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Boundaries against immigrants  
and their subjectively felt  
discrimination

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# Summary

The paper studies the feeling of being discriminated among immigrants and their children in Europe as a multifaceted phenomenon. Their discrimination is brought in relation to (1) negative attitudes towards immigrants within the general public (symbolic boundaries) and (2) societal macro structures that enhance or prohibit the access for immigrants to socioeconomic privileges, scarce resources and public goods (social boundaries). Based on cumulative data from the European Social Survey 2010 and the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2011, a cluster analysis is used to build up a typology among 17 European Countries.

The analysis reveals that what accounts for discrimination is the complex interplay of negative attitudes towards immigrants in the general public and macro-structural constraints (legal, socioeconomic, educational, and political) for equal participation. When symbolic and social boundaries diverge, the former have a stronger impact on the feeling among immigrants being discriminated. The results indicate that even those who suffer from discrimination might tend to underestimate the importance of structural and institutional mechanisms leading to discrimination and inequalities. The paper builds a bridge between two rewarding but diverging theoretical frameworks explaining discrimination, i.e. one that focuses on individuals' negative attitudes towards immigrants and another that concentrates on structural constraints for immigrants' integration.

Key words: boundaries, immigration, discrimination, inequalities, integration policy, Europe

# Boundaries against immigrants and their subjectively felt discrimination

Kerstin Duemmler<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Discrimination has become a major political and legal issue in many countries of the European Union (EU). In 2000, a relevant EU guideline (2000/43/EG) has condemned the differential and unequal treatment of people on the grounds of ethnic origin and race. Since then European member states are required to abolish ethnic and racial discrimination in law and to implement measures against discrimination with regards to the labour market, the educational and social security system as well as the access to public goods (e.g. housing) (article 3). Moreover, they are committed to build up institutions in charge of equal treatment and must provide juridical channels so that complaints about unequal treatment can be made (article 7, 9, 13). Although the EU member states have to put the non-discrimination guidelines into practice, there are important differences in their implementation. Whereas some states hardly meet the standards of the guidelines, others even go further in their measures for combating discrimination. This raises the question of how these diverging policies in the European states eventually account for the subjective feeling among immigrants and their children being discriminated.

The particular focus on discrimination against immigrants and their descendants in this paper is motivated by the results of various studies highlighting perpetual social inequalities within the labour market, the educational system or the access to housing for first and second generation migrants in many European countries (Diehl, 2009). However, social inequalities between immigrants and the host population cannot be fully explained by discrimination. Another mechanism of inequality production relates to the unequal distribution of socioeconomic, cultural and social capital and the transmission of these unequal forms of capital from the first to the second generation (Scherr, 2008). Nevertheless, various studies have shown that immigrants and their children are discriminated, for instance on the labour market where they often face inferior chances to get a job compared to the host population although they have the required qualifications and diplomas (Fibbi, Lerch, & Wanner, 2006).

Within the social science – and in line with the various legislations against discrimination within and outside the EU – a serious concern has emerged to address

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discrimination as a complex phenomenon. Consequently, individual-oriented approaches have been receiving growing critics (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Hormel, 2010; Reskin, 2003) since they reduce discrimination to the understanding of an individual action based either on prejudices (negative attitudes) against specific categories of people and/or on interests to protect one's own privileged social position or access to scarce resources vis-à-vis others. Competitive threat theory has thus become one of the most widely used theories in this field (Pettigrew, Wagner, & Christ, 2010). However, critical scholars have argued that this perspective provides only a partial picture and that structural conditions should be taken into account favouring the unequal treatment of immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010: 318).

Since decades, scholars adopting an institutional discrimination perspective have particularly concentrated on the social structures, procedures, routines and norms leading to discrimination that are inscribed in organisations, institutions and even daily interactions (e.g. in the labour market, schools). In this approach, discrimination is not theorized as the simple outcome of individual actors' interests or prejudices that give rise to an unfavourable treatment of a specific category of people. Instead, institutionalized behavioural and procedural patterns that are linked to wider socioeconomic, political and juridical inequalities and unequal power relations are seen as the basis for discrimination (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Gomolla, 2010; Reskin, 2003). Thus, indirect discrimination is also considered under this theoretical perspective; i.e. when individuals treat others unequally based on their participation in organisations (e.g. firms) or institutions (e.g. schools) although they do not share negative attitudes or interests to do so.

