

## Germanophobia in Switzerland

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

SSG Sozialwissenschaften, USB Köln

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Helbling, M. (2010). *Germanophobia in Switzerland*. (Discussion Papers / Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Forschungsschwerpunkt Zivilgesellschaft, Konflikte und Demokratie, Abteilung Migration, Integration, Transnationalisierung, 2010-702). Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung gGmbH. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-238071>

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Marc Helbling

## Germanophobia in Switzerland

May 2010

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**Order no.: SP IV 2010-702**

discussion paper



## **Abstract**

This paper considers two common assumptions that often arise in the empirical literature on xenophobia—namely that xenophobic attitudes are found mostly among the poorly educated, and that xenophobia mainly concerns immigrants from low social classes and from geographically and culturally disparate nations. These arguments will be discussed in the context of the migration of high-skilled Germans to Switzerland, a phenomenon that has increased markedly in the last few years, leading to major controversies. A survey conducted in the city of Zurich has shown that Germans are considered less likable than other Western Europeans. Over the course of my analyses, two arguments are tested. First, I consider whether the boundaries between culturally similar groups are actually less fragile than those occurring between more dissimilar groups. Following this line of reasoning, we consider whether Swiss-Germans' popularly evoked "inferiority complex" towards Germans might lead Swiss-Germans to perceive German immigration as a cultural threat. Second, I consider whether well-educated people in high positions may feel threatened by new arrivals who are similarly well-educated. This rationale corresponds to the classic argument that working class people are xenophobic out of a fear that immigrants will take their jobs. Ultimately, this study finds empirical support for both arguments.

*Keywords:* education, German migration, realistic individual threat, symbolic group threat, Switzerland, xenophobia

## Zusammenfassung

Das Paper hinterfragt zwei in der Forschungsliteratur zu Fremdenfeindlichkeit gängige Annahmen und Befunde, die besagen, dass fremdenfeindliche Einstellungen vor allem unter gering gebildeten Angehörigen der Mehrheitsgesellschaft zu finden seien und sich in der Regel gegen Migranten aus unteren sozialen Schichten und aus geographisch wie kulturell fernen Ländern richten würden. Überprüft werden diese Annahmen im Kontext der deutschen Einwanderung in die Schweiz, die in den letzten Jahren stark angestiegen ist und spürbare Kontroversen ausgelöst hat. Eine in der Stadt Zürich durchgeführte Umfrage hat ergeben, dass Deutsche im Vergleich zu anderen Westeuropäern als weniger sympathisch angesehen werden. Zwei Argumentationen werden untersucht: Zum einen wird die Hypothese überprüft, dass Grenzen zwischen Gruppen, die sich kulturell sehr nahe stehen, nicht notwendigerweise leichter zu überwinden sein müssen. Der mitunter angeführte Minderwertigkeitskomplex der Deutsch-Schweizer gegenüber Deutschen könnte dazu führen, dass die deutsche Einwanderung als kulturelle Bedrohung empfunden wird. Zum anderen ist es auch möglich, dass sich Bessergebildete in höheren beruflichen Positionen durch vergleichbar gut gebildete Zuwanderer durchaus bedroht fühlen. Diese Hypothese entspricht dem klassischen Argument, dass Angehörige der Arbeiterklasse deswegen fremdenfeindlich sind, weil sie befürchten, ihre Jobs an Immigranten zu verlieren. Beide Hypothesen werden in dieser Studie empirisch belegt.

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## Highly skilled migration in Europe and Switzerland

The third wave of migration since World War II in Western Europe, which started in the late 1980s, has consisted to a large extent of refugees, asylum seekers, illegal migrants and people rejoining their families (Geddes 2003: 17-19; Messina 2007: 39-46; Schain 2008: 1-4). Accordingly, the migrant that one typically has in mind comes from outside Western Europe and most often from a country with a Muslim background. Moreover, the average migrants have lived before in the countryside, which make them even more culturally distant and increases the probability that they are badly educated and from a low social classe. As a result, xenophobic attitudes are often explained by the fact that people consider these newcomers as a threat to their own culture. Moreover, people from low social classes that potentially compete with immigrants on the job market fear to lose their jobs and thus perceive them as an economic threat (Stephan et al. 2008).

One however forgets that an increasing number of highly qualified people are migrating to other countries (Deutsche Bank Research 2006: 19). International flows of highly skilled migrants are an important aspect of the global economy and become more and more important for both employers and states to maintain competitive advantage (Koser and Salt 1997). Even if they have not been very successful, since the late 1970s West European states have tried to restrict the immigration of highly skilled migrants. Moreover, the European integration process has led to increasing migration within the European Union (Geddes 2003: ch.6). To be clear, this kind of immigration is still rather exceptional. More importantly, so far it has not been politicized and thus does not yet constitute a challenge to Western European states. Nonetheless, one might ask what would happen if the average immigrant came from a culturally similar country, with a high level of education and from a high social class? Would the cultural threat of immigration disappear, and would people from high social classes begin to feel economically threatened?

One exception where highly skilled migration has already led to major controversies is Switzerland. Especially in the city of Zurich violent debates about German migrants could be observed over the last years. In the biggest city of Switzerland Germans now make up the largest immigration group thereby even outnumbering Italians, the traditional immigration group to Switzerland, and immigrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, that constitute another major and more typical migration group. It is rather difficult to explain reactions towards German migration in Switzerland as very little research has been done on how people react towards immigrants who do not come from culturally distant countries and who are not from low social classes or badly educated.

