

Citation for published version

Rodon, T. [Toni], & Franco-Guillén, N. [Núria] (2014). Contact with immigrants in times of crisis: An exploration of the Catalan case. *Ethnicities*, 14(5), 650-675. doi: [10.1177/1468796813520307](https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796813520307)

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796813520307>

Handle

<http://hdl.handle.net/10609/150746>

Document Version

This is the Accepted Manuscript version.

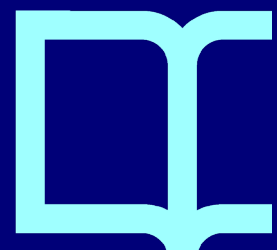
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Contact with Immigrants in Times of Crisis: An Exploration of the Catalan Case

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Acknowledgments

We thank Ricard Zapata-Barrero, Sergi Pardos-Prado and Veronica Benet for their invaluable contributions. We also thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments, which helped us to improve the manuscript. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Political Behaviour Seminar at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Both authors contributed equally to this work and are listed in inverse alphabetical order.

Introduction

There is little doubt that immigration poses important challenges to Western democracies. The arrival of newcomers forces governments to design public policies in order to integrate them into the labour market and into society in general. Besides, the existence of prejudices against ethnic diversity and immigrant groups has paved the way for the emergence and success of anti-immigrant and extreme right-wing parties. Thus, the understanding of how prejudices develop between individuals and what mechanisms help to reduce them is of major concern for both policymakers and researchers.

In this context, one of the most referred to mechanisms, highlighted by previous research, is *contact theory*. In general, the conventional wisdom in this literature is that contact with immigrants, especially close/friendship contact and family contact, helps in reducing prejudices, boosts mutual interests and creates a more intercultural society with intercultural societal interests (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Several authors have defended the view that knowing the 'others', especially those from a different culture, leads to a fading away of prejudices, false opinions or biased perceptions.

However, the effect of contact is not universally established and alternative explanations suggest that contact may lead to negative attitude towards immigrants. *Group threat theory* suggests that contact with immigrants, in particular workplace contact, fosters latent negative attitudes towards immigration especially when the immigrant group size is relatively large or the economic context entails competition over scarce resources, notably among lower economic status citizens.

Both theories offer relatively different approaches, which are sometimes linked to contradictory results. Despite recent efforts to test the validity of one or the other, we still lack a definitive conclusion. Not only do we not know whether contact with immigrants has positive or negative effects on an individual's attitudes towards migrants, but it is unclear what

type of contact leads to these effects. Therefore, this paper is aimed at testing the contact theory perspective and the group threat theory approach, putting to the test the contradictory findings of past research and analysing whether close/friendship contact, family contact, and workplace contact have positive or negative effects on attitudes towards immigration¹. Moreover, the analysis also integrates the micro-macro perspective adopted by the most recent research and tests whether the impact of contact is modified when context is taken into account.

In sum, we extend previous findings and integrate different approaches into a single and coherent analysis. Hence, we expect that the effect of contact is modified when the environment is taken into account, mainly when positive and negative economic situations are contemplated or when the 'opportunity of contact' (the size of the immigrant group) is considered. Both dimensions offer alternative explanations in order to understand the effect of contact on attitudes towards immigration. In other words, the following questions are analysed: Does contact with immigrants still have an impact in those contexts where the economy performs badly? Do respondents with close immigrant contact express lower levels of exclusionism than those without, regardless of the immigrant group size where the individual lives?

More interestingly, our hypotheses are analysed in the context of Catalonia (for the year 2010). The reason to study Catalonia is fourfold: Firstly, Catalonia is a stateless nation where its citizens report a distinct identity from the rest of Spain. The literature linking individuals with distinct or mixed national attachments and prejudices towards immigration is not very common in stateless Nations and, as many authors have argued², these cases deserve special attention, insofar as immigration poses additional distinct challenges to these societies. Secondly, Catalonia is one of the European regions that received more immigration during the early 2000s. Thirdly, it has experienced a harsh economic period since 2007. Finally, it sheds light on our knowledge about contact theory in new immigrant countries, which is still relatively scarce (Martinez and Hernández, 2009).

Our empirical analysis is based on a multi-level model, which takes into account the economic conditions and the size of the immigrant groups in different Catalan municipalities. By employing individual and self-reported measures of immigrant contact, we acknowledge that these measures can be endogenous to attitudes towards immigration. However, this should not preclude researchers from testing the different hypotheses, but rather to avoid causal terminology. Moreover, scholars have found that the relationship between contact and attitudes towards immigration persists even when taking into consideration participant selection (Herek and Capitanio, 1996).

Our results show that contact with immigrants—in the form of close contact and family contact—has an effect in reducing negative attitudes towards immigration. We find that close contact and family contact are significant, whereas contact in the workplace per se does not modify attitudes towards immigration. Interestingly, our analysis suggests that workplace contact effects are mediated by the economic context. Finally, we show that Catalan identity is related to positive attitudes towards immigrants, even when different types of contact are considered.

