RESEARCH ARTICLES

A Multilevel Analysis of Anti-Immigrant Sentiments in France

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Abstract. Using the most recent European Social Survey (ESS7) data collected in France in 2014 from a representative sample of the population age 15 and over, the present study examines the French residents' sentiments toward immigrants when individual and contextual factors at the region level are considered. Results show that immigrants are more likely to be perceived as socioeconomic, cultural, and safety threats by persons who experience economic hardship, show low levels of social attachment, are not concerned with the welfare and interests of others, live in ethnically homogenous communities, tend to distance themselves at work and in the family from immigrants belonging to ethnic minority groups, overestimate the size of the immigrant population in the country, are politically conservative, are females, and belong to younger or older cohorts. At the region level, while employment effects on public attitudes are negligible, the natives' aggregated personal economic circumstances appear to affect the residents' sentiments toward immigrants, as economic theories of attitude formation would predict. In support of one of the contact theory's versions, larger the proportion of foreign-born residents in a region, less intense anti-immigrant sentiments are.

Keywords: *anti-immigrant attitudes, France, immigration, regional variations*

Introduction

More than two decades ago, Paul Kennedy contended that "the reaction of the industrialized world to the overwhelming demographic pressures from developing nations may well be one of the most vexing problems of the next hundred years" (Kennedy 1993:44 in Fetzer 2000: 2). Undeniably, in the twenty-first century, countries on both sides of the Atlantic had and have to cope with large transnational population movements. In addition to population ageing, a rise in human mobility has become a reality of the contemporary globalized world that countries of the old continent are confronted with more than ever. The current migration crisis faced by European Union nations demonstrated, as Clark (2007: 79)

argued, that the traditional paradigms used to anticipate and explain variations in immigration flows (e.g. economic opportunities, structural imbalances, and state economic and geopolitical policies) should be supplemented with new paradigms focusing on inter-country socioeconomic inequalities and changes in the world order, as the number of undocumented immigrants and refugees keeps increasing in western societies.

Since 2013, Europe has been experiencing one of the most significant influxes of immigrants and refugees in its history. Poverty, political instability, human rights abuses and ongoing violent conflicts in the Middle East have been the main drivers of recent migratory flows. In 2015, it is estimated that about 1,800,000 migrants crossed the border and attempted to reach Europe. Over eighty per cent of those who arrived in Europe by boat during the past three years are from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2015, there were filed in Europe 1,321,560 asylum claims, representing on average 260 asylum applications per 100,000 local population. The number of asylum applications was almost twice higher than the record number of asylum applications received in the European Union (EU-15) in 1992, when most of the applicants were from former Yugoslavia. In 2015, in EU-28 about 229 thousand persons were granted refugee status, 56 thousand applicants received subsidiary protection status, and 22 thousand persons were granted authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons. Germany granted almost half of the asylum claims, followed by Sweden, Italy, France, Netherlands, and United Kingdom (BBC 2016; Eurostat 2016). Although only one in four asylum applications has been approved, it is anticipated that a high proportion of the international migrants who did not obtain legal status in the country of destination will not return to their countries of origin. Even if these asylum seekers represent only a small fraction of the foreign-born population now residing in Europe, the recent unprecedented influx of refugees presents a serious challenge not only to European security agencies, but also to local communities all over Europe.

Although the debate regarding the costs and benefits of international migration is less likely to end soon and a discussion of this contentious matter is beyond the scope of this paper, the need for a successful integration in local communities of the new comers and of many natives of immigrant origin has been recognized for many years by European governments (Collett and Petrovic 2014). In order to establish social cohesion at local levels and formulate effective immigrant integration policies, it is important, however, not

only to identify the target population needs, but also to understand the natives' concerns and sentiments toward immigrants and their descendants.

The present analysis will focus on France, a country that has experienced steady immigration inflows since the 19th century. Historically, France resorted to immigration for military, demographic, and economic reasons and adopted since 1889 an assimilationist model of immigration that required newcomers to adhere to the French cultural norms and republican values in order to ensure the homogeneity of the nation state and the preservation of the country's national identity (Lacroix 2002). Despite France's long and ideologically elaborated tradition of immigrant assimilation (Brubaker 2001: 535), a relatively large segment of the population considers immigration and immigrants important sources of concern. For instance, a public opinion poll conducted in France on a representative sample of the adult population before and after the 13 November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that left 130 persons dead and almost 400 injured indicated that, after terrorism and job scarcity, immigration is the third most important problem the country is currently facing. About 68 per cent of the residents felt that the tensions inside the French society recently escalated, 75 per cent acknowledged an increase in social inequalities, and about two thirds of the respondents said they feel the French identity and laicism are threatened by immigration (Institut d'Etudes et de Conseil /CSA 2015). Although the results of the Global Attitudes Survey conducted prior to the 2014 European Parliament elections in seven European Union countries by the Pew Research Center (PRC), showed that negative views about immigration were less pronounced in France than in Greece or Italy, the majority of French residents declared they would support restrictive immigration policies. Additionally, more than half of the respondents in France (52 per cent) were more likely to consider immigrants as being an economic burden. Less than half (46 per cent) of the respondents in Spain, 37 per cent of the public in United Kingdom, and only 29 per cent of residents from Germany shared this opinion (Pew Research Center 2014; Wike 2014).

Taking into account the fact that attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies vary not only among social groups, but also among regions (Crawley 2005; Crawley, Drinkwater and Krauser 2013) and considering the system of multi-level governance that is emerging in Europe, allowing sub-national levels, such as regions, to design and implement place-specific immigrant integration policies (Schmidke and Zaslove 2014) it is important to know what regional characteristics

appear to influence public attitudes toward immigrants. Because individuals interact with the social contexts to which they belong, being affected by these contexts and in turn, influencing the environments they live in (Hox 2002), the present study will consider a hierarchical system of individuals and groups, defined at two separate levels of analysis, the individual level and the region level. Several researchers (Jolly and DiGiusto 2014; Markaki and Longhi 2013; Sobczak 2007) recently noted that most of the literature examining factors influencing public attitudes toward immigration and immigrants tends to focus on individual and household characteristics, while only a limited number of studies examined the role played by a country's regions in shaping attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. By considering the impact of structural characteristics at the region level in addition to the effect of individual-level factors and by focusing on a country that currently faces increasing immigration-related issues, the present study intends to reduce this gap in the literature and to advance existing international migration research.

Although in addition to cross-national studies focusing on determinants of public attitudes toward immigrants that included aggregated data from France (e.g. Malchow-Møller, Munch, Schroll and Skaksen 2009; Markaki and Longhi 2013; Mayda 2006) several previous studies examined in more detail attitudes toward immigration policies and/or immigrants in France in comparison with a limited number of countries of immigration (e.g. Fetzer 2000; Freeman 1979; Simon and Sikich 2007), to the author's knowledge, only one other study (i.e. Jolly and DiGiusto 2014) focused exclusively on France and considered the impact of regional factors on variations in public attitudes toward immigrants. However, the aforementioned research is based on survey data collected in France in 2002 and uses regional-level census data from the late 1990s. In addition to using updated information, the current study uses a composite measure of anti-immigrant sentiments that also includes the public perceptions of immigrants as a safety threat, takes into account the residents' experience with victimization, and examines the effect of regional crime levels on public attitudes toward migrants, factors not considered in prior research. The present study also controls for the respondent's immigration background and makes a distinction between natives and residents born in France to immigrant parents.