Henk Dekker and his colleagues have investigated attitudes of Dutch people towards Germans and Germany (Dekker and Jansen 1995; Aspeslagh and Dekker 1998; Du Bois-Reymond et al. 1999; Dekker et al. 2007). They have however not investigated attitudes towards German immigrants but towards Germans in Ger-



many. Even if their results yield some explanation of attitudes towards immigrants that are culturally and economically similar, they treat a different question. It is reasonable to believe that attitudes towards foreigners in general (who live in another country) are different from attitudes towards immigrants in one's country (people who live among us). It has been shown that attitudes towards immigrants in general are much more tolerant than when concrete questions of immigration and integration are treated (Koopmans et al. 2005: 99). There is a similar problem in Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007). As one of the only studies they differentiate between attitudes towards immigrants from richer and poorer countries inside and outside Europe. However, contrary to immigration from poorer countries outside Europe, respondents have most likely never experienced immigration from richer countries inside Europe. Such questions thus concern a purely hypothetical social phenomenon, and one that has not yet been politicized—especially if we take into account that respondents have been asked about abstract and not concrete categories such as Turks or Germans. It can thus again be assumed that respondents indicate much more generous positions if this kind of immigration is not in sight.

To my knowledge, the only research focusing on highly educated immigrants has been done on attitudes towards Soviet migrants in Israel (Shamai and Ilatov 2001; Halperin et al. 2007; Canetti-Nisim et al. 2007). These Soviet migrants are however culturally quite different from Israeli Jews: Their Russian cultural identity and especially their Orthodox Christian faith, which they practice publicly and openly, have triggered perceptions of cultural threat (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2007: 93; Halperin et al. 2007: 183). In a country where religion plays an important role this aspect is crucial and might explain why in these studies threat perception has a similar impact on attitudes not only towards Soviet migrants, but also towards Palestinian citizens of Israel and labor migrants.

While all these studies yield some preliminary findings on how people react to highly educated immigrants, things become more complicated when the new arrivals share similar cultural values to those of their host nations. In Western Europe where religiosity is very low this mainly concerns people that share the same liberal values. To investigate such a phenomenon in this paper, I focus on reactions towards German migrants in Switzerland. In the next part I will present relevant trends in the immigration of Germans and people of other nationalities into Switzerland, alongside Swiss attitudes towards these different nationalities. It will appear, unsurprisingly, that attitudes towards people from West European countries are much more positive than those towards people from other regions. Among the West Europeans, however, Germans have by far the most negative image. I will then develop and test two arguments that might help us explain germanophobic attitudes and that are related to the perception of cultural and economic threat.

One might expect the Swiss not to perceive Germans as a cultural threat as they are, at least at first sight, culturally similar. This argument can however be ques-

tioned in two ways. First, we must differentiate between objective similarity and subjectively perceived dissimilarity. As we will see, the cultural difference between Germans and Swiss-Germans is considered to be very large in Switzerland. Second, some argue that boundaries between groups that are culturally very close are not necessarily less fragile.

In a second step I consider the common argument that the working class people are often xenophobic as they fear that immigrants take their jobs. As we are confronted with highly educated immigrants, it might be that in our particular case well-educated people in high positions feel threatened by the new arrivals. This would contradict the argument that better-educated people are more tolerant as they are more open-minded and have greater cognitive capacities for differentiated perceptions.

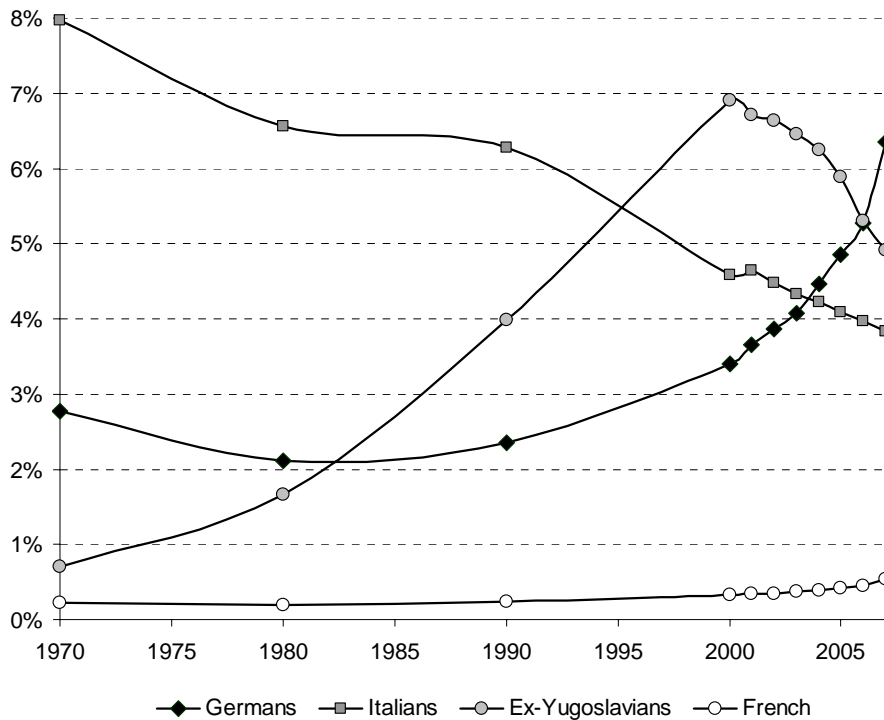
## **German migration and attitudes towards Germans**

