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Immigrants against immigration: Competition, identity and immigrants' vote on free movement in Switzerland

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ABSTRACT

Standard explanations of anti-immigrant sentiments as well as explanations of the voting behavior of ethnic minorities would both predict voters with an immigrant background should be less inclined to support anti-immigration policies than comparable natives. We show this was not the case in the Swiss referendum "against mass immigration" held in 2014. In this referendum voters with an immigrant background showed surprisingly high levels of support to the initiative to restrict immigration, which were comparable to those expressed by natives. To explain this puzzling finding, we propose to look at two alternative (but not mutually exclusive) drivers of policy preferences previously overlooked in the voting literature: ethnic boundary making and labor market competition. We show that accounting for Secondo identity (a boundary-making identity specific to the Swiss ethnic hierarchy) and exposure to occupational and geographical labour market competition can explain the puzzle of immigrants' support for immigration restrictions.

1. Introduction

On February 9, 2014, Swiss citizens voted on a referendum "against mass immigration" (Masseneinwanderungsinitative; MEI). The referendum, which was led by a popular initiative launched by the far-right populist Swiss People's Party (SVP), demanded limits and quotas on total immigration in Switzerland. One important implication of the initiative was that reintroducing quotas on total immigration is incompatible with Switzerland's Free Movement of Persons Treaty with the EU. The referendum proposal therefore questioned Switzerland's participation in the EU-wide free-movement-of-persons zone. The Swiss people narrowly backed the initiative with 50.3 percent of the votes in favor of immigration quotas. As we will show below, the initiative not only won support from Swiss natives (Swiss citizens from Swiss-born parents) but also from a similar share of citizens with migration background. Furthermore, even a considerable share of foreigners residing in Switzerland would have voted in favor of the referendum proposal to restrict immigration through the use of quotas had they been enfranchised.

Finding similar levels of support amongst natives and citizens with migration background for an initiative to restrict immigration constitutes a puzzle. It goes against major findings regarding the effect of ethnocentrism and national identity on anti-immigrant attitudes (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014, 233–236 for a review) as well as against standard explanations of the political behavior of immigrants and ethnic minorities (Bird et al., 2009; Messina, 2007 for reviews). Also, it contrasts with the existing quantitative studies that report more positive attitudes towards immigration by immigrants than natives (Berry, 2016; Citrin et al., 1997; Dandy and Pe-Pua, 2010; Hindriks et al., 2016).

This is the first article to analyze the behavior of voters with migration background in the context of a popular initiative.[1] To take voting behavior on a highly salient migration issue as an indicator for preferences on immigration has important advantages over both the use of surveyed attitudes and behavioral measures from lab experiments (Bechtel et al., 2015; Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2013). We explain the lacking gap in voting behavior between natives and immigrants by drawing on ethnic hierarchies and labor market competition models. We first show that ingroup status and exposure to labor market competition are relevant predictors of the vote choice on the MEI initiative. More precisely, we show that self-categorizing as a "Secondo" (an ethnic category with high standing in the Swiss ethnic hierarchy), living

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[1] Probably most close comes a study by Campbell et al. (2006) on voting behavior in the three Californian ballot initiatives on restrictive immigration–related proposals. However, the study only reports voting behavior for minority groups independent of immigrant status and does not try to explain it. It does show, however, that Hispanics and Asians voted more against the proposals than Whites, which underlines how puzzling the voting behavior of the immigrants in the MEI is.

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in an area with a large number of cross-border commuters, and lacking specific human capital, which overexposes workers to labor-market competition, all increased support for the anti-immigrant initiative net of standard socio-demographic controls. We then demonstrate that these three variables can explain to an important extent the lacking gap between natives and immigrants in their voting behavior. In order to test our argument, we analyze data from the MOSAiCH 2015 survey including a paper drop-off questionnaire with a specific section on migration-related questions.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. In the first section we start by discussing standard theories of the voting behavior of immigrants and ethnic minorities. We argue that all these theories would predict a large majority of people with migration background should have voted against the anti-immigrant initiative. We then present our own hypotheses with reference to the literature on ethnic boundary making and labor market competition. The second section presents the data and the operationalization of the variables. The third section presents the results of the empirical analyses. The article concludes by summarizing the results and by pointing to implications for future research.

2. Explaining immigrants' preferences on migration policy

The expectation that residents with migration background vote against immigration to a similar extent as native Swiss do is counter-intuitive for several reasons. First, one would expect citizens with migration background to be more positive towards immigration than native Swiss due to shared experiences and interests. Recent common experiences of migration and common ethnic identities typically acquired through parental and network socialization should enhance understanding for, and solidarity with, potential migrants. People with migration background also share common interests with newcomers because they are both negatively affected by laws that restrict mobility, for instance, when these laws hinder family reunification. Downsian models of issue voting based on this intuitive expectation would thus predict that immigrants voted by far higher shares against the MEI than natives. This should be all the more true as it has been shown that in Switzerland – similar to other countries – a Left-leaning bias exists among the first and second generation (Ruedin, 2017; Strijbis, 2014). Given the fact that the Left parties in Switzerland are clearly pro-immigration (Ruedin, 2013), standard theories of issue voting would lead to the expectation that immigrants would also lean to the position of the Left parties on immigration.