The aim of this paper is to theoretically and empirically contribute to this debate by approaching discrimination against immigrants and their children in its complexity. Instead of drawing either on competitive threat theories or on theories of institutional discrimination, I propose an original framework bringing both perspectives together. Therefore, I base my theoretical reflections on the symbolic and social boundary-work approach (Lamont and Molnar 2002) providing an integrated framework to understand discrimination as a multifaceted phenomenon. Discrimination will be conceptualized in relation to (1) negative attitudes towards immigrants/ immigration within the general population (called here symbolic boundaries) as well as in relation to (2) societal macro structures that enhance or prohibit the access for immigrants to socioeconomic privileges, scarce resources and public goods (called here social boundaries). Based on cumulative data from the European Social Survey 2010 (attitudes towards immigrants/ immigration and the perception among immigrants and their descendants being discriminated) and the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2011 (Huddleston, Niessen, Chaoimh, & White, 2011), I use cluster analyses to construct a typology among 17 European countries (for a similar approach see Bail, 2008). The analysis reveals that only taking into account the complex interplay of negative public attitudes towards immigrants and macro-structural constraints (legal, socioeconomic, educational, and political) for equal participation – in other words symbolic and social boundaries – enables to understand why immigrants feel discriminated.

This approach is also a novelty from an empirical perspective since survey research has been mainly interested in perceived discrimination as an independent variable influencing for instance health or educational outcomes among immigrants. Moreover, the few (often psychological) studies explicitly interested in what influences the feeling of discrimination have focused on the individual characteristics of the victims, such as personality traits (Phinney, Madden, & Santos, 1998) or the role of ethnic and racial identities (Sellers & Shelton, 2003) whereas the social context (e.g. hostility in the host population or structural integration barriers) have been rather neglected. Since this paper is explorative in its scope, I discuss implications for policy measures against discrimination and further research avenues in this domain in the conclusion.

## 2. Symbolic and social boundaries and their link to discrimination

The scientific literature on boundaries has become widespread in the last decade. Much work has drawn on this theoretical perspective to examine the social inclusion and exclusion of first or second generation immigrants in the US or Europe (Alba, 2005; Bail, 2008; Michèle Lamont & Mizrachi, 2012; Michele Lamont, Morning, & Mooney, 2002; Wimmer, 2004, 2008). I propose to expand this theoretical approach and discussion to the issue of discrimination. Initially introduced by Lamont and Molnar (2002), it has become common to make a difference between symbolic and social boundaries. This distinction is useful to understand discrimination as multifaceted and complex phenomenon, on the one hand as a differential and unequal treatment by social actors in daily encounters (symbolic boundaries), on the other hand as a result of norms, mechanisms and routines inscribed in key social institutions (social boundaries).

*Symbolic boundaries* are distinctions that social actors make in their everyday life to classify other people and their practices. This categorization often generates feelings of group belonging (ebd. 168). Besides, symbolic distinctions do not only influence individual and collective mental orientations but can have consequences for social actions (Alba 2005: 22), for instance the differential and unequal treatment of a certain category of people (e.g. immigrants). These mechanisms enable individuals and collectivities to acquire social status vis-à-vis others and/or to defend the access to and the monopolization of scarce resources (Weber, 1922 [1980]). In this way, the concept of symbolic boundaries refers to individual oriented approaches to discrimination looking on prejudices and the defence of privileges. The question I address is *in which way the public spread of the symbolic ‘immigrant-native’ boundary within the resident population in different European states accounts for the subjective feeling among immigrants and their children being discriminated.*

Complementary, Lamont and Molnar define *social boundaries* as “objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities” (ebd. 2002: 168). Bringing together the scientific literature on social boundaries and immigration, Alba

(2005) has particularly focused on how immigrants and their children might attend parity of life chances compared to the mainstream society. He has argued that this is shaped by how social boundaries are institutionalized in key social spheres (ibid. 26). In other words, immigrants will encounter a strong social boundary if normative patterns building on the 'native-immigrant' distinction are manifested in different social domains and are associated with asymmetric social status and unequal power relations. Thus, a macro-structural context with strong social boundaries encourages discrimination – an idea that makes indirect reference to the concept of institutional discrimination.

One important domain to look at social boundaries is the access to citizenship since it goes along with fundamental political rights, rights for family reunification, permanent settlement, and naturalization (Alba 2005: 27). The access to the labour market and the educational system are other determinant domains of social boundaries (Alba & Waters, 2011; Büchel & Frick, 2005: 15). These key social institutions can be more or less open to newcomers and hamper or facilitate their social mobility. Building on the concept of social boundaries, I address the question of *how the institutionalization of boundaries in social key spheres in different European states accounts for the subjective feeling among immigrants and their children being discriminated*.