On 20 November 2008 the Swiss quality newspaper 'Tages-Anzeiger' headlined: 'Der Zustrom von Deutschen beschleunigt sich massiv' (The inflow of Germans accelerates immensely). Almost two years before, on 5 February 2006, the 'NZZ am Sonntag', another quality newspaper, had already announced that 'Die Hochdeutschen kommen' (The High-Germans are coming). German migration to Switzerland has increased sharply in the course of the last ten years. Since 2005, they have constituted the second biggest group of immigrants in Switzerland before the Italians and after the Portuguese. In 2007, there were almost 250'000 German residents in Switzerland—and about 336'000 from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, 290'000 Italians and 193'000 Portuguese. In Zurich—the biggest city of Switzerland with around 380'000 inhabitants in 2008 and 31 per cent of immigrants—German immigration has been even more pronounced relative to the rest of Switzerland. Figure I shows the progress of various groups of immigrants between 1970 and 2007 in the city of Zurich. After a slight decrease during the 1970s, German immigration is shown to increase at the beginning of the 1990s. Since 2004, Germans constitute the biggest group of immigrants in the city of Zurich. They have even outnumbered Italians, the traditional immigration group to Switzerland, and immigrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, that constitute another major and more typical migration group.

The growth of German migration can be explained by the increasing demand for high quality jobs in Switzerland (Sheldon 2008; Dahinden 2008). Moreover, the bilateral treaties between Switzerland and the European Union have made it easier for Swiss employers to employ people from countries of the European Union. The distribution of immigrants' origins has thus completely changed in the course of the last decade (Sheldon 2008; see also Pecoraro 2005). For a long time more than half of all immigrants in Switzerland had no vocational education and less than 20 per cent a university degree. In the meantime, this relationship has re-

versed: almost 60 per cent of those who immigrated in the last years have a university degree and less than 20 per cent lack professional training. It can be assumed that it is due to the geographical proximity and the similar language, that among the new arrivals in Zurich there are mainly Germans.

**Figure I:** *Development of selected groups of immigrants in the city of Zurich (percentages of the entire population)*



Sources: Bundesamt für Statistik (Statistisches Lexikon der Schweiz, Eidgenössische Volkszählungen), Statistik Stadt Zürich.

Notes: Between 1970 and 2000 the results from the national population census that takes place every ten years, are reported. Since a large increase of German immigrants occurred in the last years, for the period after 2000 percentages for each year are reported. From 2001 onwards, the group „Ex-Yugoslavia’ includes migrants from the following countries: Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.

To better understand attitudes towards Germans, we will contrast them below with attitudes towards the more typical migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. This group of migrants has also grown larger in the last decades, but for different reasons: In the 1970s and 1980s they migrated to Switzerland due to the increasing need for cheap labor force. Later, the effects of family reunification and the wars in the Balkans further increased the number of this group of immigrants (Gianni 2005: 13-14; CFR 2006: 7-8). Since most immigrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia have a Muslim background, as in many other West European countries this trend has also increased and led to controversies over how to integrate them (Helbling 2008; Widmer and Strebel 2008; Dolezal et al. 2010). The relatively sharp decrease after 2000 can be explained by a number

of different factors: general decrease of immigration from this region, naturalizations, repatriations after the war and relocations to the suburbs of Zurich.

What are the reactions towards the new arrivals from Germany? On 27 February 2007, the Swiss tabloid 'Blick' reported about a raucous bawling of Swiss tourists in an Air Berlin flight to Mallorca shouting 'Usse, usse, usse mit de Tüütsche' (Get out, Germans!). And on 14 January 2008 the 'Neue Zürcher Zeitung' published a letter to the editor complaining about the 'Rücksichtslose, aggressive, alemannische Barbaren' (Reckless, aggressive, Alemannic barbarians). Countless articles with similar headlines appeared in Swiss newspapers over the last several years (see Imhof 2008). Various TV-programs have reported about the attitudes of Swiss citizens towards the new arrivals and public debates have been organized. It has been discussed whether or not it is acceptable that Germans announce tramway stations in High German and whether or not it is a problem that Germans work as moderators for local radio stations where mostly Swiss German is spoken.<sup>1</sup>

The debate has taken a new turn since the president of the student council of the University of Zurich complained in an interview to the 'Tages-Anzeiger' (19 December 2007) that there were too many German professors at the University of Zurich, that it was difficult for Swiss students to communicate with them and that they often arrived with their own staff thus making it more difficult for Swiss students to get jobs as research assistants at the university. This interview and the following violent reactions relate the 'German-topic' to a concrete object: academic positions (Imhof 2008: 176). Now, at the latest, it must have become clear that the debate over German arrivals is different from other controversies about immigrants. This time not poorly educated migrants from culturally distant countries are the subject of debate, but well-educated people from a neighboring country speak (almost) the same language.