Second, cases where the majority of voters with migration background do not vote for the Left have typically been explained by low salience of migration policy relative to other causes of vote choice. For example, the choice of Centre-Right parties by immigrant voters from Eastern Europe have been explained by their negative experiences under the Socialist regime which fostered an anti-Left political identity amongst these voters (Strijbis, 2014; Wüst, 2004). In other words, it has been argued that, in some contexts, people with migration background vote for Centre-Right parties *despite* the latter's policy positions on immigration. In the crucial case of vote for the MEI referendum citizens vote on migration policy alone and hence this explanation cannot apply.

Third, it would be intuitive to expect that at least those voters with migration background from low-status groups were clearly pro-immigration. While it is true that some immigrant groups are as negative towards new cohorts of immigrants as the natives, these are typically high–status groups. For instance, Hindriks et al. (2016) find that Surinamese Dutch are similarly negative towards Turkish–Dutch as native Dutch are.[2] However, to our knowledge all quantitative studies find that *on average* immigrants are more positive towards immigration than natives (Berry, 2016; Citrin et al., 1997; Dandy and Pe-Pua, 2010; Hindriks et al., 2016).[3]

In Switzerland, low-status groups are those with South East European migration background (in particular former Yugoslavia and Turkey), Muslims, and Blacks. These groups are disliked by relevant shares of the resident population (Helbling, 2011; Ruedin, D'Amato, Wichmann, and Pecoraro, 2013) and consequently experience higher levels of hostility than any other ethnic group. The fact that these members of 'outgroups' systematically vote for the Left (Strijbis, 2014; similar Sanders et al., 2014) suggests that they feel most represented by parties with pro-immigration policy positions. Hence, it would seem intuitive to expect these voters to also be strongly against the MEI, particularly since they were the targets of the campaign carried out by the Swiss People Party (SVP).[4] Drawing on social group theory (Tajfel et al., 1971) we would also assume that the specific experiences of hostility and discrimination faced by outgroups should strengthen their ethnic group identity and foster within-group solidarity. Indeed, it has been shown that perceived societal discrimination against one's own ethnic group positively influences ethnic minority group members' attitudes toward other ethnic minorities (Craig and Richeson, 2012). This should generate resistance against an initiative likely leading to higher levels of hostility. So the question is, why in view of these prominent explanations do we find a large share of voters with migration background voting in favor of curbing immigration?

2.1. Voting against immigration to secure ingroup status

One plausible explanation as to why voters with migration background might also vote in large numbers against immigration is that casting an anti-immigration vote is an act of boundary making. Voters with migration background might not identify with their ancestry ethnicity. This is likely to be the case if they have at least one native-Swiss parent with whom they identify more in ethnic terms. Moreover, second generation migrants with two foreign-born parents, and even first-generation migrants, might not identify with newly arrived migrants if they enjoy (or aspire to enjoy) a high status in the Swiss ethnic hierarchy. Preferences against new arrivals as expressed through the act of voting might thus be seen as driven by voters' desire to secure their achieved status in an ethnic hierarchy. Seeing voting behavior as an act of boundary-making is consistent with contemporary theorizing on ethnicity that stresses the "constructed", "contested" and "contingent" character of ethnicity and its role in the struggle over power and prestige (for excellent reviews see Bird et al., 2009; Wimmer, 2013).

It is indeed possible that people with a migration background construct an identity that draws a boundary with newly arriving migrants, but which at the same time does not neglect their own migration background. Indeed, Wimmer (2004) finds that in Swiss cities ethnic boundaries do not run between ethnic groups or between the first and second generation immigrants, but rather between the newcomers and old–established with the latter including second generation immigrants and even first generation immigrants from high-ranked ethnic statuses.

In the Swiss context, there is a term used in popular parlance to

[2] There is also historical evidence from the USA where immigrants from Protestant countries have resented immigrants in particular from Catholic countries (Archdeacon, 1984, 150; Higham, 1981 [1955], 82).

[3] This mirrors research on the assessment of acculturation strategies, which shows that both the majority group as the minority groups expect outgroups to integrate, but with the latter being *on average* clearly less demanding (e.g. they do not expect assimilation) on the outgroups (e.g. Callens et al., 2014; Hindriks et al., 2016; Navas et al., 2007; Oudenhoven, Prins, and Buunk, 1998).

