differences in the distribution of concerns about immigration can be seen between natives employing a maid in their household (23.5% are very concerned about immigration) and those who do not (32.5%). This may, however, be due to the fact that households employing a maid have higher incomes because they are better qualified and consequently have

⁹ More precisely, parents whose children answered the youth questionnaire between the years 2000 and 2003.

a better occupational status.¹⁰ Concerns about immigration are more prevalent among parents whose children go to a school with a large share of foreign students.

Table 5-1
Descriptive statistics on concerns about immigration - (in %)

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not concerned at all
Gender			
Men	34.5	42.3	23.2
Women	31.2	49.7	19.1
Marital Status			
Not single	33.6	46.7	19.7
Single	24.8	42.1	33.1
Community Size			
Rural	33.8	49.4	16.8
Middle	33.7	44.4	21.9
Urban	30.0	47.3	22.6
Occupational status			
Untrained worker	40.2	38.3	21.6
Trained worker	49.3	36.8	13.9
Skilled worker	43.9	42.1	14.0
Independent	28.9	43.4	27.7
Employee low level	30.2	49.6	20.2
Employee high level	17.8	39.8	42.4
Civil servant	30.6	41.1	28.4
Unemployed	25.4	46.3	28.3
Inactive	35.1	49.5	15.4
Maid in HH			
No	33.7	45.9	20.5
Yes	24.3	49.1	26.7
Dining Outs			
Seldom/Never	35.9	45.3	18.8
Frequently	29.9	47.2	22.9
Foreigners' concentration at school*			
Low	27.0	48.2	24.9
High	40.8	46.0	13.2
Insatisfaction			
Worried about financial situation	36.3	44.8	18.9
Not worried about financial situation	24.1	45.9	30.0
Work and worries about job security	38.1	43.2	18.7
and no worries about job security	25.5	43.4	31.1

Source: SOEP 1998 and 2000, only German natives respondents, weighted.

* Only parents according to the amount of foreigners in the schools of their children

¹⁰ However, it should be noted here that, especially as far as the correlation between high education and positive attitudes towards immigration and immigrants is concerned, a factor which is hard to extract from data is that of group norms. In the spheres of the highly educated, for example within the university, people may think that immigration is a threat but they would not dare proclaiming it.

Even if descriptive statistics reveal the outlines of possible causal effects between two variables, they are not sufficient to test hypotheses because higher education in particular affects the objective status as well as the opinions of individuals. Therefore we need a multivariate analysis in order to identify the impact of benefits and dissatisfaction on acceptance of immigration. For this purpose, ordered probit models were estimated here. They are presented in the following sections.

6 Dissatisfaction and acceptance towards immigration

According to the “modernization loser hypothesis”, respondents with a low status may hold more conservative views than higher-status respondents. The results presented in Table 6-1, Model I, indicate that unemployed people do not necessarily perceive immigration as a threat to the country or themselves. Rather, natives who experience unemployment tend to hold a positive view of immigration, as the coefficient is negative and significant.

Working respondents with lower status such as blue-collar workers tend to be more worried about immigration than respondents who are outside the workforce. Only the coefficient for employees holding a managerial function is negative (-0.163), which means that they have more positive opinions about immigration. Respondents with a high educational level tend to have positive attitudes toward immigration. However it should be noted that highly educated people answer the question on concerns about immigration as might be expected. Thus, positive attitudes toward immigration among the highly educated may be the result of group norms and social control inside groups. Unfortunately, this could not be captured in the data.

As mentioned above, subjective elements of individuals’ perceptions of their economic and social situation are added. The results in the second model (Model II) confirm this assumption. Respondents with financial worries are also more likely to worry about potential immigration flows. The fear of immigration is then partly related to the fears directly concerning individuals’ everyday lives. Respondents who work and fear job loss are significantly more likely to be reluctant toward immigration than respondents who work and do not fear job loss. The coefficient for civil servants, which was not significant in the first model, is significant and positive in the second model when we control for subjective indicators. Civil servants who are not confronted with unemployment risks because of strong job protection laws for the German civil service still tend to worry more about immigration when we control for financial

and job security worries. Contrary to the findings of Fetzer (2000), who found that persons living in poverty in Germany tend to hold pro-immigrant attitudes, we find here that living in poverty has no impact on attitudes toward immigration. It can be concluded that deprivation, seen as a negative perception of one's financial and job situation, has a negative impact on opinion formation about immigration, whereas living in poverty lacks statistical significance.