While the complex relationship between the Swiss and the Germans has already been the subject of a few scholarly works (Altwegg and de Weck 2003; Pecoraro 2005; Müller-Jentsch 2008; Dahinden 2008), a systematic analysis of the extent of germano-phobic attitudes, how they could be explained from a social-scientist perspective and whether or not they are comparable to reactions to other immigration groups is missing. This can partly be explained by the fact that most of the relevant surveys did not include questions to measure indicators that are normally used in studies on xenophobia. The only survey that included relevant questions and that will be used in the analyses below was conducted between

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<sup>1</sup> For those not familiar with the 'language-situation' regarding Swiss- and High-German, some clarifications are necessary: Germans (and especially the well educated that migrate to Switzerland) speak what is commonly called 'High-German' that is very close to the written German. Swiss-Germans however (and even the well educated) speak a strong German dialect and High German only in formal situations (lecturers at the university, for example) or when non-native speakers like Swiss-French are present (see Lüdi 2008; Schläpfer et al. 1991).

October 1994 and March 1995 in the city of Zurich and included over 1'300 interviews with Swiss citizens that were between 18 and 65 years old.<sup>2</sup>

Although the survey was conducted at the place where the debate has been the most intense in the preceding years, it was undertaken at a time when German migration has already started to increase but has not yet reached the high levels we observe today (see Figure I). Thus, I am unable to measure the impact of the sharp rise in German migration. It might, however, be assumed that German immigration does not so much have a direct impact on attitudes towards Germans, but increases the explanatory power of other factors. Thus, if we already find some explanations for the mid-1990s, it can be assumed that these effects have increased with the growing number of German migrants.

Before we turn to explanations we must first ascertain the extent of germanophobic attitudes. The term 'germanophobia' connotes here negative attitudes towards persons that can be distinguished on national or ethnic terms. Following Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) I distinguish attitudes from cognition and behaviour (see also Duckitt 2003). For Ajzen and Fishbein (1975: 54, 64) an attitude is "a person's general feeling of favourableness and unfavourableness" and "an index of the degree to which a person likes or dislikes an object." Thus, the term "germanophobia" is used here interchangeably with the expression "dislike of Germans". This also makes clear that we do not investigate behavioural desire regarding Germans or real discriminatory behaviour.

Figure II displays the percentages of those people who find the different groups of immigrants 'not very likable' or 'not at all likable' (see also Stolz 2000: 131-33).<sup>3</sup> Three groups can be distinguished: There are first the immigrants from Southern and Western Europe towards whom hardly any negative attitudes can be found. It is particularly notable that Italians are the most liked immigrants, while at their arrival in the 1950s and 1960s they were the group of immigrants that attracted the most hostilities (D'Amato 2001; Niederberger 2004).

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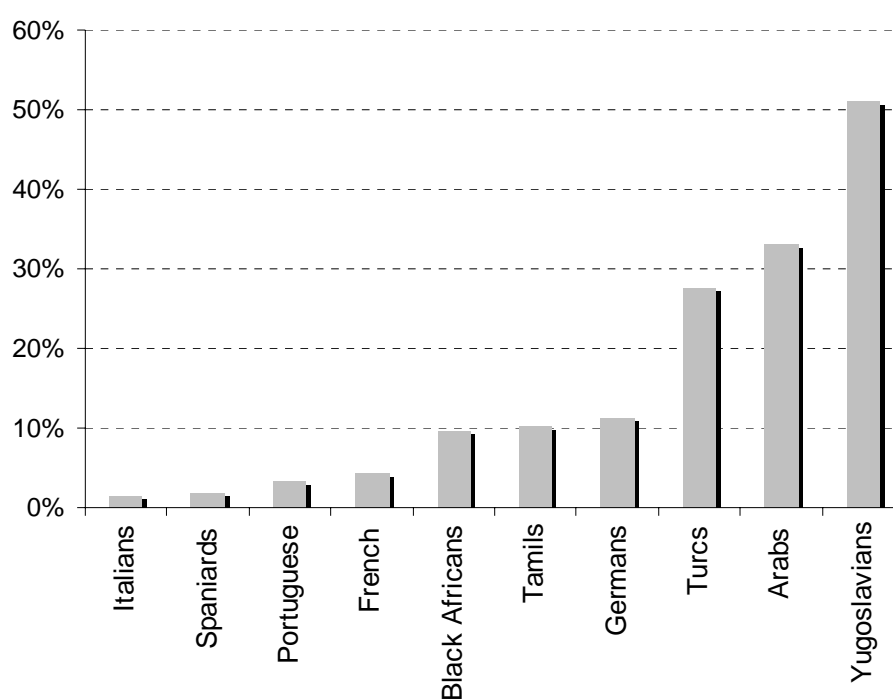
<sup>2</sup> The survey was organized by the Institute of Sociology of the University of Zurich. Since the interviews were conducted fact-to-face, the data collection took place over a relatively long period of six months. To my knowledge there was no event during that period that could have had an impact on attitudes towards Germans. The people were randomly chosen from the local residents' registration office (Einwohnerkontrolle) and the response rate was 72 per cent (see Stolz 2000: 336; 2001: 35).