[4] In the context of this campaign it was in particular the Muslims and the Kosovans that were negatively stereotyped. Some campaign advertisements warned of Islamization and depicted grim looking burka wearing women. Another hotly debated campaign ad was titled "Kosovans lynch Swiss" (Kosovaren schlitzen Schweizer auf).

describe people with migration background that consider themselves, and are considered by others, as established and belonging to the in-group. This term is "Secondo/a". In its original meaning the term referred to Swiss residents with second generation migration background (Archdeacon, 1984; Lüssi, 2013). The Secondo/a category is historically and linguistically linked to Italian migration background. The term stresses the fact that the Italians are the most liked immigrant group in Switzerland (Helbling, 2011; see also Ruedin et al., 2013, 24) together with people with Greek, Spanish and Portuguese background, who also fit easily into the Secondo/a category, as they all belong to the high status group within the Swiss system of ethnic hierarchies. Although the value attached to the term is politically contested, those using the term for self-identification attach a positive connotation to it and use this concept to self-describe in a way that is distinct from the category used for newly arriving immigrants (also Wimmer, 2004, 12–16). Hence, self-categorization as Secondo/a likely indicates the will to draw a symbolic boundary with immigrants and thus constitutes a nice construct to capture the role of ethnic boundary making in voting for the MEI proposal.

We expect people self-identifying with the Secondo/a category to be more likely to vote in favor of the MEI proposal as an act of symbolic demarcation against lower status groups in a system of ethnic hierarchies. To our knowledge this hypothesis has never been tested before in the Swiss context.

2.2. Vote against immigration to secure status on the labor market

Another plausible explanation for immigrants' support for anti-immigration policy is their higher levels of exposure to labor market competition (LMC). Although realistic conflict theories in the social sciences have often over-emphasized the subjective dimension of competitive threat (see e.g. Davidov et al., 2008; O'Rourke and Sinnot, 2006), recent research and theorizing shows the degree of exposure to LMC is a powerful driver of anti-immigrant sentiments (see Kunovich, 2013; Ortega and Polavieja, 2012; Polavieja, 2016). Most existing research on attitudes towards migration has measured labor-market exposure by looking at formal education (see e.g. Helbling, 2011; Helbling and Kriesi, 2014; Pecoraro and Ruedin, 2016 for the Swiss case). Yet formal schooling captures only one dimension of skills. Ortega and Polavieja (2012) identify two further sources of exposure to LMC that are endogenous to the job: 1) specific human capital, and 2) communicational skills. Drawing on standard human capital theory, they argue that jobs that require high investments in specific human capital will be naturally shielded from LMC because employers incurring training costs will logically seek to safeguard their investments (see Becker, 1993). Hence workers employed in jobs that require skill specialization should be better protected from all kind of competition (be it from migrants or natives). Likewise, workers employed in jobs that require high levels of communicational skills (low levels of manual skills) will be better protected from competition with international migrants because international migrants are likely to possess lower levels of communicational competence. Ortega and Polavieja (2012) show that job-specificity and communicational skills are significant predictors of anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe.

In the specific Swiss context, however, there are reasons to believe communicational skills do not provide such an effective shield against LMC. Between 1999 and 2007 Switzerland opened its labor markets to immigrants from the European Union (EU), fully liberalizing access by 2007. Many EU migrants are native speakers of French, German and Italian, the three official languages in the Swiss Confederation. They are also often fluent in (or native speakers of) English, a language typically used in business across the country. Moreover, the Swiss liberalization policy included opening its labor market to cross-border workers, who constitute more than half of EU immigrants in Switzerland. The vast majority of cross-border commuters are native-speakers of the cantons' first language. This means being employed in a job with high requirements in communicational skills will be a rather ineffective shield against cross-border competition. Especially in the border-regions, cross-border commuters are perceived as the primary source of labor market competition.[5]

For these reasons, the two indicators of exposure to LMC that we use in this study are 1) the skill-specialization requirements of respondent's job, and 2) the share of cross-border commuters in his/her municipality. The former captures endogenous sources of employment closure as theorized in standard human capital models, while the latter captures potential exposure to cross-border competition, which is a specific source of competitive threat in the Swiss case.

3. Research design

3.1. Data and method

We analyze data from the MOSAiCH 2015 survey including a paper drop-off questionnaire with a specific section on migration related questions (Ernst Stähli et al., 2015). Beyond having a particularly large section on items related to migration policies, the survey has two features, which makes it particularly suited for the analysis. First, it asks about migration background over three generations allowing for a very precise and more continuous measurement of migration background. Second, the study includes foreigners and asks them about their hypothetical vote choice for the MEI, which allows us to also analyze the preferences of this important part of the immigrant population.