### 3. Data and methods

Data stems from the cross-sectional European Social Survey (ESS) of round 5 (2010) including people aged 15 and older living in 17 European countries. Because this study is designed to investigate the subjective feeling among immigrants and their children being discriminated, I excluded countries that do not have at least 50 first or second generation immigrants (defined as individuals whose parents were born abroad) in their national ESS sample<sup>2</sup>. Subjectively felt discrimination among this group was measured by the items (1) "Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?" (yes-no-scale) and (2) "On what grounds is your group discriminated against?" through which criteria such as color, race, nationality, religion, language, and ethnic group were recorded. This measurement is well suited since it takes various criteria into account on which ground discrimination may occur. Yet, a separated analysis for the six criteria is not possible because of the limited number of cases. Since I am interested in the societal (and not individual) determinants for discrimination (symbolic and social boundaries), the analysis refers to the percentage among first and second generation immigrants in the 17 selected ESS countries (aggregated data on the level of states) who feel discriminated because of one or more of these five criteria.

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<sup>2</sup> Some Eastern European countries had to be excluded from the analysis (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) where immigration is a more recent phenomenon. Cyprus was excluded since immigrants were underrepresented compared to official statistics. Other countries were not included because of missing macro data on social boundaries (Croatia, Russia, Ukraine, and Israel). A cluster analysis requires that there are no missing values.

Symbolic boundaries were derived from six items measuring the general public attitude towards immigration and immigrants. Respondents were asked (1) "To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country]'s people to come and live here?". The question was re-asked for people (2) "with a different race or ethnic group" and (3) "from the poorer countries outside Europe". The response scale ranged from 1 to 4 "allow none", "a few", "some" to "many". Respondents were also asked if (4) "it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries", if (5) "[country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched" and if the country is (6) "made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?". Responses were given on a 10-point-likert scale where '0' stands for extremely negative and '10' for extremely positive attitudes towards immigrants. The analysis refers to the mean values of the six items measuring symbolic boundaries against immigrants/immigration (cronbach alpha=0.938) that are spread in the general public in each of the 17 countries. This aggregated data on the level of countries indicates the prevalence of symbolic boundaries against immigrants in each country that might account for the feeling among immigrants being discriminated.

Table 1 gives an overview of the percentage of first and second generation immigrants in each country, the prevalence of symbolic boundaries among the resident population, as well as the percentage among first or second generation immigrants who feel discriminated. It reveals that symbolic boundaries are very common in Greece while the percentage of immigrants who feel discriminated is also the highest. In Sweden, on the contrary, this percentage is one of the lowest while symbolic boundaries towards immigrants are also the least widespread within the resident population.

Table 1: Symbolic boundaries against immigrants (mean scores) and 1<sup>st</sup>/ 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants subjectively felt discrimination (percentage)

	Immigrants are/ make <sup>1</sup> ...			Allow immigration <sup>2</sup> ...			% of immigrants who feel discriminated <sup>3</sup>	% of immigrants in each country
	bad/ good for economy	undermine/ enrich cultural life	country worse/ better place	for same ethnic group	for different ethnic group	from poorer countries		
BE	4.53	5.52	4.66	2.77	2.46	2.47	10.90	11.85
CZ	3.95	4.11	4.07	2.46	2.16	2.13	10.40	2.01
DK	5.21	6.07	5.84	3.10	2.70	2.50	14.70	7.36
EE	4.49	5.34	4.37	2.96	2.40	2.06	18.10	19.07
FI	5.21	6.84	5.35	2.64	2.34	2.18	21.20	2.77
FR	4.72	5.23	4.61	2.70	2.55	2.42	20.10	12.96
DE	5.23	5.79	5.06	3.06	2.69	2.64	14.40	13.26
GR	3.06	3.13	2.77	2.55	1.78	1.73	27.20	10.28
IE	4.43	5.27	5.09	2.64	2.49	2.42	20.80	12.27
NL	5.19	6.13	5.23	2.72	2.65	2.49	23.00	8.31
NO	5.64	5.80	5.32	3.02	2.78	2.71	8.50	8.33
PT	4.71	5.28	4.09	2.30	2.22	2.18	24.50	4.37
SL	4.08	4.91	4.35	2.83	2.65	2.50	6.90	9.35
ES	4.97	5.91	5.15	2.59	2.49	2.50	14.50	8.39
SE	5.95	7.16	6.51	3.31	3.23	3.19	9.30	12.96
CH	6.12	6.00	5.50	3.04	2.66	2.59	8.70	26.76
GB	4.54	4.95	4.61	2.59	2.43	2.31	14.20	14.24
Mean	4.82	5.50	4.86	2.78	2.51	2.41	15.73	
Standard Deviation	0.73	0.92	0.81	0.26	0.30	0.31	6.04	
Min	3.06	3.13	2.77	2.30	1.78	1.73	8.50	2.01
Max	6.12	7.16	6.51	3.31	3.23	3.19	27.20	26.76
N	32691	32721	32724	32855	32846	32788	3776	3776

<sup>1</sup> Scale from 0 'bad for economy/ undermine cultural life/ country worse place' to 10 'good for economy/ enrich cultural life/ country better place'

<sup>2</sup> '1' allow none, '2' allow few, '3' allow some, '4' allow many

<sup>3</sup> because of their colour, race, nationality, religion, language, or ethnic group