There have also been other surveys that asked respondents how much they liked Germans and other groups of immigrants (Frei and Kerr 1974: 81; Frei et al. 1983: 47; Schläpfer et al. 1991: 148-150; UNIVOX 2002). The problem of the three older surveys is that data are not available. Moreover, they have not been conceptualized for the study of attitudes towards immigrants, but included many other topics and thus excluded many questions that would have been necessary for the present analyses. The more recent UNIVOX 2002 survey also lacks some crucial questions. I was however able to test the impact of some of my variables (education and job position) and came to the same conclusions as in Table I. Although attitudes towards Germans have been measured at different points in time, it is not possible to show a trend over time. As all surveys included different samples and formulated the relevant questions in different ways, it would be too dangerous to directly compare the relative numbers of people that expressed negative feelings towards Germans. It however appeared that in all surveys Germans are far more disliked than other Western nationalities. In 2002 Portuguese have been more disliked than Germans.

<sup>3</sup> The response categories were 'very likable', 'rather likable', 'not sure', 'not very likable' and 'not at all likable'.

At the other end of the scale in Figure II we have three groups that are most disliked: Turcs, Arabs and ex-Yugoslavians. More than half of all respondents indicated that they disliked people from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. In between we have black Africans, Tamils and Germans that are disliked by around ten per cent of the population of Zurich. There are hardly any black Africans in Zurich, as they migrate mostly to the French part of Switzerland. Tamils constitute another important migration group. Despite the fact that they come from both a geographically and culturally disparate country, they have a relatively good reputation and are regarded as very friendly and quiet (see Moret et al. 2007: 39).

**Figure II:** *Hostile attitudes towards immigration groups in the city of Zurich in 1994/95 (percentages)*



Source: Stolz 2000: 131-33.

## Arguments and explanations

In a survey conducted in 1998 in the Netherlands, Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007: 59) made a similar observation to ours concerning the reputation of Germans: They found that Germans are accepted as neighbours at a similar degree as Moroccans and refugees. The most popular groups in their sample were

Spaniards and Surinamese. Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007: 59) explain the high unpopularity of Germans with the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. Stolz (2001: 55n33) also brings up the historic experiences of World Wars I and II as one explanation for resentment towards Germans in Switzerland. Although Switzerland had not been occupied during World War II, the national-socialist heritage of Germany also had a negative impact in Switzerland. And this heritage still pops up from time to time in contemporary debates. Only recently, a deputy of the national parliament referred to the Nazi regime and their practices to express his displeasure with the German minister of finance who harshly criticized the Swiss banking secrecy.

Although the historical past of Germany might have an effect on negative attitudes towards Germans, it is impossible to test this argument with the data I have at hand. Let me therefore focus on two other arguments that have appeared in public debates here and there and that can also easily be related to broader discussions in the literature on negative attitudes towards immigrants. While the first relates to the question of whether German migrants might pose a cultural threat, the second refers to the possibility that they might constitute an economic threat to well educated Swiss in high positions.

At first blush, Germans appear very similar to their Swiss counterparts regarding cultural aspects. It might therefore be expected that cultural threats are absent. Following Stephan et al. (1998: 560) I define cultural threat as the perceived harm caused by immigrants with distinct morals, norms and values. When an individual believes that his or her culture is threatened by increasing cultural heterogeneity, that person has more negative feeling towards immigrants. However, it is not so much relevant how objectively similar or dissimilar two groups are, but rather how the differences between the two groups are subjectively perceived. Zarate et al. (2004) rightly argue that the quality of the similarity/dissimilarity and thus the importance that is attached to specific characteristics is crucial. Two groups might be similar with regard to a large range of characteristics that are considered unimportant. There might none the less be tensions between the two groups if they can be differentiated on the basis of one trait that is considered fundamental by one or both groups.

In other words, the ranking of outgroups closer or further away from the ingroups depends not primarily on objective criteria such as language, religion, nationality, skin color etc., but rather on what is socially and culturally acceptable in a group. From a social constructivist perspective any trait of group members—some of course more easily than others—can be instrumentalized to differentiate one group from another. A large range of experiments have shown that even randomly assigned groups develop group identities in a very short period of time (Tajfel 1981; 1982).

A case in point is Sniderman's et al. (2000) study on prejudice in Italy in which they reported no difference in attitudes toward immigrants from Africa and East-

ern Europe (they are both similarly disliked) although these groups look differently and come from very different regions. With regard to Swiss-German/German relationships it is interesting to see what Schläpfer et al. (1991: 151-4) revealed in a survey among Suisse recruits: They have shown that 40.1 per cent of their respondents indicated that the characteristic differences between Germans and Swiss Germans are rather large. With regard to Austrians, 30.4 had such an opinion. On the other hand, only 10.9 and 13.6 held the opinion that there are rather large characteristic differences between French and Swiss French, respectively Italians and Swiss Italians.

Why are Germans considered so different from Swiss-Germans? For many there are two reasons why Swiss Germans dislike Germans: They are jealous of the cultural, political, scientific and other achievements of Germans and feel inferior, as most Swiss Germans do not speak High German as eloquently as Germans (Stolz 2001: 55n33; Schläpfer et al. 1991: 126-61; Teuwsen 2003: 154; Bichsel 2003: 159-63). Especially the language issue between Swiss Germans and Germans is a very good example for how seemingly minor differences can be instrumentalized to draw group boundaries: Although the languages are 'objectively' very similar, the rather small differences lead to major controversies.

