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Book Reviews

Karen Nielsen Breidahl, Troels Fage Hedegaard, Kristian Kongshøj and Christian Albrekt Larsen (2021), *Immigrants' Attitudes and the Welfare State: The Danish Melting Pot*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, £75.00, pp. 208, hbk.
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The implications of immigration for Western welfare states have recently received more and more attention in academic research. So far, however, few studies have paid much attention to the attitudes of immigrants themselves. In their new book, Karen Nielsen Breidahl, Troels Fage Hedegaard, Kristian Kongshøj and Christian Albrekt Larsen do exactly that. Taking advantage of two Danish surveys that oversample immigrant respondents, they investigate how immigrants in the country think about the welfare state. Their main conclusion is both surprising and important: they find that immigrants in Denmark have mostly adopted the welfare attitudes of the native-born population, and conclude from this that the Danish welfare system has had a largely assimilative effect on newcomers. This suggests that the power of welfare state institutions might be larger than what scholarship had long assumed based on studies of native-born individuals. It should also assuage any fears that the arrival of immigrants will fundamentally alter a country's political culture in general or its support base for welfare state institutions in particular.

The authors use a clever methodological approach to pursue their investigation. They examine the attitudes of immigrants in Denmark from fourteen very different countries of origin (China, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and former Yugoslavia) and conclude assimilation has taken place if three observations hold: (1) the views of these immigrants in Denmark are very different from the views of people in their country of origin; (2) the views of these immigrants in Denmark are similar to the views of native-born Danes; and (3) the views of these immigrants in Denmark are similar to each other regardless of their large differences. For as far as data availability allows, this strategy is applied to seven sets of attitudes: trust in institutions, attitudes on government providing welfare, attitudes on redistribution and poverty relief, attitudes on female employment, attitudes on public childcare, attitudes on migrant access to benefits, and social trust. The use of multiple comparative angles (between immigrants of different countries, between immigrants and native-born Danes, between immigrants and the population in their country of origin, and between different welfare attitudes) allows the authors to make plausible inferences and reach their overall conclusion that "migrants' welfare attitudes to a high extent assimilate into those of native Danes despite large differences in self-interests and cultural backgrounds" (p. 9).

Immigrants' Attitudes and the Welfare State is a great piece of scholarship. It tackles a novel subject, relies on high quality survey data, employs a smart inferential strategy, and reaches conclusions of large theoretical and societal importance. At the same time, it seems important to point at four limitations. The authors recognize most of them themselves, and the intention of describing them here is primarily to outline areas that future research could probe further.

First, at times the conclusions about the empirical findings seem overstated. By their own description (pp. 176-180), the authors find clear evidence: that immigrants differ from individuals in their own country of origin for four of the seven sets of welfare attitudes; that immigrants have similar attitudes to native-born Danes for three of the seven sets of welfare attitudes; and that immigrants in Denmark from different countries of origin have similar attitudes for four of the seven sets of welfare attitudes. Differently put, of the 21 tests of assimilation the book conducts (three comparisons for seven sets of attitudes), only 11 result in clearly supportive findings. While these results are remarkable considering all the reasons why we might expect limited evidence of assimilation, they do not seem to warrant the conclusion that immigrants' attitudes have "assimilate[ed] to most attitudes with some minor and very specific exceptions" (p. 180).

Second, it is not always easy to go along with the conclusion about each comparison because the book rarely employs a clear benchmark to establish whether the differences in attitudes it encounters are large or small. In most cases, the reader is presented with relatively dense bar charts (sometimes including as many as 33 bars), which the authors then interpret as reflecting 'large' or 'small' differences. More formal procedures (for example, using measures of dispersion or analysis of variance techniques) would have helped and avoided any impression of occasionally charitable interpretations (for example, the authors describe the difference in views on dissatisfaction with the functioning of Danish democracy between immigrants from Turkey and former Yugoslavia as 'modest' on p. 80, but label a similarly sized difference in the perception of the number of politicians involved in corruption between immigrants from the UK in Denmark and the general population in the UK as 'sizeable' on p. 75).