When contact with immigrants matters

Over the years, high levels of worldwide migration have correlated with increasingly negative attitudes towards immigrants (Esses et al., 1998). Having had implications on people's and governments' everyday life, this worldwide phenomenon has also triggered vivid academic debates in different fields and disciplines. One of the most productive subfields is related to perceptions towards foreigners among the native population (Simon and Keri, 2007; Nelson, 2009; Rustenbach, 2010). In particular, great efforts have been devoted in order to detect the factors that can reduce the negative reaction towards immigrant population.

Within this overall context, contact theory (or the *hypothesis of contact*) defends that frequent contact between natives and immigrants generates an impact on natives' prejudices against

immigrants. According to the conventional wisdom, by building social connections between natives and migrants, contact is supposed to diminish discriminatory attitudes, as well as emerging as a powerful tool to deal with the ghettoisation of some societies³. The original idea of early theorists (Allport, 1954), formulated in the US context in the 1950s, was that intergroup contact facilitated learning about the 'out-group', and this new knowledge in turn reduced prejudice. There is not, however, a clear and unidirectional link between contact and positive attitudes towards immigrants. While some authors have proved that contact with immigrants, especially close contact, reduces negative attitudes towards immigration (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006)⁴, others have shown that any type of contact can have no effect or even increase anti-immigrant attitudes (Fetzer, 2000; Rustenbach, 2010).

Part of these discrepancies may be based on the fact that two crucial aspects add complexity to the relationship between contact and attitudes towards immigrants. Firstly, according to some authors, what matters is not contact per se but the type of contact that individuals are exposed to. In this sense, not all types of contact have the same implications on natives' individual attitudes. For example, having a foreign family member (mainly due to intermarriage) or foreign friends (what is referred to as close contact) seem to be the type of contact that have a higher impact on reducing anti-foreigner exclusionism (Hamberger and Hewstone, 1997).

Secondly, even when the type of contact is considered, the literature often disregards that certain contextual factors can alter the conditionings in which contact can take place (Pettigrew, 2008). Contextual factors can be crucial when studying contact effects because different contexts make some individuals more likely to develop positive or negative attitudes. As Pettigrew stresses (2008, p. 187), 'rather than just a situational phenomenon, intergroup contact needs to be placed in a longitudinal, multilevel social context'. The two main contextual factors considered by the literature have been the size of the immigrant population and the competition hypothesis (economic context).

In regard to understanding the size of the immigrant group and its effects, it is necessary to return to the fundamentals. When Williams (1947) and Allport (1954) were fashioning intergroup contact theory, they sought to specify the positive features of those contact situations that could maximize the potential for contact to promote positive intergroup outcomes. Consequently, 'opportunity of contact' was considered a pre-condition for contact theory. Following this reasoning, one might expect that those citizens living in areas with high levels of immigration are more likely to be in contact with immigrants and, according to Allport's insights, ultimately develop positive attitudes towards immigration. Some research seems to confirm this idea. Wagner et al. (Wagner et al., 2006) show that an increase in the percentage of ethnic minority members affords the majority a greater opportunity for intergroup contact and thus reduces the majority's prejudices. Stevens et. al (Stevens et al., 2008) also show that individuals living in a multicultural environment express lower feelings of exclusion. Similarly, McLaren (2003) showed that intimate contact with members of minority groups in the form of friendship reduces levels of willingness to expel legal immigrants from the country. In order to introduce the role of context, she found that the environment mediates the effect of contact, helping to produce lower levels of threat perception in contexts of high immigration (see also (Strabac, 2011)).

However, the size of the immigrant group has not always been framed to produce positive effects. In another perspective, group threat theory (LeVine and Campbell, 1972) argues that contact enhances the prejudices against immigrants, especially when contact is superficial (Pettigrew et al., 2007). This literature argues that latent underlying prejudices against immigrants can emerge when the environment becomes multi-ethnic. Consequently, where there is an important presence of immigrants or in contexts where immigrants represent a higher portion of the population, contact can result in an increase in threat perception (Pettigrew et al., 2007, pp. 41–425; Savelkoul et al., 2011; Stephan and Stephan, 1985). Moreover, Meuleman et. al (2009) show that country-specific evolutions in attitudes towards

immigration are shown to coincide with different national contextual scenarios (Meuleman et al., 2009; Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010)⁵.

The second contextual factor, or the competition hypothesis, is based on the claim that natives and immigrants compete over scarce resources. This suggests that contact between natives and foreigners enhances negative attitudes towards immigrants. It has been proposed that when competition over resources is present, proximity and contact increase intergroup hostility (Esses et al., 1998, p. 170). Under this framework, it is argued that competition exists between members of the native population, especially between those with lower occupational status and educational skills, on the one hand, and immigrants, on the other. As stressed by Simon (2007), immigrants pose the greatest threat to those of lower status—defined in terms of education, and income—because those of lower status fear competition for jobs, housing, schools and social services (see also Hoskin and Mishler (1983)).

Therefore, according to this argument, in times of economic hardship, the idea that migrants ‘steal our jobs’ becomes common in the public sphere. When the economy is shrinking, the impact of contact diminishes, especially contact in the work place. In general, immigrants are more likely to work in unskilled and lower-paid jobs. This also holds for those immigrants that are better educated and have been in the country for a longer period (Simón et al., 2011).