Jetten et al. (1998) demonstrate that groups that are too similar (as well as groups that are too different) are perceived more negatively by each other than moderately different groups. Borrowing from Sigmund Freud's terminology, Theiler (2004: 648) argues that a situation as we observe it between Swiss Germans and Germans has the potential to result in a kind of 'narcissism of minor difference'. For Theiler, small cultural differences between groups are particularly likely to lead to tensions. Nonexistent cultural boundaries usually mean that there is no competition between groups and thus no danger for the culture of a group. On the other hand, large cultural boundaries that are stable are perceived as secure. Small cultural differences, however, are fragile and often result, so Theiler's (2004: 648) argument runs, in 'subconscious fears of insufficient separation from and damaging exposure to the other category.' Pointing to the same phenomenon, Zürn (1998: 269) argues that the 'narcissism of minor difference' is the result of increasing transnationalism that reduces the differences between nation-states and leads to a situation in which seemingly rather minor cultural differences are emphasized.

The assumption that large cultural boundaries should be perceived as unproblematic can be challenged in many ways. It suffices to recall how many times we have heard right-wing populists exclaiming that for example Muslim immigrants threaten our culture, as they are too different from us. Speaking of different groups that have the same culture is also somehow problematic as it could be argued that it is simply useless to speak of different groups if they are culturally the same. Despite this criticism Theiler's and Zürn's argument is still useful, as it makes clear that (objective) cultural closeness does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of tensions between groups.



The particular situation in Zurich forces us to also question another empirical regularity in the literature on xenophobia and prejudice. Various studies have shown that well educated persons have more positive feelings towards newcomers (Wagner and Zick 1995; Vogt 1997; Hagendoorn and Nekuee 1999; Hjerm 2001; Heyder 2003). It is often argued that education influences our cognitive faculties, social competences, value orientation and social status (Heyder 2003: 78). It is however disputed why and how education reduces xenophobia. Some argue that individuals with a low level of education have limited cognitive capacities for differentiated perceptions and information processing and are therefore inclined to stereotypical thinking and much more susceptible to interpersonal influence (Case et al. 1989; Hyman et al. 1990; Maykovich 1975; Stouffer 1955; Wagner 1982). Others hold the opinion that better-educated people mix in a social environment where xenophobic attitudes are considered undesirable (see Kühnel and Schmidt 2002: 85). Still others argue that educated people are socially and economically better integrated and thus do not perceive immigrants as competitors in the job market.

Hello et al. (2006) set out to test the different arguments concerning the impact of education on negative prejudices. They found that cognitive sophistication and open-mindedness have a negligible importance for the explanation of the educational effect. In their study, perceived threat turned out to be the most important factor. In a similar vein, Halperin et al. (2007) found that the significant effect of education on social distance is mostly mediated by the perception of cultural and economic threat. In other words, better-educated and positioned people are less prejudiced against immigrants as they do not compete with them in the job market. But what happens when immigrants are also well educated? If Hello et al. (2006) and Halperin et al. (2007) are right we should observe that well educated Swiss are not less hostile towards German migrants than other people. We should thus observe different relationships between education and attitudes towards Germans and nationalities that do not compete with highly educated Swiss.

If education is most closely linked with economic threat perception, we should also observe differing impacts when it comes to social class and job position and attitudes towards immigrants from high and low social classes. Such socio-economic variables are known in the literature as the natural "partners" of level of education (Halperin et al. 2007: 190). It is often argued that globalization and the opening of national markets mainly pose problems for people from lower social classes (Bornschiefer and Helbling 2005: 32-6). It has been shown that such people more readily vote for radical-right and populist parties (Mughan et al. 2003; Kitschelt and McGann 1995) and that these so-called losers in the globalization processes perceive immigrants as competitors on the job market. According to the realistic group conflict theory the competition for access to limited resources leads to conflicts between groups (Stephan et al. 2001: 560). The realistic threats posed by out-groups concerns among others the economic power and material well-being of the in-group or its members. A group is considered as a competitor

if it is similar to the in-group on the relevant dimension (Zarate et al. 2004: 100). Since German migrants mostly look for high status jobs they rather compete with the winners of globalization. For the same reasons low-skilled workers are prejudiced against low-skilled immigrants, it might be that highly skilled Swiss fear the new competitors.

To a certain extent the cultural and economic arguments that I have discussed so far can be related to each other. To put economic competitors in a negative light, they are often ascribed negative (cultural) characteristics. Various studies have shown that high-status immigration groups are, indeed, considered as highly skilled, but otherwise described with negative characteristics. For Fiske et al. (2002) stereotypes consist of the two dimensions warmth and competence. For them, status and competition predict differently which attitudes we have towards others. In their US study they show that for example Asians are positively seen as highly competent in their professions. But since they are in competition with US Americans they are also perceived as cold. Phalet and Poppe (1997) have shown in their study on Central and Eastern European stereotypes that groups such as Bulgarians and Czechs are often described as moral/social, but incompetent whereas other groups such as Germans and Jews are seen as immoral/unsocial, but competent. In the dataset I use for the following analyses there is no information on how Germans in Zurich are exactly seen. However, Frei et al. (1983: 49) reveal in their study among Swiss recruits that Germans are perceived as very hard-working, very reliable, and progressive, but also as very power-hungry. Moreover and in comparison with Swiss they are seen as less generous, less jovial and more aggressive (Frei et al. 1983: 51; for similar findings in the Netherlands see Dekker and Jansen 1995; Aspeslagh and Dekker 1998; Du Bois-Reymond et al. 1999).