Third, despite the strengths of the book's inferential strategy, there are at least four complications that might warrant different interpretations of the results. For example, one is left wondering whether differences between immigrants and their counterparts in their country of origin are at least partially attributable to selection effects. (Could it be, for example, that individuals who are more trusting are more likely to migrate to an unknown setting, or more generally, that there are systematic differences between the attitudes of those who migrate and those who do not?) Similarly, the familiar problem of social desirability bias in survey findings could lead to misleading results. It seems plausible, for example, that at least some migrants would be reluctant to express to a Danish researcher that they distrust Danish institutions or Danish individuals. More generally, if we know that survey respondents are biased towards giving answers they think are appropriate or expected, we should expect them to give different answers if they are answering those questions in different countries. In other words, perhaps part of the difference in the answers Chinese immigrants in Denmark and survey respondents in China give is the result of different expectations of what the researcher wants to hear in these two contexts. Equally challenging is to account for the possibility of reference effects. Some of the questions on which the researchers rely ask respondents whether they think the government should do more: for example, to reduce income gaps or help parents with children. How one answers this question of course partially depends on how much the government in place is already doing, which means that it is difficult to directly compare the responses from immigrants in Denmark (who are stating whether they think the Danish government should be doing more) with those of respondents in immigrant-sending countries (who are expressing their view on whether the government in their country of residence should be doing more). And perhaps most importantly, the book concludes that the main cause of assimilation in welfare attitudes can be found in the institutions of the welfare state itself, but the empirical analysis does not include any measurement of those institutions themselves. Whether immigrants'

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responses to the survey questions are shaped by the institutions of the welfare state or by something else (Danish political culture, interactions with native-born Danes, or any of the complicating factors mentioned above) therefore remains very much an open question. Additionally puzzling is that the main theoretical account the authors invoke to explain how institutions shape attitudes heavily relies on the mechanism of positive feedback effects, but that there is very limited evidence in the findings that points at the importance of time (for example, in most multivariate analyses length of residence does not seem to have any effect on welfare attitudes).

This is related to a fourth and final point: while it is tempting to take the conclusions of this study and reflect on their implications for broader questions regarding the assimilative power of institutions or the integration of immigrants in welfare state systems, future cross-national research should test the external validity of this book's findings. This research has taken place in a context which combines a universal and encompassing welfare system with a comparatively assimilationist approach to immigrant integration. Moreover, it relies on survey data that oversample long-settled immigrants (p. 33) with good enough proficiency in the Danish language to answer the questions (p. 35). One might speculate that the evidence of assimilation into the welfare attitudes of the majority would not be as robust in countries with leaner welfare systems and more liberal integration strategies, or in surveys that target the least integrated among the newcomer population.

Again, the intention of these critical considerations is mostly to suggest ways for future researchers to pick up where Breidahl, Hedegaard, Køngshoj, and Larsen left off. Their book is an innovative and thought-provoking contribution that should be on the shelves of anyone interested in the connection between immigration and welfare.

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Lisa Dellmuth (2021), *Is Europe Good For You? EU Spending and Well-Being*, Bristol University Press, £47.99, pp. 202, hbk.
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The role of the EU in 'levelling up' its territory, through an increasing range of policies and funded programmes that have been developed since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, is more publicly recognised than many others that it performs. The now familiar cycle of seven year Cohesion programmes, funding projects and investment, accompanied by public sign boards of acknowledgement of EU contributions, have been a significant means of communicating the EU's vision and values in tangible and local ways. While not overcoming any charges of a democratic deficit, the Cohesion policies are designed to reduce economic and social differences between different places across the EU's territories, providing the EU with a public face that can meet local circumstances. In the UK, as seen in the Brexit Referendum outcome, the provision of this EU support to more deprived areas was so engrained in local life that local politicians could not understand why it was not being maintained after the UK left the EU. Elsewhere in Europe, this local role of the EU is perhaps better understood.

Yet the EU's initiatives at the substate level have not always been welcomed by member state governments who have regarded these Cohesion programmes as undermining their own