However, the competition for resources hypothesis contains shortcomings. Connor (1984) has previously discussed the exaggerated importance of economic factors in ethnic conflict. Moreover, in recent research, Rustenbach (2010) addressed this issue and included economic indicators to measure the interaction of economic competition and other sources of negative perceptions towards immigration. In his work, no significant correlations were found with regard to contact. Moreover, after analysing different European contexts, Schneider concluded that economic and social competition between groups play a lesser role in the explanation of cross-national differences in anti-immigrant attitudes than is often assumed (Schneider, 2008).

To sum up, the behavioural (personal contact between members of the majority and minority groups) and the contextual literature (the size of a minority group within a specified

geographic area and the economic context) are based on different expectations and, in fact, produce divergent findings. Although the literature has produced lots of works regarding the effect of contact, there are still many doubts regarding the effects of contact with immigrants. In an innovative approach, Stein et al. (2000) adopted a micro-macro perspective and examined jointly the impact of context and contact on negative attitudes towards immigrants. As they recognised, the interaction between behavioural and contextual measures of contact provides a more realistic test of the inter-group contact hypothesis. However, their work was strictly based on the American context and on a particular immigrant subgroup. As the authors recognise, “further research is necessary to understand this relationship fully” (Stein et al. 2000: 299).

This is precisely the aim of this article. Drawing on recent and sometimes contradictory findings (both theoretical and empirical), we test the different ideas in a single and comprehensive analysis. We do so by focusing on the Catalan case, which provides researchers with a complex but a distinct environment in which traditional hypotheses can be challenged.

Contact in context: the Catalan case

Next to the ambiguity of the results when testing contact theory, Catalonia emerges as an interesting case of study for several reasons: Most of the research in contact theory has focused on perception towards immigration in the United States (Allport, 1954; Dixon and Rosenbaum, 2004; McLaren, 2003). Recently, scholars have also analysed the European context (Hjerm, 2007; Strabac, 2011). However, the studies have been mainly centred in northern Europe or ‘old’ immigration countries, such as the Netherlands (Martinovic et al., 2009), the United Kingdom (Andreescu, 2011), Germany or France (Hamberger and Hewstone, 1997). Less attention has been paid to southern European countries such as Italy (Vezzali and Giovannini, 2011) or Spain (Escandell and Ceobanu, 2008). This is so despite the fact that in a

few short years, the speedy arrival of immigrants has led these countries to host similar levels of non-EU residents to the aforementioned ones.

Most of the research dealing with contact theories has been carried out with data collected during periods of economic growth. For example, Escandell and Ceobanu (2008) studied contact theory in Spain between 1991 and 2000—when immigration as a large-scale phenomenon began around 2002. Furthermore, it was during the early 2000s that immigration became an issue in the Spanish political agenda (Zapata-Barrero, 2012). This, together with the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, which has been especially harsh in southern Europe, may have had an impact on this—or any other—attitudinal dimension.

The Catalan case is not only relevant because it belongs to the southern European context, but also because, since 2000, Catalonia has been a large melting pot⁶. During the last decade, it has experienced a tremendous inflow of international immigrants. In 2002, roughly six per cent of the Catalan population had been born abroad. Six years later, in 2008, this figure had more than doubled as it reached 16 per cent. Catalonia has been the Spanish region where more immigrants have settled and one of the largest receivers of immigrants in Europe. In general, not only Catalonia, but also Spain as a whole has been transformed from a state with a statistically negligible immigrant population to one of the top ten (gross) receivers of international migrants in the world⁷. Figure 1 shows the evolution of immigration in both Catalonia and Spain since 2002. The steady increase in immigration since the early 2000s, as well as the stabilization of new arrivals from 2008 onwards, when the economic crisis changed the trend, can be clearly noticed.

Figure 1: Evolution of the immigrant population in Catalonia and in Spain, 2002-2010

[Figure 1 about here]

As a result, the immigrant stock in Catalonia, as a percentage of the total population, is now above the average immigration rate in Europe. The difference is that it took Europe around forty-five years to have a 10 per cent level of immigrant, whereas it took between ten and fifteen years for Catalonia.

Nevertheless, there are other important factors that make the study of Catalan attitudes towards immigration an interesting case (Zapata-Barrero, 2009). Catalonia has developed its own specific policies to integrate non-Spanish immigrants, which are also based on linguistic and social considerations. As a stateless nation, Catalonia demonstrates both distinct demographic, identity and socioeconomic realities in addition to different historical models of inclusion, developed since the arrival of internal migration from the rest of Spain during the mid-twentieth century (Shafir, 1995), but also after the arrival of international migration in the 90s. A distinct model of integration to the one developed in the rest of Spain has shaped the so-called *Catalan Way of Integration* (Franco-Guillén 2011)⁸. Briefly, this model tries to equilibrate the respect for diversity with the belonging to the Catalan community. It attempts to build a common framework respectfully with diversity and is concerned with social and national (Catalan) cohesion. According to this model, diversity and self-consciousness of belonging to one community that is plural has to be part of the same discourse (Ferrero-Turrión and Pinyol-Jiménez, 2009).