Notes: FI=Finland, NL=Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, GR=Greece, FR=France, GB=Great Britain, IE=Ireland, DK=Denmark, CH=Switzerland, DE=Germany, NO=Norway, BE=Belgium, CZ=Czech Republic, EE=Estonia, ES=Span, SL=Slovenia

Source: European Social Survey 2010

Indicators of social boundaries against immigrants and their children in the 17 countries were derived from the 2011 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) on seven domains: education, labour market, family reunification, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination (Huddleston, et al., 2011). The indexes assess the commitment of the national governments to integration with regards to laws, policies and their implementation. They indicate the extent to which all residents, also immigrants and their children, have equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and support. Table 2 shows the classification of each country on the seven domains: The index runs from 0 to 100; the higher the score the better are the structural integration efforts in the relevant domain. Sweden stands on top with regards to efforts for labour market integration and anti-discrimination measures while Ireland

has the strongest boundaries for immigrants within the labour market, the educational system and with regard to family reunification.

Table 2: Social boundaries against immigrants

Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2011 <sup>1</sup>							
	Labour	Education	Political participation	Naturalization	Family reunion	Long term residence	Antidiscrimination
BE	53	66	59	69	68	<b>79</b>	79
CZ	55	44	<b>13</b>	33	66	65	44
DK	73	51	62	33	37	66	47
EE	65	50	28	<b>16</b>	65	67	32
FI	71	63	87	57	70	58	78
FR	49	29	44	59	52	46	77
DE	77	43	64	59	60	50	48
GR	50	42	40	57	49	56	50
IE	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>	79	58	<b>34</b>	43	63
NL	85	51	79	66	58	68	68
NO	73	63	<b>94</b>	41	68	61	59
PT	94	63	70	<b>82</b>	<b>91</b>	69	84
SL	44	24	28	33	75	69	66
ES	84	48	56	39	85	78	49
SE	<b>100</b>	<b>77</b>	75	79	84	78	<b>88</b>
CH	53	45	59	36	40	41	<b>31</b>
GB	55	58	53	59	54	<b>31</b>	86

<sup>1</sup> Index from 0 'low integration efforts' to 100 'high integration efforts in the relevant domain'

Notes: FI=Finland, NL=Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, GR=Greece, FR=France, GB=Great Britain, IE=Ireland, DK=Denmark, CH=Switzerland, DE=Germany, NO=Norway, BE=Belgium, CZ=Czech Republic, EE=Estonia, ES=Span, SL=Slovenia