Table 6-1

Ordered-probit analysis of concerns about immigration Subjective and objective indicators of living conditions

	Modell I		Modell II	
	Coefficients	t-Value	Coefficients	t-Value
Subjective indicators	<i>(Ref.: Not worried about financial situation)</i>			
Worried about financial situation			0,357	(19,60)**
	<i>(Ref.: employed and not worried about job security)</i>			
Employed and worried about job security			0,176	(7,79)**
Missing			0,126	(1,84)+
Age	0,005	(8,07)**	0,007	(9,90)**
Sex <i>(Ref.: Men)</i>	-0,051	(2,99)**	-0,054	(3,19)**
Type of municipality	<i>(Ref.: high density)</i>			
Medium density	0,109	(5,50)**	0,108	(5,43)**
Rural area	0,215	(7,42)**	0,207	(7,10)**
Status Variables	<i>(Ref.: Not in the workforce)</i>			
Unemployed	-0,066	(1,92)+	-0,118	(3,30)**
Unskilled blue-collar worker	0,210	(4,31)**	0,210	(2,72)**
Skilled blue-collar worker	0,405	(9,70)**	0,353	(4,72)**
Qualified blue-collar worker	0,320	(9,13)**	0,289	(4,07)**
Independent worker	-0,062	(1,61)	-0,067	(0,92)
Low Employee	0,080	(2,92)**	0,078	(1,17)
High Employee	-0,163	(4,38)**	-0,136	(1,89)+
Civil servant	0,067	(1,44)	0,196	(2,53)*
Education level	<i>(Ref.: low education level)</i>			
High education level	-0,328	(11,52)**	-0,313	(10,96)**
Middle education level	0,002	(0,08)	0,009	(0,40)
Live in poor household <i>(Ref.: No)</i>	0,047	(1,51)	-0,006	(0,19)
Observations	20352		20352	
Pseudo R ²	0,02		0,04	

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

+ significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Source: SOEP 2000, only German natives respondents, 15 countries dummies as control variables

7 The impact of self-interest on opinion formation

First, the impact of the benefit indicators is tested without controlling for social status or living conditions, and only regional and demographic predictors are used. We control also for the household context, this means if the respondents is single and lives alone in the household

because it is expected that this may influence the activity of dining out whereas, families with children may not dine out so frequently.

Table 7-1
Ordered-probit analysis of concerns about immigration - Benefit from immigrant labour

	Model I		Model II	
	Coefficients	t-Value	Coefficients	t-Value
Benefit indicators				
Maid in the household (<i>Ref.: No</i>)	-0,259	(5,44)**	-0,160	(3,27)*
Sometimes dining out (<i>Ref.: Never</i>)	-0,082	(2,98)*	-0,041	(1,46)
Frequently dining out	-0,128	(4,05)**	-0,061	(1,88)+
Age	0,002	(3,45)**	0,004	(4,07)**
Sex (<i>Ref.: Men</i>)	-0,035	(1,54)	-0,025	(1,03)
Single			-0,244	(4,96)**
Type of municipality (<i>Ref.: high density</i>)				
Medium density	0,151	(5,14)**	0,124	(4,21)**
Rural area	0,240	(5,66)**	0,209	(4,88)**
Status Variables (<i>Ref.: Not in the workforce</i>)				
Unemployed			-0,110	(2,18)*
Blue-collar worker			0,266	(6,24)**
Self employed			-0,028	(0,49)
White-collar worker			-0,006	(0,15)
Civil servant			0,147	(2,13)**
Education level (<i>Ref.: low education level</i>)				
High education level			-0,296	(7,21)**
Middle education level			0,030	(0,94)
Household Equivalent income			-0,00007	(3,57)**
Observations		9667		9667
Pseudo R ²		0,01		0,03

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

+ significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Source: SOEP 1998 and 2000, only German natives respondents, 15 countries dummies as control variables

Persons living in rural areas and in areas of medium population density are more likely to be worried about immigration than persons living in big cities, whereas immigrants usually settle in urban areas, and inhabitants of rural areas have less *de facto* contact with immigrants. In this context, the impact of the political debate on integration and immigration and the way the different parties frame the issue in the media should not be underestimated. The widely held image of immigrants as “aliens” is largely a product of the political and social discourse.¹¹

¹¹ In this field, the framing theory can help explaining the influence of the media on opinion formation by looking at the issues which are put on the agenda, how this is done and, much more important, what the impact of issue framing may be (Snow/Benford 1988).

By controlling for federal states and types of area, the coefficient for persons in households regularly employing a maid is negative (-.259) and statistically significant, which means that having a maid in the household tends to have a positive impact on attitudes toward immigration (Table 7-1). Activities like going out and dining outside the home also significantly increase the probability of having positive views about immigration.