The literature linking stateless nations and immigration has normally taken the perspective of normative theory, given the specific challenges these territories have to face (Kymlicka, 2001). Some authors have focused on regional governments and stateless Nationalist and Regionalist Parties (2011, 2009). This literature mainly analyses how regional parties and regional governments respond to immigration from a multi-level perspective, sometimes going against what the central government and statewide parties propose. Despite their important contributions⁹, with the exception of Banting and Soroka (2012) who explored immigrant's feelings of belonging in the context of competing nationalisms (in Quebec), less attention has been paid to the individual level. National identity has been proved to be an important factor

that explains individuals' behaviour in different political issues, such as individuals' attitudes towards immigration (Sides and Citrin, 2007). However, it is still largely unknown how it works in those contexts where regional and national identities compete between each other.

In this sense, we do not know whether contact with immigrants works in a stateless nation (or whether it works differently) because it has not been tested yet. Despite the lack of theoretical and empirical research on contact theory in national minorities' contexts, there are some clues that can be used to build our expectations. The *Catalan Way of Integration* has been built upon the fact that more than half of the population has its origins outside Catalonia. Catalonia has traditionally had a more developed policy of immigration than does the rest of Spain, a policy that emphasises mutual dialogue and accommodation beyond the control measures. The Catalan model has pursued something other than multiculturalism or assimilation: it focuses on language acquisition and education as elements of integration and identification with the territory (Conversi, 2000; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2005; Hepburn, 2011). In particular, the Catalan language has been a core part of national identity in Catalonia. As Franco-Guillén and Zapata-Barrero (Forthcoming) explain, the Catalan language has often been portrayed not only as the most intimate part of Catalonia's soul but also ensuring its knowledge has been defended by policy makers as the main tool for granting equality of opportunities (see also Conversi, 1990). Moreover, immigration has been an integral part of the "modern Catalan system of reproduction" (Cabré, 1999). Therefore, Catalan identity may be related with lower levels of negative attitudes towards foreigners.

Individual identity is important to take into account because the construction of nationality that prevails in a given context affects the link between national identity and negative/positive attitudes towards migrants (Pehrson et al., 2009). In some contexts, national identity is linked to the preservation of the "traditional" identity, whereas in others it is related to the building of an inter-cultural society (Esses et al., 1998). In the Catalan case, there is, however, a lack of empirical evidence relating national identification and anti-immigrant attitudes. In a recent study, Barceló (2012) showed that Spanish national identification tends to be associated with a

negative reaction against immigrant population, although the relationship is only tested at the aggregate level¹⁰. Despite this lack of evidence, both the aforementioned idea of Catalonia as a land of welcome, and the defence of the Catalan language as a means for ensuring equality of opportunities suggests a civic pattern that would be coherent with a rather positive attitude towards immigration (Conversi, 1990).

This makes the study of Catalonia potentially relevant because it provides an interesting context in order to study an attitudinal dimension such as the effect of contact. Researchers tend to focus their attention on national politics and it is generally unknown whether some factors (such as contact theory) operate in the same way in stateless nations.

Hypotheses

In light of the contradictory findings in the literature, we test different hypotheses regarding the effect of contact over several contextual scenarios. In other words, we extend previous and sometimes unconnected findings and test whether the impact of different types of contact is modified when different contextual factors are taken into account. Moreover, we do so in the context of Catalonia, which provides a challenging framework for the theoretical arguments detailed above.

We first hypothesise that contact with immigrants engender positive attitudes towards immigrants. Therefore, citizens who have friendly interactions with immigrants express less prejudice and bigotry, as contact can lessen prejudice in racially and ethnically diverse settings. Formally,

H₁: Contact with immigrants fosters positive attitudes towards immigration.

As previously mentioned, although some researchers have found that the impact of contact is negative or neutral (Fetzer, 2000; Rustenbach, 2010), we stick to Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) findings: according to a recent meta-analysis of more than 713 independent samples, they found only 34 (less than 5 per cent) in which intergroup contact related to greater prejudice.

It is also necessary to take into account the type of contact. As shown by Hamberger and Hewston (1997), friendship and kinship contact have a stronger effect on positive attitudes towards immigrants than the effect engendered by family contact. At the same time, a weaker effect of workplace contact is also expected.

H_{1a}: Friendship contact and family contact with immigrants positively impact on the attitudes towards immigration, with the impact of the former being more important than the latter.

However, according to group conflict theory, workplace contact with immigrants is supposed to trigger interethnic conflict, especially among those of lower status.

H_{1b}: Workplace contact with immigrants fosters negative attitudes towards immigration, especially among lower status citizens.

Our argument is that the effects of friendships, family contact or workplace contact are not constant across different contextual situations. On some occasions, its predictive power will be higher but on other occasions, its capacity to modulate the attitudes towards immigrants will simply decrease or disappear. Therefore, we hypothesise the capacity of contact experience to lower the levels of exclusionism does not remain constant and it fundamentally varies depending on different contextual scenarios.

The first contextual factor to take into account is the economy. During times of economic hardship, the positive effect of contact with foreigners may be eclipsed by perceptions of the threat that immigrants may pose to the native population. During gloomy economic periods, job competition between migrants and the native population increases and as a consequence, negative perceptions about immigrants are more likely to spread. This idea brings forward the following hypothesis:

H₂: When the economy is shrinking, the positive effects of contact are reduced or disappear.

As previously mentioned, it is among lower status citizens that the effect should be more prominent. Hence:

H_{2a}: In contexts of economic hardship, the effect of workplace contact is especially negative among lower status citizens.