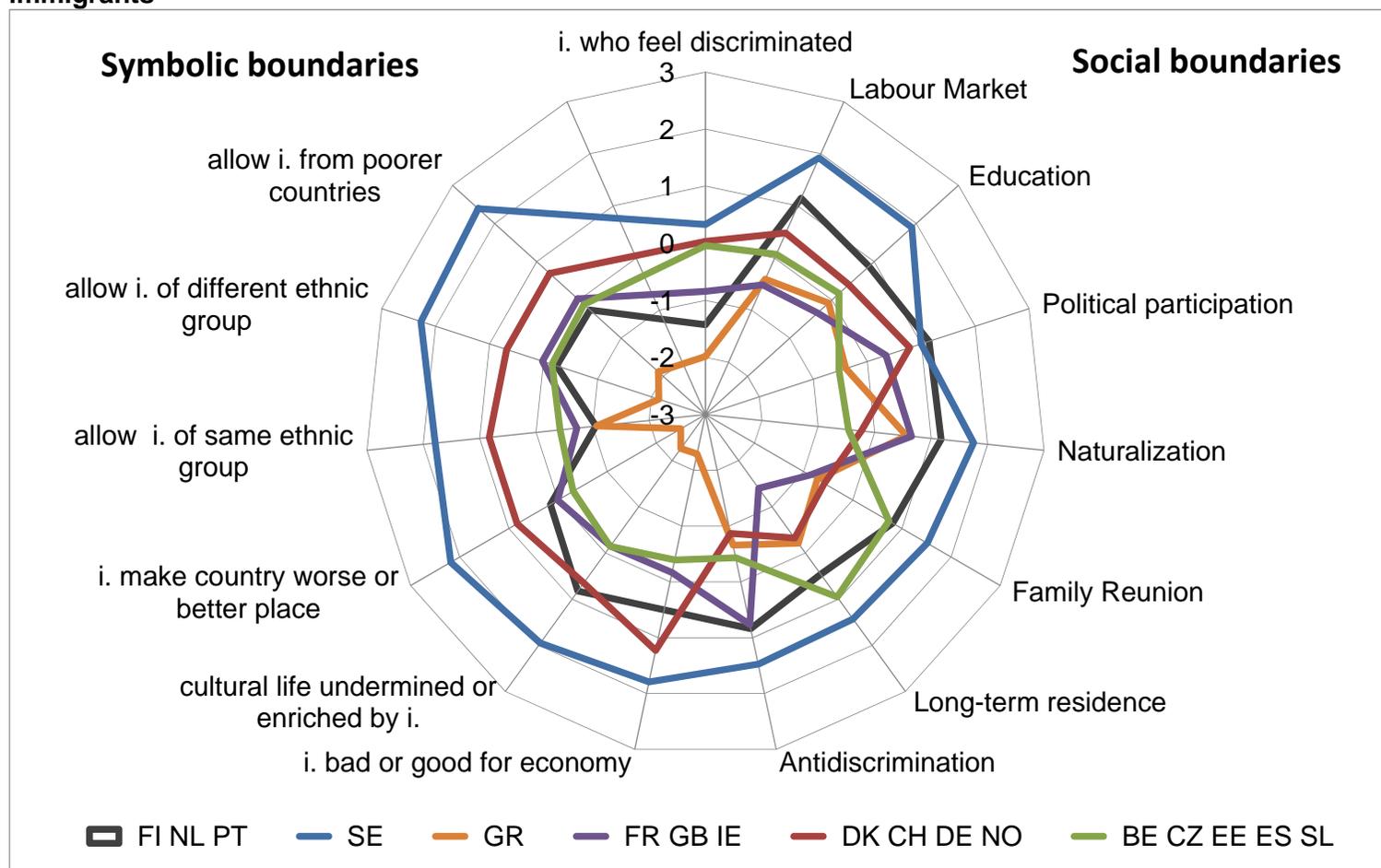
A cluster analysis taking countries as cases allows investigating the link between subjectively felt discrimination among first and second generation immigrants, as well as symbolic boundaries that are spread in the general public and social boundaries that are inscribed in the macro structures. First, a hierarchical cluster analysis was performed with the 14 standardized variables in order to determine the number of relevant country clusters. I used squared Euclidean distance to place progressively greater weight on countries that are further apart. According to this analysis, six clusters seemed to be an appropriate solution. Second, I performed k-means clustering to classify the 17 countries to the six clusters and to determine the cluster centres. The cluster centres significantly differed with regard to the six items measuring symbolic boundaries (ANOVA <0.01) and the extent to which immigrants feel discriminated (ANOVA <0.01) (Table 3). Social boundaries in the domains of education and naturalization did not significantly discriminate. However, the six clusters significantly differed in the way the countries provide access to the labour market, allow political participation, family reunification, and long term residence for immigrants, as well as take measures against discrimination (ANOVA <0.05). Figure 1 shows the centres of each cluster on the three domains (discrimination, symbolic and social boundaries measured by the 14 variables). Two clusters consist of only one country (Sweden and Greece); the others encompass three to five. The whole cluster configuration reveals a

complex relationship between subjectively felt discrimination, symbolic and social boundaries towards immigrants.

Table 3: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) between the six cluster centres

	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Immigrants who feel discriminated</b>	7.537	<0.01
<b>Symbolic boundaries against immigrants</b>		
Immigrants bad or good for country's economy	12.039	<0.01
Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	7.515	<0.01
Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	9.365	<0.01
Allow immigrants of same ethnic group	7.147	<0.01
Allow immigrants of different ethnic group	11.659	<0.01
Allow immigrants from poorer countries	10.094	<0.01
<b>Social boundaries against immigrants</b>		
Labour market mobility	4.611	<0.05
Family Reunion	3.318	<0.05
Education	1.834	n.s.
Political participation	3.243	<0.05
Long-term residence	7.117	<0.01
Naturalization	3.011	n.s.
Antidiscrimination	3.346	<0.05

**Figure 1: Six country cluster configurations (cluster centres) accounting for discrimination, symbolic and social boundaries against immigrants**



Note: Higher standardized scores stand for more permeable symbolic and social boundaries; that means the general public is in favour for immigrants/ immigration and structural conditions in the different domains facilitate their integration. Higher scores also indicate that the feeling among first and second generation immigrants to be discriminated is less common. Fi=Finland, NL=Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, GR=Greece, FR=France, GB=Great Britain, IE=Ireland, DK=Denmark, CH=Switzerland, DE=Germany, NO=Norway, BE=Belgium, CZ=Czech Republic, EE=Estonia, ES=Span, SL=Slovenia

#### 4. Six cluster configurations accounting for a complex relationship between subjectively felt discrimination, symbolic and social boundaries against immigrants

*Sweden* has been accorded a cluster (SE) of its own since it stands out due to its specific configuration: Subjectively felt discrimination among first and second generation immigrants is the least widespread. Compared to the other country clusters, social boundaries against immigrants are in all domains the most permeable and symbolic boundaries among the resident population are the least prevalent (Figure 1). There seems to be a strong convergence of the view held by the general public towards immigration and the political, socioeconomic and judicial arrangements for immigrant's integration. The Swedish 'mainstreaming approach' that aims to provide equal opportunities and rights for immigrants in all life domains has not only been successfully implemented (Parusel, 2009) but seems to be also deeply rooted within the Swedish population who largely evaluates immigration as an economic, social and cultural advantage and is in favour of future immigration. Immigrants seem to benefit from this situation and do only rarely feel discriminated or excluded<sup>3</sup>.