In the main MOSAiCH 2015 survey 1235 individuals were interviewed with computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) (response rate 51.7%). Among these respondents 77% also participated in the paper drop-off survey resulting in a sample of 947. The fact that there were two steps in the selection process might accentuate typical problems of selection bias. The analysis of selection from the CAPI into the drop-off survey shows, however, that the added bias is small for most socio-demographic variables (Ernst Stähli et al., 2015). In particular, the share of residents without migration background in the sample nicely matches that within the entire Swiss population. However, among the residents with migration background the Swiss nationals are overrepresented relative to the foreigners. Also, among the foreigners the second generation is overrepresented.[6] Finally, among the foreigners, self-selection did produce underrepresentation among those who are not of Austrian, German, French or Italian nationality. In summary, the sample can be considered to have typical levels of selection bias in CAPI surveys with an additional bias among the subsample of foreigners. Consequently, we will not just pool the data but analyze the sample with and without the inclusion of the foreign respondents.

Self-reported turnout in the sample was 76%.[7] It did vary somewhat

[5] In two Cantons with particularly high shares of cross-border commuters – Geneva and Ticino – this gave rise to the sizeable electoral success of the regional anti-immigration parties Movement of Citizens of Geneva (MCG) and League of the Ticinese (Lega) respectively. In the 2013 cantonal election of Geneva the MCG received 19% of the vote while in the 2015 cantonal election of Ticino the Lega won 21% of the vote.

[6] Based on the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SAKE) 2014 the Swiss Statistic Office estimates the number of Swiss nationals with and without migration background above the age of 15. Migration background is defined as being foreigner, naturalized of the 1st and 2nd generation, as well as Swiss by birth with both parents born abroad. According to this definition Swiss nationals without migration background make up 64% of the population, the Swiss nationals with migration background 12%, and the foreigners 23% (own calculation). In our sample the share of Swiss nationals and foreigners with at least one parent born in Switzerland is 62%. According to the previously mentioned definition of the Swiss Statistics Office, Swiss nationals with migration background and foreigners are 19% of our sample each.

[7] Official turnout was 55.8%. The gap between self-reported turnout in the sample and official turnout can be due to selection bias or overreporting (Sciarini and Goldberg, 2016). If it is due to overreporting and overreporting

according to migration background. Citizens without migration background reported a turnout of 75%, the third generation and first generation one of 80% each, and the second generation reported a turnout of 68%.

In order to test our explanation for the similarity in vote choice between natives and immigrants we look at variance in vote choice across generations and between Swiss citizens and foreigners. We do so with and without control variables. Since our dependent variable (Yes- vs. No-vote choice) is bivariate, logistic or probit regressions would be standard. However, since we are interested in group-comparisons between natives and migrants such models are problematic because they do not allow to compare the explained variance and beta-coefficients over models with different samples. Hence, in addition to logistic regressions, we replicate the analysis with pooled models with interaction effects, heterogeneous choice models, and linear probability models (for reasons of presentation these additional analyses are provided in the supplementary material part A). In order to test whether ethnic labor market competition and ethnic hierarchies can explain the similarity in vote choice between natives and immigrants, we compare predictions in vote choice between the two groups with and without the corresponding variables.

3.2. Operationalisations

Vote choice is measured with two questions, the first one asks respondents how they would vote on the MEI initiative today, the second asks how they did vote on the voting day. The hypothetical question allows respondents that are not Swiss nationals—and who do not have the right to vote at the national level—to also express their preferences. However, since the two questions are not identical, and we are also interested in the real vote choice, we replicate the analyses replacing the hypothetical question with the recall question for those Swiss nationals that turned out at the voting day (the results are given in the supplemental material part B). The correlation between recalled and hypothetical vote choice is very high ($R = 0.94$; $p > 0.001$; $N = 497$) and the results of the replications do not deviate in any important way. The real share of Yes-Votes was about 6% higher than the estimates based on the recall question in our sample, which might be due to the typical overrepresentation of Left and underrepresentation of Conservative-Right voters in Swiss surveys and possibly also some additional desirability bias.[8]

Our independent variables relate to self-categorization as Secondo/a and exposure to labor market competition. The MOSAiCH 2015 survey asks respondents whether they ever considered themselves as Secondo/a. To our knowledge, this question is the first attempt to measure the group identity of people with migration background who consider themselves as established and belonging to the Swiss in–group. Confirmatory factor analyses with items related to this category, which were inspired by previous qualitative research (in particular Wimmer, 2004), suggest that the item is indeed suited to measure a latent dimension that is distinct from both identification as an ethnic Swiss and identification as an immigrant newcomer (see the supplemental material part C). The only downside of the Secondo item is that it has generated a rather large number of missing values. However, respondents that did not reply to the Secondo question were typically individuals without migration background or those with migration background belonging to an out–group. Most likely, for them the question did not make sense because they clearly did not classify as Secondo (those without migration background) or because the category was not familiar to them (migrants from out–groups). Hence, for the respondents with a missing value for the Secondo category that did at the same time give a valid answer to one of the other items of the same question, we replaced the missing value with a value indicating no self–categorization as Secondo. Additional analyses demonstrate that the results of our analysis do not change if we keep the original values for the Secondo item (see the supplemental material part C).