The relative size of the immigrant population is the second contextual factor to take into account. Immigration in Catalonia has significantly increased in the past decade. Even though the increase of the immigrant group has had an impact on the likelihood of contact in different areas related to the everyday life (school, neighbourhoods, work-place...), a higher presence of immigrants may foster foreigner exclusionism as it sparks social and racial tensions (Strabac, 2011). Recent comparative research demonstrates that group-size operates through individuals' perceptions, in other words, the perception of group size is much more important than real group size (Hjerm, 2007; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Strabac, 2011). However, we still do not know whether real-group size modifies the effect of contact. For some, the 'opportunity of contact' may provide the opportunity to reduce stereotypes and thus have a positive impact on attitudes towards immigration. For others, a higher presence of immigrants sparks racial tensions and trigger underlying negative attitudes towards immigration.

H₃: Immigrant group-size has an effect (positive or negative) on attitudes towards immigration

Finally, as previously mentioned, the Catalan case offers an interesting context because of the prevalence of the national debate. To our knowledge, few works have analysed the impact of subjective national identity (Spanish-Catalan) on prejudices towards immigrants. We expect that an individual's identity goes in line with the traditional public discourse on immigration made by Catalan nationalist parties: that is, immigration has been considered as an integral part of the modern Catalan system of reproduction and identity (Cabr , 1999). We expect the following:

H₄: Catalan national identification is associated with lower levels of negative attitudes towards migrants, regardless of (the type of) contact with the foreign population.

Research Design and data analysis

To test our hypotheses, we use data from the *Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió* (CEO) and, particularly, a survey carried out in 2010 that was focused on the opinion of Catalans towards different aspects related to immigration¹¹. This survey enables us to identify enough municipalities to carry out an analysis that includes both individual and contextual variables. By doing so, we are able to test how the contextual factors shape the effect of individual-level variables on the attitudes towards immigration.

To create the dependent variable, we have used three items tapping three different dimensions regarding individuals' opinions on immigration issues. More concretely, the survey includes three questions about whether they think immigrants 'steal our jobs', about protesting against building a new mosque and about students wearing the *niqab* at school as can be found in more detail in the appendix. Following previous works (Escandell and Ceobanu 2010), we have added these variables into a single index that ranges from 0 (null levels of foreigner exclusionism) to 13 (high levels of foreigner exclusionism).

As for the main independent variables, the most relevant terms are the three dimensions of contact. In the survey people were asked whether they had experienced any 'contact' with an immigrant. If the answer was affirmative, respondents were asked to detail what type of relationships this contact was based upon. Three options were given: Friendship (*close contact*), Family contact or Workplace contact. Accordingly, the empirical analysis includes three dummy variables specifying whether the respondent reported to have any of these three types of contact. Numbers show that 30.5 per cent of the respondents declared to have workplace contact with immigrants, 17.32 per cent contact within the family and 43.28 per cent affirmed that they have immigrant friends.

The model also includes several individual-level variables that can have an effect on the attitude towards immigrants. The first one is the perception of the number of migrants living in each respondent's municipality. The perceived size of minority populations has been proved to be

an important factor driving negative attitudes towards immigration (Semyonov et al., 2006). The question included in the survey was the following: 'Out of every 100 people living in your town/city, how many do you think were born outside the country?' The second question that we are able to include is the so-called subjective national identification. This variable ranges from 1, 'I feel only Spanish' to 5 'I feel only Catalan'. Third, we included different control variables tapping the individual's socioeconomic status: occupational status (1, unemployed; 0, employed) and income (1, individual earns less than 1000 Euros per month; 0, earns more than 1000 Euros per month). Models also control for individuals' left-right position, sex, age and education.

In line with our expectations, we also included two contextual variables. The first one was the average of the unemployment rate registered in each municipality in 2010, when the survey was carried out¹². The second contextual factor was the percentage of immigrant population in each municipality¹³.

Table I gives descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the models shown below.

[Table I about here]

Since individual and contextual variables are taken into account, the predictions of the hypotheses are tested with a multilevel model that includes cross-level interactions between contact and contextual characteristics that vary across municipalities. In that way the slopes of contact are allowed to vary depending on the contextual characteristics of the municipality (Bryk and Raudenbush, 2002). Multilevel modelling is well suited in order to avoid underestimating the standard errors, as well as overcoming the problems derived from ecological and individual fallacies (Lijphart, 1980; Seligson, 2002).

Our model can be defined as expressed in Equation 1. In this model, the *overall* relationship between y and x is represented by a straight line with intercept β_0 and slope β_1 . The intercept for a given group j is $\beta_0 + u_j$, where u_j is a group effect or residual. Thus, the intercept of the group regression lines is allowed to vary randomly across groups. Theoretically, it would have

been better to include a random term for contact because the effect of this explanatory variable is assumed to vary across groups. However, the low number of cases, both at the individual and the contextual level (N=47) precludes us from doing so. The requirements for the size of datasets are often large in order to detect significant interactions; therefore, we would need a larger dataset to estimate a random coefficients model. However, conventional interaction models allow the slope of a chosen variable to vary depending on the presence of contextual variables in order to test the conditional impact of this variable on the dependent variable, which is enough to assess if the conditional relationships predicted by the theory exist (Kam and Franzese Jr., 2007).