*Greece* equally forms a cluster (GR) of its own but stands in big contrast to Sweden: The number of first and second generation immigrants who feel discriminated is the highest. On the one hand, this might be explained by the general public's view who sees enormous economic, cultural and social disadvantages for Greece in light of the settlement of immigrants and who is strongly against immigration. With regard to social boundaries, on the other hand, immigrants are neither in a favourable situation. Compared to the other clusters, Greece shows low scores with regard to equal opportunities in the labour market, the educational system, for political participation, family reunion and antidiscrimination. In big contrast to Sweden, a convergence of sharp symbolic and social boundaries can be observed which might account for the high number of immigrants who feel discriminated (Figure 1). In the last two decades, Greece has become not only a transit country for immigrants on the way to other European countries but also a destination country (e.g. for Albanians or Bulgarians). Right-wing-political groups are very active in Greece in promoting racist and xenophobic campaigns and various human rights organizations reported an increase of xenophobic attacks against non-EU migrants during 2012. The cluster configuration of Greece clearly mirrors these tensions: a pronounced reluctance towards immigration in

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<sup>3</sup> The results are based on data from 2010/11 and seem to be striking in light of the Stockholm riots that occurred in May 2013 in many immigrant neighbourhoods. In fact, immigration has recently become a hotly debated public issue in Sweden. The anti-immigration party 'Sweden Democrats' has even gained ground during the 2010 elections so that questions of immigrant discrimination have come to the fore, similar to other European countries. Unfortunately, more recent ESS data is not available yet that could account for these changes.

the general public, structural constraints for immigrants' integration, and a strong feeling among immigrants of not being welcomed.

The two clusters (SE and GR) stand for a kind of 'linear' relationship: the stronger symbolic and social boundaries are, the stronger discrimination will be experienced. Yet, the other 15 countries classified into four different clusters add more to the complexity of this relationship.

Cluster (FI, NL, PT) is formed by *Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal* with a high score comparable to Greece of first and second generation immigrants who feel discriminated. However, this high score does not go along with manifested social boundaries. The country cluster is rather characterized by remarkable governmental ambitions comparable to Sweden favouring the integration of immigrants within the labour market and the educational system, implementing antidiscrimination policies as well as facilitating political participation and naturalization. Moreover, the resident population in these countries sees immigrants in a rather positive way; they are perceived – compared to other clusters – as economically and culturally enriching. However, when it comes to the question of immigration, the general public is very reluctant which might account for the feeling of immigrants not being welcomed (Figure 1). In a similar way, political discourses and related practices in the three countries have advocated a need for a more restrictive immigration policy during the last decade (Solé, 2004). Portugal and Finland are younger immigration countries whose migrant population has strongly increased since the 1990s. The low support in the general public for additional immigration could be related to the recent economic crisis in Portugal and public debates on integration problems in Finland (Tanner, 2011). The Netherlands is an older immigration country whose multiculturalist policy has become under threat in the last years since integration deficits among the immigrant population have entered the public debates. Since then, individual's efforts for integration – in particular also for those who want to enter – have been put on top of the political agenda (Vasta, 2007). To sum up, the high number of immigrants who feel discriminated in this cluster could be linked to the pronounced public reluctance towards immigration albeit favourable structural conditions for immigrants' integration.

Cluster (FR, GB, IE) regrouping *France, Great Britain and Ireland* has a similar cluster pattern like Greece albeit on another level. First and second generation immigrants are quite aware of being discriminated. This goes along with sharp social boundaries with regards to the labour market, education, family reunion and long-term residence that are the most prevalent compared to the other country clusters. In the domains of naturalization and antidiscrimination measures the cluster makes more efforts for immigrants' integration. However, attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in the general public are by trend rather negative (Figure 1). Historically, France and the UK are older immigration countries whose young immigrant population is faced with social marginalization (e.g. education, labour) in particular in the big cities (Silberman, Alba, & Fournier, 2006). In the recent decade(s), these problems have also entered the British public debates and put multicultural policies under threat (Hansen, 2007; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). In France, immigration is also increasingly perceived and debated as a social problem in particular in the French right-wing populist rhetoric (Engler,

2007). Ireland, on the contrary, is a younger immigration country (Quinn, 2010) and has hardly invested in integration policy which is visible today in rather manifested social boundaries. What accounts for discrimination in this cluster are quite impermeable symbolic and social boundaries. There seems to be a convergence between symbolic and social boundaries which might have provoked the feelings among immigrants not being fully welcomed.