## **Analyses and results**

My dependent variable is operationalized with the questions I have already used in Figure II. Respondents were asked how likable they find Germans. As they could choose among five categories ('very likable', 'rather likable', 'not sure', 'not very likable' and 'not at all likable') I will run an ordered logistic regression analysis (see Table I).

As of the cultural threat argument, it is difficult to operationalize the respective concepts and to find indicators that measure the potential inferiority complex towards Germans with quantitative survey data that have not been collected for the research question discussed here. To test whether or not cultural aspects might influence negative attitudes towards Germans I have however a question at hand that asked respondents whether or not they agree that Swiss characteristics are in danger (agree=1). There is no specific question in the questionnaire whether Germans or any other nationalities put Swiss characteristics in danger. This

might however also be seen as an advantage as this reduces the danger of politically correct answers.

It can be assumed that people who have an inferiority complex towards another culture at the same time fear that immigrants from that group put in danger their own culture. In studies on xenophobia this question is also commonly used to operationalize anomia, describing disorientation and insecurity triggered by rapid and profound social changes (Hüpping 2006: 86). As we know, also small cultural differences between the dominant ethnic group and new immigrants can lead to cultural fears (Theiler 2004: 648).

Since German migrants compete with the winners of globalization it might be that better educated and positioned persons are more likely to have negative feelings towards German migrants. To measure the impact of education, I employ a dichotomized indicator differentiating whether or not a respondent has a general qualification for university entrance (A-level=1). For the impact of job position I use two indicators. The first solicited respondents about their current job position and let them choose from a list of 16 categories. Following Stolz (2000), I dichotomized this indicator by distinguishing employers, foremen, craftsmen, clerks and employees with middle and high responsibilities from people with no responsibilities (middle/high responsibility=1).

To measure the effect of competition we should not only look at those who already have a high position, but also—and perhaps more importantly—at those who seek to improve their position. They might even more consider others a danger on the job market. This variable was operationalized with a question asking respondents whether or not they like to improve their job position (yes=1). Finally, it might be especially interesting to see whether those who already have a good position and who would still like to improve it are particularly germanophobic. I therefore let 'job position' and 'desire for job improvement' interact in my model. Finally, I also control for sex (men=1) and age.

Analysing attitudes towards a specific group of outsiders bears the danger of measuring attitudes towards outgroups in general. It might very well be that those who dislike Germans have prejudices against all immigrants. The question is thus whether prejudice reflects dislike of a particular group or minorities in general (see Ray and Lovejoy 1986; Duckitt and Mphuthing 1992; Sniderman and Haagendorn 2007: 53-62; Helbling 2010). I therefore tested whether or not my model has the same impact on attitudes towards immigrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, who constitute the second increasing and controversial immigration group in Switzerland. Since those immigrants correspond much more with the common image of poor and low educated immigrants it will be particularly interesting to see whether or not the independent variables have the same impact on both indicators.

The results are reported in Table I. Since I lose a lot of cases when I include the indicators for 'job position' and especially 'job improvement'<sup>4</sup> I ran separate models to ensure that both the full and the restricted samples were part of the same population. As we will see, there were no substantial differences between the two samples. Let us first look at the interrelationship between the independent variables and the attitudes towards people from the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Model 4). The results are largely consistent with the dominant arguments in the literature: Those who fear that Swiss traditions are in danger dislike this group of immigrants significantly more than others. As we expected, education yields negative impact—better-educated people have less negative prejudices towards immigrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the indicators that measure job position and the intention to improve one's position have no impact. Sex and age have no influence either.

Let us now turn to the attitudes towards Germans (Model 2). As we see, people who fear that Swiss characteristics are in danger are also more germanophobic than others. It appears that cultural threat is not only triggered by immigrants that are objectively culturally very different but also by groups that seem very similar at first sight. Indeed, the perceived characteristic differences between Swiss Germans and Germans that other studies (Schlöpfer et al. 1991: 151-4; Frei et al. 1983: 51) have already revealed lead to negative attitudes towards Germans.

The socio-structural variables demonstrate a different pattern of impact factors when it comes to Germans and Ex-Yugoslavians. Contrary to what most studies on prejudice and xenophobia have found, highly educated people do not have less hostile attitudes towards Germans than less educated persons. What about job positions? While people with high positions do not have different attitudes towards Germans compared to those with low positions, the desire to improve one's position significantly increases negative feelings towards Germans. It appears that those who already have good jobs and are satisfied with their work are not afraid of well-educated immigrants taking away their jobs. However, those who still have to compete on the job market are more germanophobic than others. In this regard, it is also interesting to observe that older people are less germanophobic than younger people. Remember that respondents are between 18 and 65 years old. Thus, the younger people in our sample are fresh on the job market and are about to start their careers whereas older ones are more likely to have already reached their desired job position. As much as people in high positions are no longer afraid of foreign competitors, older people are significantly less germanophobic.

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<sup>4</sup> The question on job improvement has only been asked to the persons who had a job at the time of the interview (N=1'024, 77 percent of the entire sample).