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ij} + u_j + e_{ij}$$

Table 2 reports the results of a random-intercept fixed-slopes hierarchical model with individual characteristics, contextual factors and cross-level interactions. In terms of model fit, the AIC and BIC indexes indicate that the second model fits the data better. On the other hand, as compared to the null model¹⁴, the second model specification—as well as the models with cross-level interactions—substantially accounts for the contextual variation of attitudes towards immigration between municipalities. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) indicates that a part of the variance of the intercept can be attributed to the second level (0.5 per cent approximately). ICC shows, however, that most of the variance to be explained is between-individuals and not between-municipalities.

[Table 2 about here]

The first column reports the unconditional effects of contact without controls or interactions. All of them are significant and negative. Model 2 reports the full model, including the individual and the aggregate level variables. Close contact is still significant and negative. Therefore,

having immigrant friends reduces prejudices against immigrants. Family contact is also significant and negative. However, as opposed to the previous model, workplace contact ceases to be significant. Taking model 2 coefficients, we plot the predicted foreigner exclusionism for the three types of contact (Figure 2). Confidence intervals between family contact and close contact overlap, so we cannot conclude that the effect of close contact is greater, although the coefficient was bigger.

Therefore, H1a is partially accepted: friendship and family contact impact positively on the attitudes towards immigration, but the effect of the former is not greater. Moreover, H1b is rejected: workplace contact with immigrants has no effect on attitudes towards immigration.

Figure 2: Predicted foreign exclusionism by close contact, family contact and workplace contact

[Figure 2 about here]

The model also reports that the perceived size of the immigrant community fosters foreigner exclusionism¹⁵. A one-point increase in the perceived presence of migrants in the place where the respondents lives, means foreigner exclusionism goes up by 0.25 points. Moreover, being right-wing and showing a greater Spanish national identity lead to higher levels of foreigner exclusionism. Being unemployed, earning less than 1000 Euros, gender, age and education have no effect.

As for the second-level variables, model 2 reports a negative effect of unemployment: where unemployment is greater, levels of foreigner exclusionism are lower. That is, in an environment where unemployment is high, attitudes towards immigration tend to be more positive. Finally, no effects are reported regarding of the impact of immigration size of each municipality.

H1b stated that negative attitudes towards immigration increased when workplace contact takes place, especially among lower status citizens. In this sense, Model 3 includes an

interaction between being unemployed and low-income citizens and workplace contact. Both interactions fail to reach statistical significance.

Regarding the effect of context, we hypothesised that in bad economic environments the positive effects of contact are reduced or disappear (H2). To test this hypothesis, we included cross-level interactions between the type of contact and unemployment rates in each municipality¹⁶. Model 4 reports the results for these three interactions. Only the interaction between workplace contact and unemployment rate is significant and negative.

To correctly interpret this interaction, we plot the marginal effect of this interaction, together with the 95 per cent confidence intervals. Figure 3 plots the effect of workplace contact on the negative attitudes towards immigration when unemployment rates increase. When the unemployment rate is low, the effect of workplace contact in reducing negative attitudes towards immigration is low. As unemployment increases, the effect of workplace contact increases. That is, unemployment positively affects the capacity of workplace contact to diminish negative stereotypes towards foreigners. As mentioned before, this is rather a surprising result, as one would expect that in bad economic contexts negative attitudes towards immigration would be more common.

Figure 3: Marginal effect of workplace contact on negative perception towards immigrants across local unemployment rates

[Figure 3 about here]

H2a hypothesised that the effect shown in the previous figure should be more intense among lower status citizens. In this sense we have calculated the predicted foreigner exclusionism by income type (those that earn more than 1000 euro against those that earn less than 1000 euro per month)¹⁷. As can be seen in Figure 4, these differences do not exist. In both cases, confidence intervals overlap.

Figure 4: Effect of workplace contact by income group and across different economic situations

[Figure 4 about here]

H3 was tested by three cross-level interactions between the type of contact and immigrant group-size. As mentioned in the theoretical section, the 'opportunity of contact' can be seen as a positive factor (meeting other cultures and reducing negative stereotypes) or negative (triggering underlying negative attitudes). Model 5 shows that none of the interactions is significant.

Finally, we wanted to test whether contact theory works differently when individuals' subjective national identification is considered. The following figure plots the effect of close contact on individuals reporting different national subjective identification, from "I feel only Spanish" to "I feel only Catalan". The effect on negative attitudes towards immigrants is calculated for those that have had close contact with immigrants and for those that do not have immigrant friends.

Figure 5 indicates that those without close contact with foreigners have higher levels of negative attitudes towards immigrants than those with foreign friends and that this is constant across different national subjective identifications. In fact, moving from "I feel only Spanish" to "I feel only Catalan" decreases negative attitudes towards immigrants and it does so regardless of whether the person has foreign friends. Therefore, this result corroborates H₄: Catalan national identification is associated with lower levels of prejudices towards immigrants, a result which contradicts some ideas that nationalist movements or identities are based on the exclusion of "others". At least in the Catalan case, feeling more Catalan than the average is always associated with having lower levels of prejudices towards migrants, even if the respondent does not have immigrant friends. This might well be related to how the Catalan identity has been framed in the last case, putting huge efforts on integrating different sensibilities and national realities (Zapata-Barrero, 2007).