Another methodological contribution to the existing research is the use of a computed indicator that measures at the region level the size of economically disadvantaged natives, who do not have immediate immigrant ancestry (i.e. are born

in France to native parents). While prior studies generally use aggregate economic indicators that pertain to the entire population in a geographic area, this study will be able to measure the perceived relative deprivation of groups differentiated by their immigration background.[1]

To summarize, the present study intends to determine if the region in which one lives has an effect on attitudes toward immigrants and if it does, what regional characteristics appear to impact the most public sentiments toward immigrants. Several individual level factors that may influence the French residents' view of immigrants will be included in the analysis as well. The selection of the predictors, although restricted by limited available information, is guided by several theoretical perspectives that consider economic and non-economic determinants of attitude formation toward outgroup members, such as immigrants.

Explaining the formation of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy

For more than sixty years, scholars tried to explain why there are individual variations in attitudes toward those perceived as being part of the outgroup, immigrants included. While Fetzer (2000) considered that there are three main theoretical explanations of public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration in general (i.e. cultural marginality, economic self-interest, and the contact theory), other scholars (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Markaki and Longhi 2013) classify theories on immigrant attitude formation into two more inclusive categories. On one side there are social-psychological or ideological explanations and on the other side there are rationality-based explanations of attitude formation, such as labor market competition theory. In short, economic and non-economic factors are generally considered when attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy are examined (Mayda 2006).

Economic determinants of public attitudes

From a theoretical perspective that considers economic determinants of attitudes toward immigrants, it is anticipated that individuals' opinions about

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[1] Economic indicators provided by census data do not make a distinction between various population groups and it cannot be determined how natives differ in their socioeconomic status when compared to 1st and 2nd generation immigrants.

immigration policy and immigrants are influenced by the perceived effect of immigration on the labor market and on one's personal economic situation. Accordingly, those who fear financial deprivation as a result of potential competition generated by immigrants, are more likely to express anti-immigrant attitudes (Crowley 2005; Dustmann and Preston 2007). It is also contended that lower-class individuals are more likely to express anti-immigrant sentiments because they are in a more vulnerable position and see themselves in a stronger competition with immigrants not only for low-skill jobs, but also for affordable housing, schools, and social services (Simon and Alexander 1993). As Dustmann and Preston (2007) noted, there is evidence that anti-immigrants sentiments are also higher among those who believe immigrants are creating an additional burden on the welfare system.

Yet, empirical tests of the economic theoretical perspective did not produce universal support for its assertions. Based on the findings of a cross-national study that examined attitudes toward immigration policy in 23 nations, Mayda (2006: 527) contended that when controlling for a set of non-economic variables, economic factors "continue to play a key and robust role in preference formation over immigration policy." Specifically, the author found that individuals in occupations with a higher ratio of immigrants to natives (i.e. occupations in which access is more competitive due to a larger increase in labor supply) are more likely to oppose immigration and that skilled individuals are more likely to favor immigration in countries where the natives are more skilled relative to immigrants. However, when comparing the overall impact of a different set of factors on attitudes toward immigration policy, Mayda (2006) acknowledged that non-economic factors appear to have a higher explanatory power than economic factors. Using data from United Kingdom, Dustmann and Preston (2007) also found that labor market concerns are positively related to opposition toward further immigration and that welfare concerns (expressed especially by highly educated persons) regarding immigrants from certain regions of the world appeared to have an even higher impact on immigrant attitude formation. In support of economic theories' predictions, a multi-level analysis of data from United States found that compared to those in high-skill occupations, individuals in blue-collar occupations were more likely to support restrictive immigration policies and that a higher percentage of white residents below poverty at the community level was positively and significantly associated with support for immigration restrictions, as well.

However, one's occupational status and local economic disadvantage did not seem to influence attitudes toward immigrants (Sobczak 2007). Support for the economic self-interest theory was found in a study conducted on a representative sample of UK residents, where natives experiencing economic hardship were more likely to express anti-immigrant attitudes and support for restrictive immigration policies (Andreescu 2011). In their comparative analysis of attitudes toward immigrants in EU-15 countries, Malchow-Møller et al. (2009) also found that economic factors do play a role in structuring opposition to immigration, unemployed persons showing a significantly higher support for restrictive immigration policies if potential immigrants would be from poorer European and non-European countries. Similarly, even if at the region level unemployment rates did not seem to influence attitudes toward immigrants in Europe, Rustenbach (2010) found that unemployed persons expressed significantly stronger anti-immigrant attitudes, while pro-immigrant attitudes were significantly associated with an increase in one's socio-economic status. Another recent multi-level analysis (Markaki and Longhi 2013) that included respondents from 24 European countries also showed that immigrants are more likely to be perceived as an economic/overall threat by individuals who were unemployed, self-employed, employed in low-skill occupations, and by those who experienced financial difficulties. On the other hand, persons in managerial positions were significantly less likely to view immigrants as a threat. While an increase in immigrants' unemployment rate at the region level was associated with higher levels of concern regarding the immigrants' role in the host society, the regional percentage of natives unemployed and the percentage of natives in low-skill occupations were associated with a significant decrease in feelings of threat, suggesting that both, individual and regional economic circumstances influence immigrant attitude formation, even if not always in the direction anticipated by economic theories.

Nevertheless, based on a time-series analysis of 2000-2010 data from United States, Fetzer (2011) concluded that economic factors, such as income and unemployment are playing a non-significant role in structuring public support for decreased immigration. The author noted, however, that interpolation-caused measurement problems might have obscured the effect of economic factors on public attitudes. Yet a prior analysis conducted by Fetzer (2000) on attitudes toward immigrants in United States, France and Germany and Jolly and DiGiusto's (2014) study on data from France also revealed that being unemployed had no

significant effect on attitudes toward immigrants. Additionally, based on a sample of French nationals interviewed in the early 1990s, De Rudder, Taboada Leonetti and Vourc'h (1994) contended that one's occupational status is not related to attitudes toward immigrants and that a feeling of personal life degradation is not associated with hostility toward immigrants. Although a multi-level analysis of attitudes toward immigrants in 25 European societies that examined the effect of economic variables found that one's income and occupational prestige were not significant predictors of public attitudes, more positive views of the immigrants were found in countries that registered an increased GDP annual growth (Bello 2013).

While several studies found that egotropic economic concerns may influence one's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy, based on an extensive review of almost 100 quantitative studies conducted in North America and Europe on attitudes toward immigration, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) contended that in general, personal economic circumstances are less likely to be strongly related to immigration attitudes and that sociotropic concerns regarding the cultural and economic effects of immigration at the national level are more likely to influence public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. The present analysis will examine the impact of economic determinants on attitudes toward immigrants using as variables of interest a self-assessed measure of economic hardship, the regional youth unemployment rate, and the percentage of natives experiencing financial difficulties at the region level.