In order to measure exposure to labor market competition we rely on two indicators. First, we measure job-specialization by matching measures computed using the 2nd and the 4th rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) to the MOSAiCH 2015 survey. ESS measures are computed by averaging self-reported job-learning time at the level of occupation using the International Standard Classification of Occupations of 1988 (ISCO-88) at three digits, following the procedure implemented by Polavieja (2016).[9] Job-learning time scores are based on individual responses to the following question: 'If someone with the right education and qualifications replaced you in your job, how long would it take for them to learn to do the job reasonably well?' Responses are recoded in months. Occupational averages of job-learning time provide a direct and robust measure of the skill-specialization requirements of each of the 148 occupations in the ESS dataset (see further Ortega and Polavieja (2012) for validity and reliability tests). We expect migrants employed in jobs with higher levels of skill-specialization to be less exposed to LMC and hence less inclined to favor the MEI initiative.

Second, we measure exposure to labor market competition from cross-border commuters by computing the share of cross–border commuters relative to the whole workforce in the municipality of the respondent's residency. This second measure of LMC allows us to capture an important source of competition that is specific to the Swiss case, as explained above. We note the MEI initiative went against the free movement treaties with the EU, which included cross–border commuting. Hence we expect migrants particularly exposed to competition with cross-border commuters be more likely to favor the MEI initiative.

We base our measures of migration background on the place of birth of the respondents, their parents, and their grandparents. We create a variable for *generational migration background* where all foreign born were categorized as first generation migrants, the Swiss born with at least one foreign parent as having second generation migration background and those 'only' having at least one foreign born grandparent as having third generation migration background. For our multivariate analyses we distinguish between two subsamples: The "natives" consisting of 48% of the respondents without or with third generation migration background and the "immigrants" consisting of those 52% of the respondents with first or second generation migration background. Among the immigrants, 71% are Swiss nationals and hence have the right to vote in national referenda.

We further control for education, age, and sex. As potentially mediating variables we include standard predictors of political behavior as well as variables that have been shown to relate to vote choice on the MEI in previous analyses (Mazzoleni and Pilotti, 2015; Milic, 2015; Sciarini et al., 2015) such as national identity (i.e. pride to be Swiss),

(*footnote continued*)
varies between natives and citizens with migration background it could impact on the subsequent findings. With the existing data it is not possible to know whether migration background and overreporting of turnout are related.

[8] For instance, in the post-electoral survey to the last national elections the vote share of the Social Democrats was overreported by 2.0% and that of the Swiss People's Party underreported by 7.1% (own calculations based on Selects, 2015). Weighting our sample based on the real and recalled vote choice in the national elections reduces the difference between the recalled Yes–vote share in our sample and the real outcome by 1%.

[9] We use the 2nd and the 4th rounds of the ESS because only these two rounds include information on job-learning time. The MOSAiCH 2015 survey measures occupations using the International Standard Classification of Occupations of 2008 (ISCO-08) while ESS occupations are measured using the ISCO-88 code. For this reason we first converted ISCO-08 into ISCO-88 codes using the occupational crosswalk kindly provided by Harry Ganzeboom (http://www.harryganzeboom.nl/isco08/index.htmISCO-88); and then we matched skill-specialization scores to the MOSAiCH survey using the ISCO-88 code.

trust in the government, and party identification. We regroup the party identifications in three broad families: the Left, the Centre-Right, and the Conservative-Right.[10] We did not include additional control variables such as European migration background, transnational identity and perceived discrimination because due to missing observations they would further reduce the size of our sample. However, we have also checked for the robustness of our analysis for the inclusion of these variables (see part D of the supplemental material).

Table 1 shows for all variables the similarities and dissimilarities between the two subsamples (for additional descriptives see part E in the supplemental material). Beyond voting behavior, the immigrants are also indistinguishable from the natives with regards to gender, party identification, and trust in government. Besides these similarities there are important differences between the two samples: For instance, immigrants are on average better educated but have less specific human capital and live in areas with higher shares of cross-border commuters. The fact that for the two groups education does not co–vary with specific human capital and presence of cross–border commuters, supports our argument that levels of education is not a good proxy for exposure to labor market competition.[11] Also the share of self–categorizing as Secondos is different with 11% in the immigrant sample and 6% in the native sample. The fact that Secondo identity is found in the natives sample is due to its inclusion of individuals with 3rd generation migration background. Finally, immigrants also have a lower propensity to be very proud to be Swiss—an important variable for vote choice which would also make us expect a significantly lower Yes-vote share for the MEI initiative among the immigrants than among the natives.

Table 1
Description of group differences.