Figure 5: The effect of close contact on individuals reporting different National Subjective Identifications

[Figure 5 about here]

Conclusions

In this article, we have tested contradictory hypotheses regarding the effect of contact on reducing/increasing negative attitudes towards immigration. Moreover, in line with the literature, we argue that context matters because it can change the conditions in which contact operates. In particular, we tested the effect of two contextual factors that *a priori* can affect the positive relationship between having contact with immigrants and attitudes towards immigration: immigrant group size and the economic environment. To do so, we selected the case of Catalonia for two important reasons: First, Catalonia represents a new immigration region and has been experiencing an important economic crisis since 2008. Studies of how contact theory operates in southern European countries are scarce and they need further validation. Second, as a stateless nation the Catalan case offers a more complex picture than other European regions. Overall, it is largely unknown whether the existence of a different identity provides different evidence regarding the impact of contact with foreigners.

Results in this article show that having immigrant friends and immigrant family members reduce negative attitudes towards immigration, whereas workplace contact fails to reach statistical significance. The impact of workplace contact has been found to be relevant when it is conditioned by the socioeconomic status of individuals.

In a second step we checked whether the effect of (different types of) contact interacted with the immigrant group size and the economic context of the interviewee's municipality. Results show that the existence of a larger or smaller immigrant-group size does not modify the effect

of contact. The empirical analysis also reveals that the economic context plays a mediating role, but in the opposite direction predicted by the idea that immigrants “steal our jobs”: where unemployment is higher, workplace contact with immigrant reduces negative attitudes towards immigration in a more significant way.

Regarding the previous result, we recognize that this may be an artificial one: almost all the Catalan municipalities have very high levels of unemployment rates and therefore differences can be attributed to other aspects related to the pre-crisis situation. However, it might also suggest that bad economic environments lead work colleagues to form some sort of solidarity bonds between them or, as suggested by Connor’s work (1984), the importance of economic factors has been exaggerated.

Moreover, in the case of Catalonia, immigration became somewhat politicized in certain elections (Garcés-Mascareñas et al., 2012) but not in the regional elections. At the individual level, surveys reveal that immigration has decreased in importance and general concerns have been focused on the state of the economy. Therefore, the economic crisis has possibly deviated attention towards other issues. Finally, our findings square with Lancee and Pardos-Prado’s recent article (2013), that shows that a remarkable variation of concern over immigration, usually attributed to permanent conditions of economic vulnerability, changes when the contextual and the individual conditions are modified.

The inflow of foreign populations into Catalonia has been constant for many years, which might have had an effect on people’s perceptions towards immigrants. In this sense, the Catalan political discourse towards immigration adopted a particular approach, which was based on the respect for diversity with the belonging to the Catalan community. Recent literature has shown that there is a link between immigration and national identity and belonging. For instance, Giudici (2012) argued through the case of Wales that stateless nations aiming to gain increasing autonomy can use their immigration history to construct and disseminate a tolerant and inclusive national image, one that aims to foster both indigenous people’s and migrants’ sense of national belonging. Moreover, Franco-Guillén and Zapata-

Barrero (Forthcoming) show that in the case of Catalan nationalist parties there is a link between ethnic/civic nationalism and negative/positive stances towards immigration. Therefore, Catalonia's experience of an immigrant receiving society can help to maintain low levels of prejudice towards immigration. This is precisely what our empirical analysis corroborates: those citizens feeling more Catalan than Spanish express lower levels of negative attitudes towards immigrants than those that feel more Spanish than Catalan. These results also contradict previous research (Escandell and Ceobanu, 2010) that link regional identification to protectionism, perceptions of threat and therefore to higher levels of exclusionism. In fact, our results are more in line with Hepburn (2009) and Jeram's (2012) argument that sub-state nations may try to distinguish themselves from the nation-state by pursuing liberal/multicultural integration policies.

In conclusion, this article has studied the relationship between contact and immigrants' attitudes in stateless nations by using the example of Catalonia, taking into account the importance of context and of different types of contact. We have shown that contact has positive effects, especially close contact, and that a bad economic context is not necessarily linked to negative attitudes towards immigration. Moreover, we have proved that feeling Catalan does not lead to higher levels of exclusionism; in fact, it leads to lower levels of negative attitudes towards foreigners.

Future studies of contact theory will need to take into account whether this finding is extendable to other stateless nations or whether the economic crisis will change the paradigm under which contact theory operates. Bigger datasets with more contextual scenarios and other variables, such as the type of integration policy, or the concrete role of the region in a wider economic and regional background, will be necessary in order to disentangle how contact interacts with context, especially if it is a consequence of the latter or if it precedes context. For this purpose, longitudinal analyses (see, for example, Lancee and Pardos 2013) or even experiments, in combination with qualitative analyses, may help researchers to shed light

on the relationship between contact and attitudes towards immigration on different contextual scenarios.