Non-economic determinants of public attitudes

A second approach to the study of immigrant attitude formation refers to non-economic factors, it is more heterogeneous, and its theoretical foundation is generally grounded in political psychology (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014) and social psychology. Initially formulated to explain racial and ethnic prejudice, Gordon Allport's (1954) *contact theory* has been frequently applied to explain biased perceptions of and attitudes toward various social minority groups, immigrants included. Allport (1954: 281) hypothesized that "prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between the majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals." Allport also noted that the positive effect of inter-group contact would be greatly enhanced

when there is institutional support, such as the law, custom or local atmosphere, indicating that interpersonal contact would be beneficial to all group members. Although based on Allport's hypothesis, persons in contact with immigrants would be less likely to express anti-immigrant sentiments only if certain conditions are satisfied, a meta-analytic review of over 500 empirical studies found that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice and that the positive effects of the interpersonal contact generalize to the entire outgroup, even when Allport's (1954) optimal contact conditions are not present (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006: 751).

When the contact theory was applied to explain the impact of intergroup contact on attitudes toward immigrants results were not always consistent, possibly because proxy measures of group contact, such as immigrant population size were used more frequently in the statistical analyses than measures of true group contact. Perrineau (1985) for instance, found strong support for the ultra-conservative Front National party in areas of France with large immigrant populations living on the city fringe and concluded that *casual contact* as opposed to *personal contact* (through friendship, school or work relationships) might generate hostility toward immigrants (Fetzer 2000). When examining the effects of residential and professional proximity to immigrants in France, De Rudder et al. (1994) also found that persons living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods and working in places that have more immigrant workers tend to show hostility toward immigrants. However, persons who had foreign friends and socialized with foreigners showed favorable attitudes toward immigrants and manifested openness to foreign cultures. Additionally, the positive effects of personal contacts on attitudes toward immigrants was documented by Hooghe and De Vroome's (2015) study in Belgium. The authors found that Belgians who had foreign friends were significantly less likely to have negative feelings toward immigrants. Results also showed a weaker but negative relationship between the immigrant population size at the community level and anti-immigrant sentiments. Similarly, Jolly and DiGiusto (2014) found that with an increase in the proportion of the foreign-born population at the departmental level in France there was a decrease in xenophobic sentiments, while Rustenbach (2010) concluded that the number of immigrants at the regional and national level in Europe had no significant relationship with anti-immigrant attitudes. On the other hand, Markaki and Longhi (2013: 330) found that immigrants were perceived as an economic, cultural, and overall threat significantly more often in European regions with a higher proportion of immigrants. However, when percentages were disaggregated based on the immigrants' country

of birth, results showed that negative attitudes toward the foreign born were actually driven by the percentage of non-EU immigrants.

Although there is no consensus among scholars that intergroup contact will always decrease prejudice, as Crowley (2005: 21) contended, there is evidence in the migration literature that areas characterized by ethnic diversity (i.e. areas with a higher proportion of immigrants and/or persons whose parents are immigrants) tend to be more tolerant toward newcomers as a result of a potentially higher frequency of intergroup contact. The present study will examine the impact of immigrant population size at the regional level and the ethnic composition of the respondent's neighborhood as proxy indicators for interpersonal contact with immigrants.

Immigrant attitude formation is also influenced by cultural variables (Fetzer 2011). In addition to contact theory, *cultural marginality theory* is frequently used to explain variations in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy when the impact of non-economic factors on public attitudes is examined. According to this view, anti-immigrant sentiments and support for restrictive immigration policies are less likely to be expressed by people with cultural and ethnic ties to immigrants and by individuals who are themselves victims of prejudice or who see themselves as being outside the mainstream society (Fetzer 2000; 2011). Based on her analysis of data from Europe, Rustenbach (2010) however, questioned the validity of the cultural marginality hypothesis because individuals who acknowledged discrimination did not express significantly weaker anti-immigrant attitudes than those who did not suffer discrimination. Nonetheless, in support of the 'cultural marginality' thesis, De Rudder et al. (1994) found that French persons who perceived a larger cultural difference between natives and immigrants were more likely to express xenophobia, resent immigrants, and oppose inter-mixed marriages, while immediate proximity to foreigners through family ties, such as having an immigrant parent, were associated with support for cultural pluralism and equal treatment of all citizens despite their national origin. Analyzing data from United States, Sobczak (2007) also found that a greater social distance from Latino and Asian Americans was associated with anti-immigration and anti-immigrant attitudes.

In a study based on survey data collected in United Kingdom, while ethnic minority status was associated with positive perceptions of immigrants only among immigrants, natives with strong family ties to immigrants were significantly more likely to express pro-immigrant attitudes when compared to natives without immediate immigrant ancestry, indicating support for the cultural marginality

hypothesis (Andreescu 2011). Similar results were obtained by Markaki and Longhi's (2013) study, which showed that ethnic minorities and second-generation immigrants in Europe were significantly less likely to perceive immigrants as an economic, cultural, and overall threat. Mayda (2006) also found that second-generation immigrants had generally more positive views of immigrants, but their attitudes were not significantly different from the rest of the population. The finding was not surprising considering the fact that the reference category included natives and immigrants, two groups that usually have different opinions about immigration-related issues.

In order to test the validity of the cultural marginality thesis, the present analysis will consider one's immediate family ties to immigrants and will also assess the effect of one's social distance (in marriage and work relationships) relative to immigrants belonging to ethnic minority groups. Additionally, the analysis will estimate the effect on attitude formation of general human values, such as benevolence and universalism (i.e. individuals' concern for the welfare and interest of others) (see Schwartz 2012).

Inspired by various theoretical frameworks, empirical studies on public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration also used micro-level attitudinal predictors that include among others individual misperceptions of the immigrant population size, political and ideological orientations, and different forms of attachment to national and supranational institutions (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010: 320). Research findings generally indicate that anti-immigrant sentiments are positively associated with an overestimation of the immigrant population size (Hooghe and De Vroome 2015; Markaki and Longhi 2013; Sobczak 2007) and with one's political orientation toward the right (Andreescu 2011; Jolly and DiGiusto 2014; Rustenbach 2010), while positive views of immigrants are expressed by those who manifest a high level of institutional trust (Andreescu 2011) or generalized trust (Hooghe and De Vroome 2015).

With the exception of education that is consistently negatively associated with anti-immigrant attitudes, when other non-attitudinal predictors (i.e. socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, residency, marital status, etc.) are used as control variables in studies about attitudes toward immigrants/immigration, results lack stability (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010: 320). For instance, while several studies found a positive relationship between age and anti-immigrant attitudes (Hooghe and De Vroome 2015; Jolly and DiGiusto 2014;

Mayda 2006; Quillian 1995; Rustenbach 2010), other studies identified a negative relationship (Sobczak 2007), and other researchers acknowledged a non-linear relationship between age and anti-immigrant sentiments (Markaki and Longhi 2013). Regarding the effect of gender, while some researchers concluded that compared to women, men displayed a higher level of racial prejudice (Quilian 1995), others found that men are less likely to support restrictive immigration policies and/or tend to express more positive views of immigrants than women do (Andreescu 2011; Jolly and DiGiusto 2014). Nonetheless, Markaki and Longhi (2013) found that women are more likely to perceive immigrants as an economic threat, while men are more likely to see immigrants as a cultural threat, while no significant gender effect on attitudes toward immigrants or immigration policies was identified in other multivariate analyses (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Fetzer 2000; Hooghe and De Vroome 2015; Mayda 2006; Sobczak 2007).