Variables	Natives (N = 335)		Immigrants (N = 367)		Difference	T-test
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Yes-vote (hypothetical)	0.41	0.49	0.42	0.49	0.00	0.96
Years of schooling	10.99	3.25	11.84	3.96	*−0.84*	*0.00*
Female	0.47	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.01	0.77
Year of birth	1963	18	1968	16	*−5.36*	*0.00*
Specific human capital	11.08	4.47	10.33	4.46	*0.76*	*0.03*
Cross-border commuters	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.09	*−0.01*	*0.04*
Secondo identity	0.06	0.24	0.11	0.32	*0.32*	*0.01*
Very proud to be Swiss	0.43	0.50	0.32	0.47	*−0.15*	*0.00*
Left PID	0.18	0.38	0.17	0.38	0.02	0.87
Right PID	0.19	0.39	0.15	0.36	0.62	0.18
Trust in government	0.78	0.42	0.76	0.43	0.02	0.56

Note: Significant differences in italics.

4. Results

We present the results in several steps. In a first step, we focus on the similarity in voting behavior between natives and immigrants. In a second step, we test our hypotheses regarding the high Yes-vote shares for the MEI by the immigrant population. In a final step, we analyze what share of the similarity can be explained by ethnic boundary making and labor market competition.

4.1. The similarity in voting behavior between natives and immigrants

In a first step, we investigate variation in vote choice across generations. Fig. 1 shows that the share of hypothetical Yes-voters does not decrease the more recent migration has taken place. This suggests that migrant generation has no, or only a very limited, impact on vote choice regarding the MEI. Given the fact that the voting was on a proposal with clear anti-immigration content this is very surprising. Additional analyses show that the results are robust for actual (rather than hypothetical) vote choice and that even a relevant share of foreigners would have voted in favor of MEI had they been enfranchised (see part B of the supplemental material).

Model 1 in Table 2 replicates the bivariate analyses in the form of regression analyses with hypothetical vote choice as the dependent variable. These results show that vote choice does not systematically vary with migration background and this regardless of whether we base the analysis on the hypothetical or the recall question. Furthermore, model 2 shows that the result holds if we control for socio-demographic variables. This model also shows that, net of migration background, men and respondents with lower education were more likely to vote in favor of the MEI initiative. In sum, these findings show that migration background does not have a direct impact on vote choice on the MEI.

4.2. Do migrants have the same motivations as natives?

If migration background has no direct effect on vote choice for the MEI initiative, does this also mean that natives and immigrants had the same motivations for their behavior? We test this in a next step. In order to do so, we split the sample between the "natives" (i.e. those with third generation or no migration background) and the "immigrants" (i.e. those with first or second generation migration background). We then regress vote choice on the same independent variables for the two subsamples. In all models we use hypothetical vote choice as the dependent variable (replicated models with the recall vote are shown in part B of the supplemental material). We enter the variables stepwise: In a first model we only enter structural variables while in the second model we also introduce potentially mediating variables.

The results are reported in Table 3. Models 1 and 3 show the results for the structural variables only. They depict a significant negative effect for specific human capital for both natives and immigrants, as well as a significant positive effects for the share of cross–border commuters and Secondo/a identity for immigrants only. Also, all signs for our independent variables point in the expected direction: Respondents with higher levels of specific human capital have a lower propensity to vote Yes while those living in areas with a high share of cross–border commuters and those reporting a Secondo/a identity have a higher propensity to vote Yes. This picture tends to be reinforced when we introduce the potentially mediating variables (models 2 and 4). Now both indicators for labor market competition point in the expected direction both for natives and immigrants. Furthermore, the size of the effect of cross-border commuters on the propensity to vote for the MEI increases among immigrants (but not natives). While the coefficients are not always significant for both groups they have the same sign and tend to be of similar size. Additional analyses with pooled data and interaction effects as well as heterogeneous choice models show that the differences in the coefficients between the groups are not significant (see part A in the supplemental material). Also the fact that we get very similar results when replicating the analyses with the recall question for the voters further demonstrates the robustness of the finding (see part B in the supplemental material).

In short, it would seem that those variables that explain vote choice for the MEI for the native electorate are also relevant for the immigrant electorate. However, regarding the fact that the composition of the native and the immigrant population and their mean values on the predictor differ considerably, this can only partially explain why voters

[10] Left parties: SP, CSP, PDA, GPS; Centre-Right parties: FDP, CVP, BDP, EVP, GLP; Conservative-Right: SVP, SD, EDU, Lega, MCR.

[11] This is not due to the fact that for reasons of parsimony we use years of schooling rather than an ordinal measure of educational level: Spearman's rho for years of schooling and the ISCED97 9-point scale is 0.65 ($p < 0.001$).