**Table I:** *Dislike of Germans and Ex-Yugoslavians, ordered logistic regression analyses, standard errors in brackets*

	Germans		Ex-Yugoslavians	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Swiss characteristics	0.405***	0.328*	1.298***	1.263***
in danger	(0.121)	(0.141)	(0.128)	(0.150)
Education	0.066	0.029	-0.220*	-0.318*
	(0.107)	(0.127)	(0.106)	(0.126)
High position		0.165		0.114
		(0.191)		(0.195)
Improve job position		0.463*		0.295
		(0.238)		(0.242)
High position*improve job position		-0.349		-0.054
		(0.269)		(0.271)
Sex	0.020	-0.082	0.008	-0.051
	(0.104)	(0.119)	(0.103)	(0.119)
Age	-0.016***	-0.015**	-0.006	-0.002
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Cut 1	-1.749	-1.596	-2.997	-2.737
Cut 2	0.163	0.350	-1.569	-1.388
Cut 3	1.540	1.811	-0.063	0.143
Cut 4	3.598	3.821	1.978	2.220
N	1293	983	1281	975
LR chi2	23.87***	21.97**	120.92***	93.12***
Pseudo R2	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.03
-LL	1705.62	1279.20	1766.71	1341.05

Notes: Levels of significance: \* p≤0.05, \*\* p≤0.01, \*\*\* p≤0.001

## Conclusion and discussion

To my knowledge this is the first study that analyzes attitudes towards culturally and socially similar immigrants. Other works have investigated attitudes towards foreigners in other countries (Dekker and Jansen 1995; Aspeslagh and Dekker 1998; Du Bois-Reymond et al. 1999; Dekker et al. 2007), used abstract categories of immigrants from rich countries (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007) or focused on immigrants that are socially very similar but culturally very different (Shamai and Ilatov 2001; Halperin et al. 2007; Canetti-Nisim et al. 2007). German migration to Switzerland constitutes a relevant topic that has already led to major controversies. This allowed me to formulate and test two explanations and to see whether they are different from explanations of hostile attitudes towards more typical groups of migrants.

More generally, this study allowed me to shed new light on the relationships between ethnic groups in the enormous literature on xenophobia and prejudice. When treating these topics most often the reactions of dominant Western groups towards immigrants from culturally distant regions and low social classes are at the center of the debate. The relationships between culturally and socially similar groups are popularly considered unproblematic.

The findings of this study contradict two common assumptions in the research field of xenophobia and prejudice, namely that (objective) cultural distance between groups increases xenophobic attitudes and that better educated and socially better integrated persons have less negative prejudices against outgroups. We have seen in Figure II that, overall, Western Europeans are, indeed, much better accepted among the Swiss population than immigrants from the Balkans and regions outside Europe. Germans are however among the most disliked and especially considerably more disliked than other Western Europeans.

The question is of course how to measure cultural distance. While there is no space here to discuss this question, it appears in this study that culture consists of more than aspects such as language and skin color and that the construction of 'the other' is the result of a very complex process. It is much more important to look at how outgroups are conceived and what is socially and culturally acceptable in an ingroup. I was therefore interested in whether or not German cultural achievements had a durable negative impact in Switzerland and sparked sentiments of inferiority. It was highly interesting to see that German immigrants put in danger Swiss characteristics as much as immigrants from the Balkans.

Socio-economic factors turned out to be relevant, too. It is one of the most consistent findings in studies on xenophobia that well educated people are less prejudiced against immigrants (see Hello et al. 2006). I however found that education does not improve attitudes towards Germans. At the same time, we observed that people who are young and seek to improve their job position are significantly more germanophobic than those who are satisfied with their current job

situation and are already established. It appears that as much as low-skilled workers fear that poorly educated immigrants take their jobs, well-educated Swiss consider German immigrants as competitors on the job market. This confirms the findings of Hello et al. (2006) who found that the absence of a perceived threat explains why education is normally negatively correlated with xenophobia. As long as immigration groups consist of low-skilled workers that pose no threat, well-educated people have no negative attitudes towards them. This changes however when immigrants compete with the dominant group at a high level.

What else could explain germanophobic attitudes? It could be that Germans are much less considered as 'immigrants' as they are much less in economic need to migrate to a rich country like Switzerland than 'traditional' immigration groups. Thus, it could be that in a social environment where xenophobic attitudes are considered as socially not desirable, in general, it is not that much of a problem to speak negatively about Germans as they do not have the image of poor and helpless immigrants.

This would confirm the argument according to which better-educated people are less xenophobic as they mix in a social environment where xenophobic attitudes are considered as socially not desirable (see Kühnel and Schmidt 2002: 85). Sniderman and Carmines (1997) found in their experiments that some people are very much inclined to give socially desirable answers in surveys on xenophobia. They wanted to know whether whites in the United States would take advantage for expressing negative opinions towards blacks when they were given a perfectly good excuse to do it and when they believed no one could figure out how they felt. Sniderman and Carmines (1997) revealed that when it comes to general attitudes towards blacks, participants really mean what they say. However, when attitudes towards affirmative action were measured covertly it turned out that political liberals were just as upset about such policies as conservatives although liberals take much more tolerant positions in conventional surveys.

To test whether or not these assumptions are correct more research is needed. It would be especially useful to have data at hand that tell us what people understand by 'immigrants' and how they conceive different immigrant groups. Moreover, it would be particularly interesting to see whether the effects on germanophobia in Zurich that I have detected have increased along the growth of German immigration. I assume that especially the socio-economic factors have become even more valid than before as the growing number of high-skilled migrant workers has increased competition on the job market.

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