Data, methods and hypotheses

The present study is based on the most recent available data from the European Social Survey, collected in 2014 from a representative sample of persons age fifteen and over (N = 1,917) living in private households in France, regardless of the residents' nationality, citizenship, language or legal status (ESS Round 7 Data 2014; European Social Survey 2015). The main objective of the analysis is to identify from a selected group of predictors the individual and contextual-level variables more likely to predict anti-immigrant sentiments.

Based on theoretically informed prior research, it is hypothesized that people's sentiments toward immigrants and their impact on social life in France are shaped not only by individual characteristics, but also by situational factors measured at the region level. Specifically, considering economic and non-economic determinants of attitudes toward immigrants it is anticipated that anti-immigrant sentiments will be more pronounced among natives, economically vulnerable individuals, persons who tend to express lower levels of social attachment (i.e. institutional and interpersonal distrust), politically conservative individuals, those who tend to distance themselves from foreigners, persons who do not believe in equal rights and opportunities for all, and those who tend to overestimate the size of the immigrant population. It is also expected that gender and age will influence variations in attitudes toward immigrants. Additionally, economic and crime

problems at the region level are expected to be associated with negative sentiments toward immigrants. It is also anticipated that the size of the immigrant population at the region level will play a role in shaping public attitudes toward immigrants.

Measuring anti-immigrant sentiments

Different from other prior studies based on or inspired by ESS indicators that included only three measures of anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g. Andreescu 2011; Hooghe & De Vroome 2015; Markaki & Longhi 2013), the current analysis uses as a dependent variable (*anti-immigrant sentiments*) a composite measure that incorporates responses at seven questions. This measure includes a question that could represent one's perception of immigrants as an overall threat, three items referring to immigrants' perceived effect on the economy, two items referring to immigrants' effect on the cultural life, and an additional item referring to the perceived safety threat immigrants may cause.

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from zero to ten if in their opinion immigrants are bad or good for the economy; if immigrants undermine or enrich the country's cultural life; if immigrants make the country a worse or a better place to live; if immigrants take jobs away in country or create new jobs; regarding taxes and services, if immigrants take out more than they put in or take out less; if immigrants make country's crime problem worse or better; and, if religious beliefs and practices are undermined or enriched by immigrants. All indicators have been reverse coded, higher scores indicating a negative attitudes toward immigrants. The Cronbach's reliability coefficient Alpha for the index was .836. The values of the created summative scale have been converted to Percent of Maximum Possible (POMP) scores (see Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, and West 1999). The standardization of scores is a common procedure when there are different response styles or when respondents might offer socially desirable answers. Additionally, the POMP scoring method effectively standardizes the scores, allowing more meaningful inter-group comparisons (Fischer and Milfont 2010). This standardization method was also preferred because the range of the dependent variable from zero to 100 is somewhat similar to the original scaling of the individual indicators. The variable has a relatively normal distribution (Skewness = .418; Kurtosis = .020).

Individual-level predictors

Economic disadvantage – this ordinal-level variable takes values from 1 (living is comfortable on present income) to 4 (living is very difficult on present income). *National origin* - two dummy variables have been created (native = 1; others = 0) and 2nd generation immigrant = 1; others = 0), 1st generation immigrant being the reference category. Natives are defined as people born in France or abroad to France-born parents. Second generation immigrants are defined as persons who are born in France and have at least one foreign-born parent. Immigrants (1st generation) are defined as persons who now reside in France and are born abroad to non-nationals; they represent the reference category. *Ethnic homogeneity* of the respondent's neighborhood – a dummy variable has been created and coded 1 if the respondent stated that almost nobody belonging to a racial/ethnic minority group lives in his/her neighborhood and zero if the responded stated that some or many ethnic minorities live in the area. *Social distance* toward ethnic minorities is a summative scale created based on two indicators. Respondents were asked if they would mind having a boss who is an immigrant and belongs to a racial/ethnic minority group. A second question asked respondents if they would mind if a close relative would marry an immigrant who is also part of an ethnic/racial minority group. Each item took values from zero (don't mind at all) to 10 (mind a lot).The reliability coefficient for the scale was .813. The scale values have been converted into POMP scores, higher values indicating higher levels of social distance.

Institutional distrust – a summative scale has been created based on seven indicators that measure the respondent's level of trust (0 – no trust at all to 10 – complete trust) in national institutions (parliament, legal system, police, politicians, and political parties) and international institutions (the European Parliament and the United Nations). Each variable has been reverse coded, higher values indicating institutional distrust. The reliability coefficient for the seven-item scale was .880. The scale has been standardized and values have been converted into POMP scores. *Interpersonal distrust* – is a summative scale that includes three formative indicators (Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful; Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair;

Most of the time people are helpful or they are mostly looking out for themselves), each taking values from zero to ten. The variables have been reverse coded, higher scores indicating interpersonal distrust. The scale has been standardized and scale values have been converted into POMP scores. The reliability coefficient Alpha for the scale was .618.

Political orientation – is an ordinal level variable that takes values from zero (Far-Left politics supporter) to 10 (Far-Right politics supporter). Scores have been converted into POMP scores as well. *Perceived size of immigrant population* – this variable takes values from zero to 100 and is based on the respondent's answer at the following question: "Out of 100 people living in France, how many do you think were born outside France?"

Self – Transcendence values is a composite measure based on five questionnaire items that asked respondents to compare themselves to a hypothetical individual who believes that it is important for people to be treated equally and to have equal opportunities; it is important to understand different people; it is important to help people and care for others' wellbeing; it is important to be loyal to friends and devote to people close to you; and, it is important to care for nature and the environment. Answers are given on a six-point asymmetric bipolar categorical scale that takes values from 1 (very much like me) to 6 (not like me at all). The indicators included in the scale are measuring two human values (benevolence and universalism) derived from Schwartz's (1994, 2007) human values model (see Knoppen and Saris 2009). Schwartz (2012) noted that self-transcendence captures the humans' concern for the welfare and interest of others as measured by universalism and benevolence. The inter-item bivariate correlations range from .24 to .44 and the reliability coefficient Alpha for the scale is .667. The scale values have been standardized and converted into POMP scores. Higher values are indicative of a lack of self-transcendence values.

Victimization – coded 1 if the respondent or a household member had been a victim of burglary or physical assault over the past five years and zero otherwise. *Age* is a continuous variable measuring the respondent's age. Because the effect of age on the dependent variable was found to be nonlinear, a squared term for age was also used in the multivariate statistical models. *Gender* – is a dichotomous variable coded 1 for female respondents and zero otherwise.

Region-level predictors

In order to determine if contextual factors have an effect of public sentiments toward immigrants several macro-level indicators have been included in the multivariate statistical models in addition to individual-level predictors. In the European Union regions are classified at three levels using the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS). For data collected in France there have been used 21 regions[2] at Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics 2 (NUTS2). Several region-level data used in this analysis are based on the most recent available ESS Multilevel Data.[3] The ESS contextual variables selected for the analyses presented here are: 2009-2011 average net migration rate per 1,000 individuals, 2010-2012 unemployment rate for people age 15-24 (per cent), and 2008-2010 average robbery rate per 100,000 people (log).[4] The percentage of foreign-born population in 2011 in each region was based on 2011 Census data and the data source was Knoema (n. d.). The foreign-born population size was used as a proxy measure of inter-group contact. Additionally, in each region individual responses have been aggregated and it was created a variable that measured the average percentage of natives out of total natives who found living on present income difficult and very difficult (see Figure 1). The variable was created to determine the impact of sociotropic economic threats corresponding to natives in addition to the impact of egotropic economic concerns, measured at the individual level by the residents' self-assessed financial status. The variable is significantly and positively correlated with 2010-2012 percentage unemployed youth (r = .48; p<.001) and with 2010-2012 long-term unemployment (r = .30; p<.001).