In the second model (Model II), economic factors are introduced as predictors in order to test the robustness of the benefit indicators by controlling for variables of social status that may influence attitudes as well as the frequency of dining out or the hiring of a maid in the household. The results indicate that aside from economic factors such as education, household income, and occupational status, the benefit indicators still contribute to explaining positive attitudes toward immigration. The effect for respondents who only sometimes dine out disappears when controlling for occupational status and education level, but employing a maid and dining out frequently remain significant and increase the probability of having a positive attitude toward immigration. Being unemployed has no significant effect on opinion formation, and only blue-collar workers and civil servants tend to have less accepting attitudes toward immigration.

Table 7-2 presents tests of how the concentration of students of foreign origin at school affects parents' opinions on immigration. In the first model (Model I), the disutility coefficient is highly significant and positive (0.306), which means that native parents whose children go to schools with many children of foreign origin tend to have a negative view of immigration. When we control for social status, educational level, and the household financial situation (Model II), the significance of the disutility indicator decreases. But the share of foreign students at school still has an impact on parents' opinion formation.¹²

¹² On the contrary, Fertig and Schmidt (2002) found that a low share of foreigners in the area tends to result in more negative attitudes towards foreigners. But the indicator we use here on the concentration of migrants at school is a more direct one and thus more appropriate than the approximate indicator on the percentage of foreigners in the area.

Table 7-2
Ordered-probit analysis of concerns about immigration - Effect of the concentration of students of foreign origin in schools on the opinion of parents on immigration

	Model I		Model II	
	Coefficients	t-Value	Coefficients	t-Value
Disutility indicators				
High concentration of foreign students	0.306	(3.26)**	0.201	(2.08)*
Age	-0.010	(1.54)	-0.002	(0.37)
Sex (Ref.: Men)	-0.076	(1.12)	-0.172	(2.30)*
Type of municipality				
Medium density	0.081	(1.01)	0.043	(0.52)
Rural area	0.222	(1.77)+	0.162	(1.27)
Status Variables				
Inactive			0.061	(0.51)
Unemployed			0.016	(0.12)
Blue-collar worker			0.162	(1.65)+
Self employed			-0.289	(2.34)*
Education level				
High education level			-0.593	(4.48)**
Middle Education level			-0.124	(1.11)
Live in poor household			0.075	(0.46)
Observations		1167		1167
Pseudo R ²		0.02		0.04

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

+ significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Source: SOEP 2000, only German natives respondents (parents), 15 countries dummies as control variables

8 Discussion

In this paper, two lines of argumentation were followed to explain attitudes toward immigration: the role of subjective deprivation on the one hand, and the role of benefits/disutility from immigration on the other. The important empirical findings relate mainly to the second argument.

The results presented here indicate that worries about one's own financial situation have an impact on concerns about immigration. This could mean that in a country where poverty is persisting and becoming more acute, an increasing number of people may feel dissatisfied. In such a situation, a typical reaction for natives may be to seek a scapegoat, in this case the immigrant population, which they make responsible for their own discomfort. As the results of Bauer et al. (2000) indicate, many natives think that immigrants affect the national economic and employment situation, although this is not factually true. The results concerning the opinion of parents toward immigration indicate that the high concentration of foreign

pupils has an impact on opinion formation on immigration when we control for occupational status, education level, and income level. The disadvantage in this case is that areas with a high concentration of immigrant families are mostly characterised by poverty and low income. The middle-class families move away and the state institutions retire from those inner-city neighbourhoods (Wilson 1987). So this situation is interpreted by many inhabitants as a disadvantage from immigration even if it is rather the result of class transformation of the inner-city.

Benefits of immigration resulting from lower prices for goods and services can help explain the formation of opinions on immigration. According to the multivariate findings, respondents who derive economic benefits from immigration by using cheap household services and consuming cheap food outside the home are less worried about immigration flows even when social status variables are controlled for. Interesting is that the benefits derived from immigration influence the perceptions of the beneficiaries, creating patterns of action and belief characterized by positive views toward immigration. People who profit from cheap immigrant labor by employing a maid or by dining out probably do not see immigrants as a direct threat to their own wellbeing. In this sense, the social status of those who benefit from the services immigrants offer is not at stake. However, one cannot argue that immigrants are more accepted by the native population when they sell their labor cheaper than natives and when they stay in low-status employment. In fact, one of the main objectives of any integration policy is equal treatment, enabling immigrants to enjoy the same chances to achieve high status and high income. This means that the factors contributing to the increase in social acceptance of immigration and immigrants lie in the receiving society itself and are not necessarily a function of the particular social status of immigrants and their families.

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