A fifth cluster (DK, CH, DE, NO) consists of *Denmark, Switzerland, Germany and Norway*. It stands in clear contrast to the former cluster (FR, GB, IR) since feelings of discrimination among the immigrant population are not very common and social boundaries in particular with regard to the labour market, the educational system and for political participation are rather in favour and permeable for immigrants. However, in the domains of naturalization, family reunion and antidiscrimination the four national governments do little for immigrants' integration compared to the other clusters. Interestingly, the general public holds a positive view on immigrants and immigration. They are perceived as beneficial for the country which might account for the fact that the big majority among immigrants still feel welcome (Figure 1). Whereas Germany, Switzerland and Denmark are older immigration countries, Norway's immigration population has only increased in the last decade. In all four countries, immigration is a public issue and populist movements are present, at least in local politics, and defend the aim to reduce the number of immigrants. As a consequence, immigration policies have become more restrictive in recent years (Brubaker, 2001; Mouritsen & Olsen, 2013; Pineiro, 2009). Albeit these developments, the cluster still encompasses an advantageous situation for immigrants compared to the other countries. To sum up, the low level of discrimination among immigrants in this cluster can be explained by still rather permeable symbolic and social boundaries.

The sixth cluster (BE, CZ, EE, ES, SL) is formed by *Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain and Slovenia* and it adds most to the complexity of the relationship between discrimination, symbolic and social boundaries. Although the general public holds by trend rather negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigrations, the number of immigrants who feel discriminated is rather low. This might be due to governmental efforts for integration in the field of family reunion and long-term-residence that could have stimulated a feeling of being welcomed. Nevertheless, this cluster configuration profoundly questions the linear relationship that symbolic boundaries necessarily lead to discrimination (Figure 1). One explication might be that the hostility towards immigrants and immigration in the general public is a recent phenomenon since the countries have been hit by the economic crisis in 2007/08 (e.g. Spain) or since they have entered the European Union in 2004 and adopted European immigration policies (e.g. Estonia, Slovenia, Czech Republic). Future research has to examine if this hostility persists and provokes feelings among immigrants not being welcomed. Another explication might be that the cluster forms a group of very heterogeneous countries with the highest variance to the cluster centre (analysis not shown in the paper). This might point to the limits of a rewarding interpretation of this cluster configuration.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper has shown that it is theoretically and empirically fruitful to understand the feeling of being discriminated among first and second generation immigrants (1) in relation to the spread of negative attitudes towards immigrants in the general public (symbolic boundaries), as well as (2) in relation to macro structural barriers with regards to equal rights and opportunities (social boundaries). The burgeoning symbolic and social boundary-work literature (Alba, 2005; Michèle Lamont & Molnar, 2002) has enabled to build a bridge between two theoretical perspectives on discrimination; that is (1) individual threat theory (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010) and (2) theories on institutional discrimination (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Reskin, 2003). The combination of both allowed a more complex and comprehensive understanding of discrimination.

At a first glance both theories suggest that the more or the less prevalent symbolic and social boundaries are, the more or the fewer immigrants are faced with discrimination. However, the empirical cluster analysis has brought to light that this is only the case in contexts (e.g. Sweden, Greece, Great Britain, France or Ireland) where symbolic and social boundaries converge. Here, public attitudes towards immigration went in the same direction as governmental ambitions for equal opportunities so that their impact on immigrants' feelings of being welcomed was quite unambiguous. Boundaries were either open or closed, thus, first and second generation immigrants knew if they were welcomed or not.

In several other contexts the cluster analysis uncovered a pronounced divergence between symbolic and social boundaries since governmental ambitions for immigrants' integration differed from the attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in the general public (for similar findings see Lefkofridi & Horvath, 2012). Either the institutionalized social boundaries were more restrictive towards immigrants than the symbolic boundaries (e.g. Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway) or vice versa (e.g. Finland, Portugal, and the Netherlands). In both cases, the public view towards immigrants and immigration (symbolic boundaries) compared to structural boundaries seemed to account more for the feeling among first and second generation immigrants of being welcomed or not. However, these results do not prove that structural integration barriers are less important when it comes to discrimination. They rather reveal that people mainly become aware of discrimination when they encounter it in daily life, e.g. when being exposed to daily debates that promote an unequal treatment of a certain category of people. These results illuminate that even those who suffer from discrimination might underestimate the role of structural and institutional mechanisms leading to their discrimination. What seems to provoke their feelings of not being welcomed is the lived experience of discrimination that can be encountered in daily interactions with significant others.