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[2] In 2014, a new territorial reform has been approved in Parliament (Law no. 2015-29 from 16 January 2015) and starting with 1 January 2016, several regions in France have merged. Currently, mainland metropolitan France comprises 13 regions.

[3] The multilevel data is provided by ESS6-2012, ed. 2.1; it is prepared and made available by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Neither ESS6-2012 nor NSD are responsible for the analyses and interpretation of the data presented here.

[4] A logarithmic transformation was performed to correct for non-normal distribution of the data. The values for skewness and kurtosis decreased post-transformation to .719 and .192, respectively.

Results

First, univariate and bi-variate analyses have been conducted to explore residents' sentiments toward immigrants regarding different immigration-related aspects and also to note if inter-regional variations in attitudes appear to exist. In order to answer the study's main research questions, a series of multilevel regression models have been further constructed. In this analysis individuals are nested within regions. Due to the fact that random variation in attitudes toward immigrants at the region level has been uncovered, all multivariate models include random intercept and fixed effects for individual and region-level predictors. The random intercept allows the mean level of attitudes toward immigrants to vary across regions. Linear interpolation has been used to handle missing data for variables of interest.[5]

Univariate and bivariate analyses

Table 1 presents the average score for all seven indicators that formed the summative anti-immigrant scale. The reverse-coded values range from zero (positive feelings) to 10 (negative feelings). It can be noticed that on average, the mean values for all indicators included in the scale are close to the mid-point of the 0-10 interval, suggesting that in France most people tend to have moderate attitudes toward immigrants. However, it should be noted that about one third of the residents declared that immigrants contribute to increases in crime levels, that they undermine France's religious beliefs and practices, that they tend to take advantage of the country welfare system, and that they have a bad effect on the country's economy. Additionally, one in four residents thinks that France's cultural life is negatively affected by immigrants and about 22 per cent of the residents believe that French workers lost jobs to immigrants and that the country is a worse place to live as a result of immigrants who relocated to France.[6]

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[5] Separate analyses have been conducted on data with missing cases and results, including the variance explained by alternative models, were not different from those reported here. The direction of the effects was identical and in both analyses the same variables had or had not a significant impact on the dependent variable. Due to the fact that the number of units at the region level is relatively low, variables at the second level of analysis have been inserted sequentially. All models have been estimated using the mixed models procedure in SPSS 22.

[6] Additional analyses show significant positive correlations between anti-immigrant sentiments and support for restrictive immigration policies directed at: people belonging to

Table 1: Anti-immigrant sentiments in France

Questionnaire item	Negative Sentiments	Mean 0-10	Std. Dev.	Alpha, if item deleted
Is France made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	22.4%	5.15	2.16	.794
Would you say it is generally bad or good for France's economy that people come to live here from other countries?	29.3%	5.32	2.49	.797
Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in France or generally help to create new jobs?	21.7%	5.05	2.22	.822
Most people who come to live here work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think people who come here take out more than they put in or put in more than they take out?	31.1%	5.64	2.17	.812
Would you say that France's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?	24.3%	4.60	2.66	.792
Do you think the religious beliefs and practices in France are generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?	31.5%	5.52	2.31	.823
Are crime problems in France made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries?	32.3%	5.76	2.16	.848
Cronbach's reliability coefficient Alpha		.836		

Note: Answers have been labeled negative sentiments when respondents selected scores between 7 and 10.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables of interest. Additional information at the region level is presented in Figure 1. For variables that have been standardized using the percentage of maximum possible scores

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the same ethnic/racial group as the majority in France ($r = .52$; $p < .05$); people belonging to ethnic/racial minorities ($r = .58$; $p <.05$); potential immigrants from poor European countries ($r = .55$; $p<.05$); and, new arrivals from poor non-European countries ($r = .58$; $p<.05$).

(POMP) transformation, it can be observed that on average, the public sentiments toward immigrants are slightly less negative than the residents' trust in national and international institution; the average level of interpersonal trust (49 per cent) is close to the mid-point of the interval; similarly, French residents' political orientation is somewhere (51 per cent) in the center of the political spectrum that ranges from far-left to far-right. It should be noted that all the previously discussed variables approach a normal distribution and that the reported means do not represent an average of polarized tendencies.

It can be also observed that on average, the French residents are less likely to distance themselves at work or in the family from foreign-born persons belonging to racial/ethnic minority groups and that the majority of the respondents share human values characterized by benevolence and support for equal opportunities for all individuals, and oppose discrimination. The majority of the respondents (71 per cent) live in ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods and about one in four residents recently experienced directly or indirectly some form of criminal victimization.

Although official data indicate that in 2014 the foreign-born persons represented 8.9 per cent (Brutel 2015) of the population in France, results show that on average, residents estimate the size of the immigrant population as being almost three times higher than official figures. It should be noted however, that different from United States, where a person born in US becomes automatically an American citizen, children born in France to non-nationals/immigrants are granted citizenship only when they reach 18 years of age and only if certain residency requirements are satisfied. Official data provided by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), show that in 2014, approximately 600,000 people (0.9 per cent of the total population) born in France, who were mainly minors, were considered non-nationals or foreigners (Brutel 2015).[7]

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[7] Even if the questionnaire item clearly asked respondents to estimate the number of people out of 100 who live in France, but were born abroad, it is possible that the public could not or did not want to make a distinction between persons who are first-generation immigrants and persons who are second-generation immigrants, especially if they belong to visible ethnic or racial minority groups. In fact a recent study indicated that about one in four residents in France (26 per cent) agreed that persons born in the country to foreign-born parents are not really French (i.e. 'les enfants d'immigrés nés en France ne sont pas vraiment Français') (Institut d'Etudes et de Conseil /CSA 2011: 12).

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (21 Regions; 1,917 individuals)**

	Freq.	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Individual level parameters					
Anti-immigrant attitudes (POMP)		53.16	16.40	0	100
Social distance (POMP)		28.26	27.13	0	100
Institutional distrust (POMP)		57.54	17.41	0	100
Interpersonal distrust (POMP)		48.89	15.83	0	100
Political orientation (POMP)		50.66	23.72	0	100
Self-transcendence (POMP)		23.04	14.72	0	100
Perceived foreign-born population size (%)		26.11	18.10	1	100
Experienced victimization	25.7%				
Ethnic homogeneity of neighborhood	28.9%				
Immigrant status					
Native	75.1%				
2nd generation immigrant	13.6%				
1st generation immigrant	11.3%	49.88	18.74	15	99
Gender (female)	52.4%				
Age		49.88	18.74	15	99
Economic disadvantage[8]		1.91	.77	1	4
Contextual parameters					
Net migration rate per 1,000 (2008-2010)[9]		.63	1.59	-1.81	3.29
Foreign-born population (2011)		10.93	5.79	3.80	21.22
Youth unemployment (%)		23.23	3.94	18.70	33.83
Robbery rate per 100,000 (log)		1.95	.31	1.49	2.65
Economically disadvantaged natives (%)		18.83	6.23	12.20	46.20

The structure of the present sample indicates that about one quarter of the respondents are first and second generation immigrants. Nevertheless, additional analyses found a positive and significant relationship between the perceived size of the immigrant population and the actual proportion of immigrants at the regional level (r = .41; p < .001).