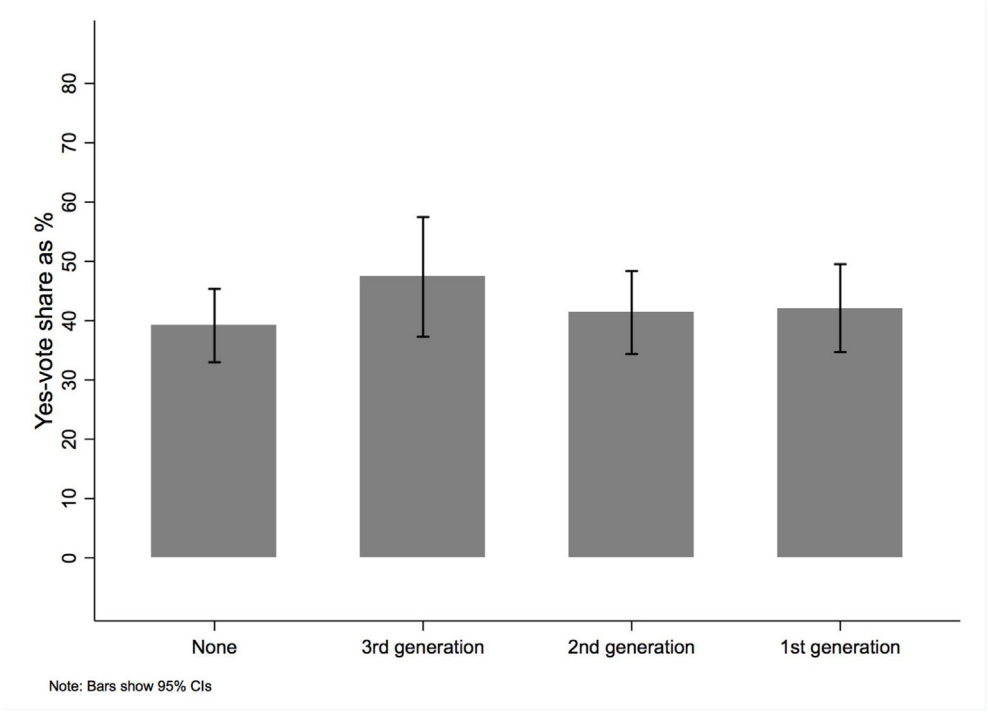

Fig. 1. Hypothetical vote choice for the MEI by migrant generation.

Table 2
Logistic regression with vote choice regressed on migration background.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2
	Vote choice[a]	Vote choice[a]
1st generation	0.335	0.371
	(0.244)	(0.250)
2nd generation	0.0913	0.263
	(0.198)	(0.209)
3rd generation	0.122	0.175
	(0.204)	(0.210)
Years of schooling		−0.137***
		(0.0249)
Female		−0.365*
		(0.160)
Age		−0.00132
		(0.00459)
Constant	−0.440***	4.149
	(0.132)	(8.986)
Observations	697	697
Pseudo R2	0.002	0.042

Notes.
[a] Hypothetical question; beta-coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis;*p < 0.05,**p < 0.01,***p < 0.001.

with migration background voted so similarly as the natives. In particular, the fact that immigrants are better educated, younger, have a lower propensity to feel very proud of being Swiss and of identifying with a right wing party (see Table 1) would make us expect a clearly lower Yes-vote share. However, as we argued in the theoretical section, it might be the relatively higher exposure of immigrants to labor market competition as well as ethnic hierarchies that explain the similarity in vote choice.

4.3. Do labor market competition and ethnic hierarchies account for the similarity in voting behavior?

Whether labor market competition and ethnic hierarchies account for the similarity in voting behavior depends on the size of the

Table 3
Logistic regression with vote choice regressed on labor market competition and Secondo identity.

Variables	Model 1: Natives	Model 2: Natives	Model 3: Immigrants	Model 4: Immigrants
	Vote choice[a]	Vote choice[a]	Vote choice[a]	Vote choice[a]
Specific human capital	−0.0821**	−0.0873**	−0.0801**	−0.0878**
	(0.0300)	(0.0334)	(0.0295)	(0.0311)
Cross-border commuters	−0.218	2.588	4.403**	4.934**
	(1.867)	(2.078)	(1.402)	(1.521)
Secondo identity	0.137	0.516	1.011**	0.948*
	(0.483)	(0.554)	(0.363)	(0.387)
Years of schooling	−0.169***	−0.118*	−0.0893**	−0.0721*
	(0.0461)	(0.0501)	(0.0324)	(0.0341)
Female	−0.565*	−0.454	−0.695**	−0.721**
	(0.254)	(0.287)	(0.249)	(0.264)
Year of birth	0.00580	0.00320	−0.0132	−0.00828
	(0.00644)	(0.00713)	(0.00705)	(0.00750)
Very proud to be Swiss		0.578*		0.674**
		(0.274)		(0.260)
Left PID		−1.335**		−0.588
		(0.458)		(0.340)
Right PID		1.749***		1.266***
		(0.368)		(0.357)
Trust in government		−0.521		−0.141
		(0.309)		(0.278)
Constant	−8.189	−3.872	28.13*	18.18
	(12.61)	(14.00)	(13.90)	(14.82)
Observations	335	335	367	367
Pseudo R2	0.075	0.224	0.087	0.151

Notes.
[a] Hypothetical question; beta-coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis;*p < 0.05,**p < 0.01,***p < 0.001.

coefficients (Table 3) and the distribution of the two groups with regards to the values on these variables (Table 1). On the basis of this information, Table 4 shows stated and predicted vote shares for both natives and immigrants according to models with and without independent variables. The first row shows stated vote shares. It reports that in the sample 41.5% of the natives and 41.7% of the immigrants

Table 4
Predicted Yes-vote shares with and without Secondo identity and labor market competition.