A better understanding of these issues not only provides a richer picture on the relationship between immigrants and natives, but it is also relevant for intercultural public policies. Currently, several public institutions at all levels are investing important amounts of money in order to implement programmes fostering interaction between people coming from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Further refinement of studies on contact theory should serve to help (re)design immigration policies, especially in times of economic uncertainty.

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1. Appendix

Questions to build the DV index:

P32: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Immigrants steal our jobs. 1 (agree completely); 5 (disagree completely)

P33d: Do you find acceptable or unacceptable that...? People protest against the building of a new mosque. 1 (very acceptable); 4 (not at all acceptable)

P33b: Students wearing *niqabs* at school. 1 (very acceptable); 4 (not at all acceptable)

¹Beyond close/friendship, family or workplace contact, the literature has also framed contact in different ways, such as cultural contacts or cultural exchanges, occasional contact or contact with immigrants through mass media (Boomgaarden and Vliegthart, 2007); and contemplated different contact situations with immigrants (contact in schools, language contact...). We stick to close/friendship, family or workplace contact because they are the most common (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006) and, most importantly, they are the only indicators operationalized in the survey employed here.

² See Zapata-Barrero (2007) for an excellent exposition on the interaction between minority nations and immigration.

³ It is important to mention that public policies follow suit and foster contact between immigrants and natives, as it is believed that it has a positive impact in society. See for example the Intercultural Cities project led by the Council of Europe and the European Commission (<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/>)

⁴ Meta-analysis carried out by Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) reached the same conclusion.

⁵ Theory of symbolic racism generally contends that negative attitudes towards immigration are static and rarely change. However, even if the latter is true, context and social conditions shape these underlying attitudes (Bobo, 1983; Glaser, 2003; Zárate et al., 2004)

⁶ As a matter of fact, immigration was not a new phenomenon in the early 2000s. For the past hundred years, the arrival of migrants from around Spain has been a constant occurrence, especially in the 1960 and 1970, when it is estimated that more than 3 million citizens arrived in Catalonia. The information and the approach used here focuses on the most recent wave of migration, one marked by the majority of the immigrants being foreign nationals and by the rapid pace at which it occurred (Franco-Guillén 2011).

⁷ Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008).

⁸ Notice must be taken of the fact that Catalonia, and most political actors in the region, agree that Catalonia is a land of welcome (*terra d'acollida*) (Franco-Guillén and Zapata-Barrero, Forthcoming) or *terra de pas* (Conversi, 2000), that seek to accommodate immigrants from different origins into a society that has been built by a mixture of different cultures. This idea lies at the heart of Catalan identity together with the importance given to the Catalan language. More on this process can be found in Kleiner-Liebau (2009) and May (2012). Also, Conversi (2013) has recently stressed the importance of globalization on the process of nation-building.

⁹ See Hepburn (2009) for a comparative work on the cases of Bavaria, Northern Italy, Catalonia and Scotland, or the same author's paper (2011) for these parties' conceptions of regional citizenship. At the level of stateless nations, one must highlight the work of Loobuyk and Jacobs (2011) for Flandes, Barker (2012) for Quebec, Giudici (2012) for Wales, Jeram (2012) for the Basque Country, or Zapata-Barrero (2009) for an overview of Catalonia, Flanders and Quebec.

¹⁰ Recent research on Catalan parties has shown that the two main nationalist parties (CiU and ERC) have a positive discourse towards immigration. In this sense, individuals identifying themselves as Catalan rather than Spanish might co-opt those parties' stances towards immigration. It also needs to be highlighted that Catalonia has an extreme right-wing party, PxC. This party obtained representation in 39 Catalan city councils (67 representatives) in the 2011 local elections, receiving 0.7% of the total number of Catalan city councillors. PxC has always failed to enter the Catalan Parliament, and thus their success must be weighted. For a study on PxC and its voters, see Hernández Car (2011).

¹¹ CEO is a public institution of the Catalan administration that carries out regular surveys on different topics of interest. Survey n. 638, *percepció dels Catalans i catalanes sobre la immigració, 2010*. Freely available at www.ceo.gencat.cat

¹² Unemployment rate in each municipality has been calculated using a common estimation undertaken by the provincial authorities, which is based on the occupational figures at the province level and the figures derived from the Local Population Census. More information can be found at the Local Economic Development Observatory Group (<http://www.diba.cat/web/promoeco/xodel/default>).

¹³ Data from the Local Population Census (www.idescat.cat).

¹⁴ The variance of the intercepts would decrease from 0.82 in a null model (if the model is run with no predictors in it) to 0.54 in the last model.

¹⁵ Specialised literature has also distinguished whether people react differently to different immigrant groups (Escandell and Ceobanu, 2008; Ha, 2010). Unfortunately, this option is excluded here since the CEO survey does not have a question asking the nationality or ethnic group of the immigrant that the individual had contact with. An alternative would be to calculate the percentage of each immigrant group (Latinos, Asian, Eastern Europe...) in each municipality. As a robustness check, we run the analysis with these indicators and no change was reported (results available upon request). However, future studies will need to continue studying the effect of different immigrant groups on the interplay between contact and attitudes towards immigrants, with more proper indicators and surveys than the ones used here.

¹⁶ Cross-level interactions report the same results without controls and across model specifications.

¹⁷ A relatively good or bad economic environment means a city or town with unemployment levels in the top or bottom quartile, respectively.