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[8] At the individual level, additional analyses showed significant negative correlations between economic disadvantage and the highest level of education (r = -.31; p<.001) / number of years of education completed (r = -.26; p<.001).

[9] Preliminary analyses did not show a significant relation between one's sentiments toward immigrants and the 2008-2010 average net migration rate at the region level and the variable has not been included in the multivariate statistical models.

Figure 1: Anti-immigrant attitudes vs. immigrant population (%) and economically disadvantaged natives (%) by region in France
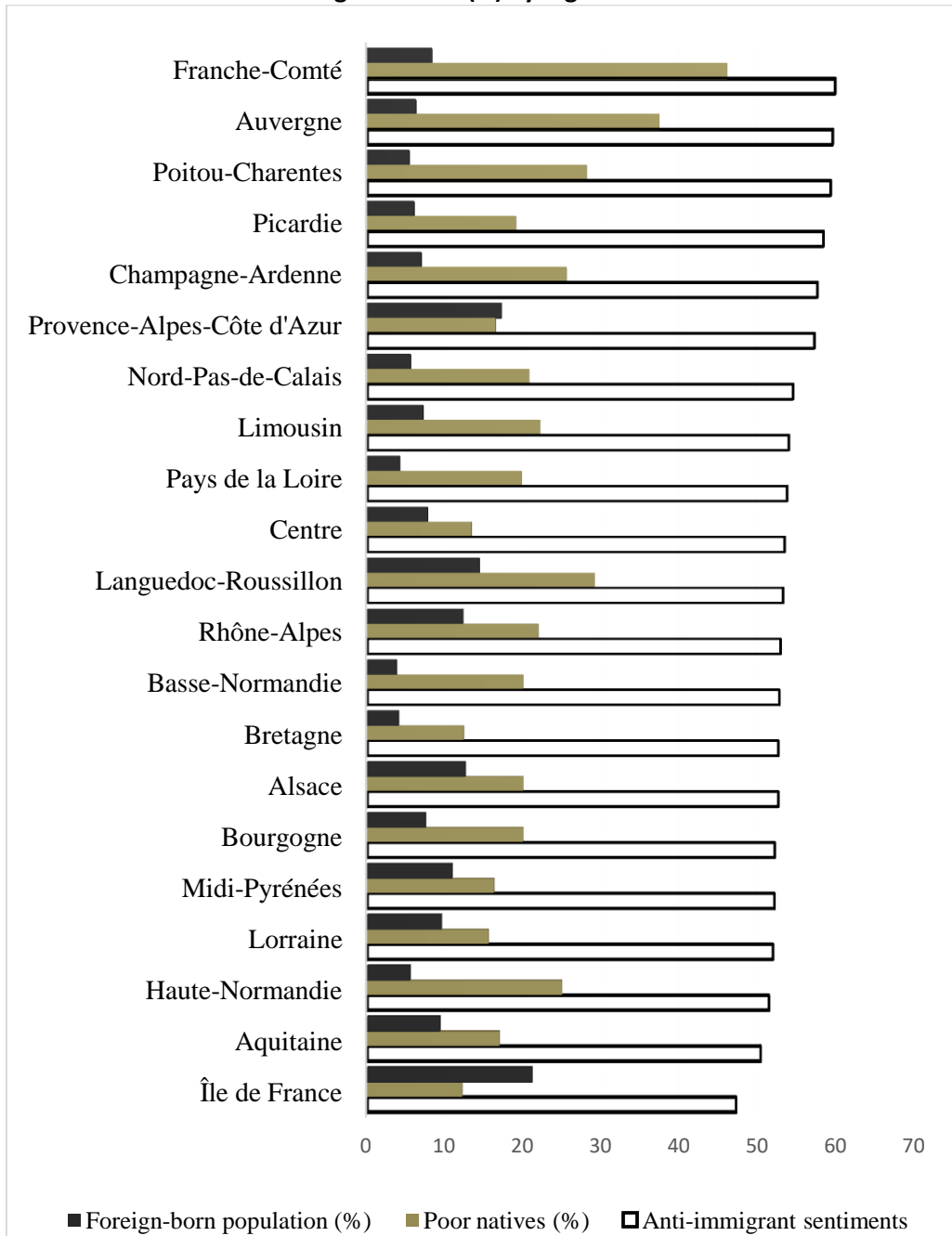
Certain contextual variables have been selected for this analysis to determine if the actual size of the immigrant population (percent foreign-born by region), economic factors, such as youth unemployment and the natives' self-

assessed poverty level, as well as violent crime rates measured at the regional level have an effect on variations in anti-immigrant attitudes in France. Preliminary analyses show significant positive correlations between anti-immigrant attitudes and levels of youth unemployment rates (r = .06; p < .05) and the proportion of natives experiencing financial difficulties (r = .12; p < .001), while a higher level of violent crime (r = -.08; p < .05) and the actual percentage of immigrants at the region level (r = -.10; p< .05) are negatively associated with anti-immigrant attitudes.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of regions in descending order based on the calculated average score for anti-immigrant sentiments combined with the corresponding percentage of economically disadvantaged natives and the size of the immigrant population in each region. It can be noticed that with few exceptions, regions with a higher proportion of economically vulnerable natives tend to also have more negative feelings toward immigrants.

Multilevel multivariate analyses

Multilevel analyses have been further conducted to determine if in addition to individual characteristics, contextual factors may shape one's perceptions of immigrants. Variability in the dependent variable at various levels (individual and regional) can be isolated when multilevel analysis is performed (see Snijders & Bosker 2012). Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimators have been used in the presented multilevel analyses. Although an estimation of the intraclass correlation (ICC) indicates that only 2.87% of the variation in anti-immigrant sentiments stems from the variation among regions, the estimate of the variance in the intercept residuals is more than twice larger than its standard error, being significant at p<.05 (see Table 3), suggesting that the hierarchical structure of the data should not be ignored. Additionally, the Likelihood Ratio test, where the -2Log Likelihood of the null model (-2LL = 15994.112) is compared to the -2LL for the one-level model (-2LL = 16035.379), shows that the obtained value of Chi-Square (41.27) is significantly higher than the critical Chi-Square at df = 1, p < .001, indicating that a two-level model is appropriate. At the region level, the standardized POMP score corresponding to anti-immigrant sentiments varies from 47.34 in Île de France to 60.06 in Franche-Comté (see Figure 1).

Table 3: Null multilevel regression model for anti-immigrant sentiments in France (21 regions; N = 1,917)

	B	SE	p
Fixed effects			
Intercept	53.623	.715	.000
Random effects			
Individual level variance	254.794	8.270	.000
Region level variance	7.529	3.362	.025
Intraclass correlation (ICC)	2.87%		

Table 4 presents the effects of individual and region-level predictors on attitudes toward immigrants in France. Model 1, the baseline model, includes only the individual-level predictors, while models 2 to 5 examine the additional effects of four socio-economic indicators. Taken into account the relatively small number of units at the second level of analysis, only one variable at a time has been introduced in these additional models. The pseudo R square represents the difference between the residual variances for the null model and Model 1 that includes the individual-level predictors only. Snijders & Bosker (2012) noted that in multilevel analyses R squares are different from R squares in OLS regression analysis and should be defined as the proportional reduction in variance generated by the model. Based on the total value of the pseudo R square, it can be noticed that Model 1 contributes 36.12 per cent to the reduction in variance in anti-immigrant attitudes. Only four of the models further presented that incorporate contextual factors account for a slightly higher proportional reduction in total variance.