Yes vote-share[a]	natives	immigrants	Pr (2-tailed)
Sample	41.5%	41.7%	0.958
Prediction with controls only	43.7%	39.6%	0.009
Prediction with controls and ivs[b]	42.3%	40.9%	0.440

Notes.
[a] Hypothetical question.
[b] IVs are specific human capital, cross-border commuters and Secondo identity.

would have voted for the MEI. The vote propensities for the two groups are thus identical. The second and the third row show predicted vote shares. As the second row shows, the expected vote shares of the two groups would have been 43.7% for the former and 39.6% for the latter if only the control variables were significant predictors of vote choice, i.e. if we exclude our independent variables (specific human capital, exposure to cross-border commuters and Secondo identity). With 6.1% this difference is far larger than the difference between stated vote choice and it is statistically significant. Note that this difference illustrates the prediction of standard explanations of (immigrants') vote choice, according to which voters with immigrant background should have had a lower Yes-vote share than the one actually observed. Once we include our three independent variables, however, the predicted Yes–vote shares are reduced to 42.3% for the natives and 40.9% for the immigrants, a difference of only 2.4 percentage points which is again not significant. This means that accounting for ethnic boundaries and labor market competition more than halves the overestimation of the gap between natives and immigrants. This shows that labor market competition and ethnic hierarchies are not only able to correctly predict a relatively high vote share to the MEI initiative among the overall electorate, but also able to explain to a considerable extent the surprising similarity in voting behavior between natives and immigrants.

5. Conclusion

This article has shown that the voting behavior of people with migration background for the popular initiative "against mass immigration" has been very similar to that of the natives. This surprising finding poses an important puzzle because it goes against standard explanations of anti-immigrant attitudes as well as of the political behavior of immigrants and ethnic minorities, which should lead us to expect that voters with migration background are more pro-immigration than natives and vote accordingly.

We have argued, as well as shown empirically, that the surprising similarity in voting behavior between natives and immigrants in the Swiss referendum of 2014 can be (at least partially) explained by the fact that immigrant residents are more exposed to labor market competition both because they are more likely to be employed in occupations requiring lower levels of specific human capital and because they are more likely to live in areas exposed to higher levels of cross–border commuters. Our evidence thus provides new and important support for the relevance of labor market competition in shaping voters' attitudes towards immigrants in real decision-making world situations. Focusing on real decision making situations such as the referendum proposal analyzed in this study provides a clear identification advantage over attitudinal and voting data because referendum data captures people's preferences over migration policies in a clear and unambiguous manner. Also, while the preceding literature focuses on natives' attitudes, we have investigated the effect of competitive pressures on immigrants' political behaviors, thus producing new and compelling evidence that competition matters. We believe this new evidence reinforces interest-based explanations (see e.g. Polavieja, 2016) precisely because it shows that not even immigrants are immune to competitive pressures related to migration.

A second contribution of this study is that it shows that an important share of the immigrant population does not identify with newly arriving immigrants and instead demarcates itself by adopting an identity of a higher status group within the system of ethnic hierarchies. This finding is in line with contemporary sociological theorizing about ethnic boundaries (see e.g. Wimmer, 2013) in that it provides further evidence that the distinction between ingroup and outgroup does not follow neatly the one of natives and immigrants. Ethnic boundaries are constructed and contested and reflect struggles over social prestige and therefore power. Future research should incorporate knowledge on actual ingroup and outgroup boundaries and more complex ethnic stratification schemes in analyses of anti-immigrant sentiments in multicultural societies. Hence, a main step in this direction will be to identify ethnic stratification schemes that reflect peoples' everyday experiences in the varying contexts of immigration countries. This, in turn, should be systematically used in the analyses of political attitudes and behavior.

Finally, this article also contributes to the literature on party competition and electoral behavior. It shows that the immigrant population provides only limited mobilization potential for those left and liberal political forces that favor open borders. By dividing the immigrants into 'good' ones (ingroup) and 'bad' ones (outgroup) nationalists might be able to divide and weaken the preferences for open borders of immigrants. Related to that our study also raises the question of whether immigrants really tend to vote for the Left due to their stance on migration policy and calls for alternative explanations for this support.

Research data

The raw data is publicly available. The do-files for recodings and analyses are available as Research Data.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.10.001.

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