Results also show that in all models individual-level predictors have similar effects, the direction of the effects being the same. As hypothesized, residents with higher levels of institutional and interpersonal distrust are more likely to have negative feelings toward immigrants. Similar anti-immigrant attitudes are consistently expressed by persons who favor right-wing politics, by those who are less likely to express benevolent attitudes toward people in general or to support equal rights for all, by persons who live in ethnically homogenous neighborhoods, by persons who prefer to distance themselves at work and in the family from immigrants belonging to ethnic minority groups, and by persons who tend to overestimate the actual size of the immigrant population. Additionally, French women tend to have significantly more negative sentiments

toward immigrants than French men do. Anti-immigrant attitudes tend to increase significantly with an increase in one's financial problems.

Results show a curvilinear relationship between age and the dependent variable. While negative feelings toward immigrants tend to decrease with age, after a certain point, they tend to increase. The calculated inflection point for age is 43.48 (see Aiken and West 1991), meaning that after age 43, with every year increase in age there is a slight increase (B = .0025) in anti-immigrant feelings. One's immigration status also impacts one's attitudes toward immigrants. Compared to first-generation immigrants, natives and second generation immigrants tend to have more negative feelings toward immigrants in general. However, when controlling for all the variables in the model, the difference in opinions is significant at p < .05 (2-tail test) only for persons born in France to France-born parents. One's direct or indirect experience with victimization has no influence on one's sentiments toward immigrants.

Regarding the impact of contextual factors on anti-immigrant sentiments, while it can be noticed that the proportion of unemployed youth at the regional level (Model 2) has no significant influence on attitudes when controlling for all the variables in the model, the proportion of financially-disadvantaged natives does. At the region level, an increase in the percent of natives facing poverty is associated with an increase in anti-immigrant sentiments (see Model 5). It should be noted that bivariate correlations indicate a significant and positive relationship between the percent youth unemployed and the percentage of economically disadvantaged natives (r = .48; p < .05). Additionally, regions with a higher proportion of immigrants tend to have a lower proportion of native residents experiencing poverty (r = -.33; p < .05).

Although regions with higher levels of violent crimes, such as robberies, tend to be characterized by weaker anti-immigrant attitudes (see Model 3), the crime-level impact is significant only at a one-tail test, p < .05. Considering the fact that preliminary analyses revealed a strong bivariate correlation (r = .88; p < .05) at the region level between the average rate of robberies and the size of foreign-born population, this finding should not be surprising. Results indicate that regions with a higher proportion of foreign-born persons and implicitly more immigrants, have on average significantly lower proportions of people who perceive immigrants as a socioeconomic, cultural, or safety threat (see Model 4).

Table 4: Multilevel Models for Anti-Immigrant Sentiments in France

Fixed effects	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Individual-level parameters	**B**	**SE**	**B**	**SE**	**B**	**SE**
Institutional distrust	.201***	.019	.201***	.019	.201***	.019
Interpersonal distrust	.211***	.020	.211***	.020	.212***	.020
Non-Self-Transcendence	.046*	.020	.046*	.020	.046*	.020
Social distance	.124***	.013	.124***	.013	.123***	.012
Political orientation (Right)	.133***	.012	.133***	.013	.134***	.013
Economic hardship	1.456**	.413	1.450**	.414	.1.437**	.413
Perceived immigration size	.101***	.017	.101***	.017	.102***	.017
Victimization	.306	.689	.302	.689	.354	.690
Neighborhood homogeneity	2.564***	.680	2.556***	.680	2.453***	.683
Immigrant status (Native)	5.730***	.956	5.718***	.956	5.616***	.958
2nd Gen. Immigrant	2.055	1.193	2.049	1.193	2.003	1.193
Gender (Female)	1.317*	.609	1.319*	.609	1.307*	.609
Age	-.221**	.083	-.221**	.083	-.219**	.083
Age square	.003**	.001	.003**	.001	.003**	.001
Region-level parameters						
Youth unemployment (%)			.013	.088		
Robbery rate (log)					-2.225	1.381
Intercept	12.418***	2.607	12.132**	3.353	16.880***	3.818
Random Effects						
Individual level variance	165.485		165.497		165.449	
Level 1 variance explained	.3505		.3505		.3506	
Region level variance	2.084		2.777		1.845	
Level 2 variance explained	.7232		.6311		.7549	
Total Pseudo R^2	.3612		.3585		.3622	
-2 Log Likelihood	15284.645		15287.658		15279.607	
Chi-Square [df = 1][a]	(Baseline Model)		NS		5.038*	

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001; SE = Standard Error.
[a] Chi-square calculated to compare M2 and M3 to the baseline model to determine if the model fit has been significantly improved by adding region-level predictors.

Table 4: Multilevel Models for Anti-Immigrant Sentiments in France (cont.)

Fixed effects	Model 4		Model 5	
Individual-level parameters	**B**	**SE**	**B**	**SE**
Institutional distrust	.201***	.019	.200***	.019
Interpersonal distrust	.212***	.020	.212***	.020
Self-Transcendence	.045*	.020	.047*	.020
Social distance	.123***	.012	.123***	.011
Political orientation (Right)	.135***	.012	.133***	.012
Economic hardship	1.431**	.413	1.379**	.414
Perceived immigration size	.102***	.017	.100***	.017
Victimization	.367	.689	.284	.688
Neighborhood homogeneity	2.444***	.682	2.557***	.678
Immigrant status (Native)	5.562***	.960	5.709***	.954
2nd Gen. Immigrant	2.007	1.193	2.052	1.191
Gender (Female)	1.307*	.609	1.348*	.608
Age	-.222**	.083	-.213**	.080
Age square	.003**	.001	.002**	.001
Region-level parameters				
Foreign-born population (%)	-.163*	.080		
Economic hardship (% natives)			.166**	.060
Intercept	14.053***	2.748	9.078**	2.850
Random Effects				
Individual level variance	165.470		158.689	
Level 1 variance explained	.3505		.3883	
Region level variance	.821		.581	
Level 2 variance explained	.7904		.8173	
Total Pseudo R^2	.3632		.3646	
-2 Log Likelihood	15284.205		15281.412	
Chi-Square [df = 1][a]	.44		3.233	

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001; SE = Standard Error.
[a] Chi-square calculated to compare M4 and M5 to the baseline model to determine if the model fit has been significantly improved by adding region-level predictors.

Discussion and Conclusion

In France, opponents of immigration do not outnumber supporters. In fact, the majority of those who expressed an opinion declared that France should allow[10] at least some if not many immigrants belonging to the same race/racial

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[10] Responses such as, 'many immigrants' and 'some immigrants should be allowed' have been combined.

group as the majority (75 per cent), immigrants belonging to minority ethnic groups (61.3 per cent), immigrants from poor European countries (60.7 per cent), or immigrants from poor countries outside of Europe (51.6 per cent). Compared to data collected in 2003 from a representative sample (see Simon and Sikich 2007), when 66 per cent of the French residents declared that the number of immigrants to France should be reduced, the recent data suggest that French residents have become more accepting of immigrants than they were a decade ago. Additional comparisons with data reported in Simon and Sikich's (2007) study show that the percentage of those who think that immigrants are not good for the economy decreased from 36 per cent in 2003 to 29 percent in 2014; the proportion of those who think that immigrants take jobs away from natives decreased from 26 per cent in 2003 to 22 per cent in 2014; if 44 per cent of the French residents considered in 2003 that immigrants increase crime levels, in 2014, only 32 per cent shared this opinion; and, the percentage of those who think that the cultural life in the country is undermined by immigrants also decreased from 34 per cent in 2003 to 24 per cent in 2014.

Overall, the French residents' recent feelings toward immigrants are somewhere in the middle, not extremely positive, but not very negative either. Yet the present study was based on a secondary data analysis that could use only available indicators. The questions that formed the composite measure of anti-immigrant sentiments referred to immigrants in general, even if immigrants are part of a very heterogeneous group. Respondents were not asked how they feel about different categories of immigrants (e.g. legal, illegal, refugees, etc.) or how they perceive immigrants belonging to ethnic or religious minority groups. Based on recent reports (see Institut d'Études et de Conseil /CSA 2011; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe /OSCE 2013; Pew Research Center 2014) that reveal more intense xenophobic attitudes toward visible minorities in France, it is possible that the level of prejudice regarding certain groups of immigrants or persons with immigrant ancestry is actually higher than current data indicate. For instance, although nine out of ten immigrants declared not long ago that they feel at home in France, more than half of the immigrants or descendants of immigrants acknowledged that they are not viewed as being 'true' French (Bouvier 2012). As Hargreaves (2007: 7) noted, while most second- or third-generation white immigrants in France appear to enjoy a relatively high level of social acceptance, many of the children and grandchildren of post-colonial migrants continue to

experience stigmatization. Nonetheless, even if the current analysis did not focus on public reaction to immigration policy in France, negative sentiments toward immigrants appear to mediate one's support for restrictive immigration policies, irrespective of the potential new comers' ethnicity or country of origin, if the sending country is considered economically poor.

The analysis revealed that anti-immigrant sentiments in France are structured by individual and contextual factors. Although the inter-regional variation in anti-immigrant sentiments is not large in France, it is significant. In support of contact theory (Allport 1954), results show that anti-immigrant sentiments decrease with an increase in immigrant population size. For instance, Ile-de-France, which has the largest proportion of immigrants, is the region with the lowest average level of hostile attitudes toward immigrants, while Franche-Comté, a region recently incorporated in Bourgogne and where the proportion of foreign-born individuals is lower than the average regional immigrant population mean, has the highest level of anti-immigrant attitudes. Although the analysis did not account for the type of interpersonal contact one might have with immigrants, it is possible that meaningful personal contacts and not just casual contacts are more likely to occur in areas that have larger immigrant populations, contributing to improved overall perceptions of immigrants, as several studies found (see Pettygrew and Tropp 2006). Yet it should be noted that the data included here did not consider the country of birth for the foreign-born population. Markaki and Longhi (2013) for instance, found that a higher percentage at the region level of persons born outside EU is associated with more anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe, while less negative attitudes toward immigrants were associated with a higher proportion of immigrants from EU countries. Taking into account the fact that in 2012 more than half of the first-generation immigrants in France were born in Europe (Brutel 2014), it is possible that public attitudes toward immigrants in France might reflect, at least partially, these recent changes in the demographic structure of the immigrant population.

Cultural marginality theory is equally supported by evidence. Persons living in non-minority ethnically homogenous neighborhoods and those who would distance themselves (at work and in family) from foreigners belonging to ethnic minority groups are more likely to express anti-immigrant sentiments. Additionally, feelings toward immigrants expressed by natives with immediate family ties to immigrants are not significantly different than the foreign-born individuals'

attitudes toward newcomers. Persons who believe in equal rights and opportunities for all and those who trust people in general, despite potential cultural differences, are also less likely to have negative views of immigrants. Conversely, as anticipated and comparable to previous research (Jolly and DiGiusto 2014; Pew Research Center 2014; Rustenbach 2010), people who place themselves on the right side of the political spectrum tent to express more negative opinions about immigrants. As found in prior research (Hooghe and De Vroome 2015; Markaki and Longhi 2013; Sobczak 2007), anti-immigrant sentiments tend to be stronger with an increase in one's subjective estimation of immigrant population size. Additionally, results indicate that those who distrust major national institutions and supranational political structures (i.e. European Union), are more likely to express anti-immigrants sentiments, suggesting as Crawley (2005: 58) noted, that attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy may reflect not only worries about one's national identity, but could also reveal one's wider concerns about current societal changes and France's role in Europe.

Furthermore, findings support the economic self-interest theory. Despite Hainmueller and Hopkins's (2014) contention that personal economic circumstances are less likely to influence immigrant attitude formation, results show that persons experiencing economic hardship are significantly more likely to perceive immigrants as a threat and to manifest anti-immigrant attitudes. Although youth unemployment rates at the region level do not appear to influence variations in attitudes, findings show that across regions in France, the natives' economic conditions do have a significant impact on public attitudes toward immigrants. Specifically, as economic theories of immigrant attitude formation would predict, a higher level of hostility toward immigrants is recorded in regions that have a higher proportion of natives experiencing financial difficulties and where a sense of relative deprivation and the labor market competition could be potentially higher (Fetzer 2000).

Different from prior research, this analysis included among non-economic predictors of anti-immigrant attitudes a set of variables referring to personal experiences with victimization and regional crime levels, factors expected to influence public perceptions of immigrants. Although an important segment of the population acknowledged that immigrants negatively impact the crime level in the country, personal experiences with victimization, while positively associated with anti-immigrant sentiments, did not have a significant impact on attitude

formation.11 At the region level, equally non-significant was the effect of violent crime rates on anti-immigrant attitudes. However, a limitation of the study that could be overcome by future research should be noted. The analysis did not differentiate between inter-group victimization experiences and information regarding immigrants' involvement in criminal activities or their representation among crime victims at the region level was not available and could not be used in the analysis. This study limitation could be overcome by future research if more detailed criminal justice indicators would be included in the analysis.

Overall, despite the fact that the level of regional attitudinal heterogeneity is relatively low in France and the limited number of contextual factors used here do not appear to have a large contribution to the variance in people's feelings toward immigrants and their role in the French society, this analysis demonstrates that socio-economic indicators at the sub-national level (that further research should expand) may provide additional useful information that should not be ignored, especially now, when the tendency in Europe is to decentralize immigrant integration policies at the city and region levels. As one scholar noted, factors shaping individual attitudes should be known because public reaction to immigration issues is "a key input in policy outcomes and their viability" (Mayda 2006: 528).

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[11] Additional analyses showed a non-significant correlation between one's direct or indirect experience with victimization and public perceptions regarding the immigrants' contribution to the crime problem in the country (r = .03; p = .20), suggesting that the non-significant effect of the predictor was not obscured by the fact that the dependent variable combined several indicators of anti-immigrant attitudes.

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