From these findings, central policy recommendation with regards to measures against discrimination can be drawn out. The success of any political and juridical attempt to reduce structural barriers for immigrants' integration (e.g. with regard to education, labour market, or housing) is based on the support from the general public. Therefore, the case of Sweden stood out from the other countries since governments' ambitions

against inequality and discrimination ('mainstreaming approach') were more widely spread and upheld in the Swedish population with the consequence that immigrants felt the least discriminated. On the contrary, Finland, Portugal and the Netherlands lacked this public acknowledgment. Consequently, immigrants felt the most discriminated, albeit structural conditions existed that favoured their integration. Nonetheless, the riots in Stockholm's immigrant neighbourhoods in May 2013 have shown that the Swedish accomplishment has also become more fragile in the last years.

The explorative nature of this paper opens up at least one crucial future research avenue. The results particularly raise the question of how symbolic and social boundaries come to a divergence. Why does the general public view towards immigrants and immigration differ from policy efforts seeking immigrants' integration? One plausible hypothesis can be that immigration policies and their implementation have recently come under public pressure – they are either perceived as too restrictive or as too open towards immigrants – which might give rise to a counter reaction in the general public. Such counter reactions in the general public might become particularly pronounced in situations of economic recession and/or individual economic threat. A case study analysis of countries that have been heavily hit by the financial crisis in 2008 (e.g. Portugal, Spain and Greece) would enable to examine this hypothesis in more detail. Evidences for this hypothesis can be already drawn from a recent study based on ESS data from 2000 to 2009 showing that people employed in growing economic sectors are more likely to support immigration compared to those in declining sectors. Interestingly, attitudes towards immigration are shaped by the economic effects on one's own employment sector; during the financial crisis, people have only become more hostile when their individual economic situation downgraded and their confidence declined (Dancygier & Donnelly, 2013).

Finally, survey studies interested in the immigrant population of a country have to be aware of an important limitation. In fact, this population is often underrepresented in general social surveys and in particular those groups who do not sufficiently speak the local language and/or are lower educated (Lipps, Laganà, Pollien, & Gianettoni, 2011). Being aware that immigrants excluded from surveys might be also those who are excluded from other social domains, it is possible that this study has underestimated the feeling among immigrants of being discriminated. To make this potential bias more concrete, table 4 gives an overview of the percentage of the foreign and foreign born population in each country according to official statistics (Vasileva, 2011) and the ESS sample 2010<sup>4</sup>. Although this population is by trend underrepresented and some groups are more concerned (e.g. Moroccans in the Netherlands and Belgium), the table shows that the ESS still represents an acceptable sample with regard to the main citizenship groups of the immigrant population in each country.

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Eurostat does only publish data on the foreign and the foreign born population. Both categories do not exactly coincide with the immigrant population (first and second generation).

Table 4: Percentage of the foreign and foreign born population in each country according to Eurostat 2010/11 and the ESS sample 2010

	Eurostat 2010/11			ESS 2010		
	Foreigners %	Foreign born %	Main citizenships of foreigners	Foreigners %	Foreign born %	Main citizenships of foreigners
BE	9.7	14.8	Italy, France, Netherlands, Morocco	6.2	11.0	Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal
CZ	4.0	3.7	Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam	0.7	2.0	Slovakia, Ukraine, Germany
DK	6.0	9.3	Turkey, Poland, Germany	3.6	6.4	Turkey, Poland, Iceland
EE	15.9	16.1	*	12.1	15.4	
FI	2.9	4.5	Russia, Estonia	1.9	3.5	Russia, Estonia
FR	5.8	11.2	*	3.7	9.1	
DE	8.7	12.0	Turkey, Italy, Poland	5.7	10.9	Turkey, Italy, Poland
GR	8.4	11.1	*	6.8	9.7	
IE	8.6	12.4	Poland, Great Britain, Lithuania	10.8	15.8	Poland, Great Britain, Nigeria
NL	3.9	11.2	Turkey, Germany, Morocco	2.2	7.5	Turkey Great Britain, Italy, Germany
NO	6.8	11.6	Poland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark	6.8	10.0	Poland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark
PT	4.3	7.6	Brazil, Ukraine, Cap Verde, Romania, Angola	2.9	6.1	Brazil, Ukraine, Cap Verde, Angola
SL	4.0	11.1	former Yugoslavia	1.0	8.7	former Yugoslavia
ES	12.3	14.2	Romania, Morocco, Ecuador	6.8	9.9	Romania, Morocco, Ecuador
SE	6.3	14.7	Finland, Iraq, Denmark, Poland, Norway	3.3	11.6	Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iraq
CH	22.0	24.7	Italy, Germany, Portugal, former Yugoslavia	15.2	23.3	Italy, Germany, Portugal, former Yugoslavia
GB	7.0	11.6	*	5.0	12.1	

Notes: \* no detailed data available by Eurostat, FI=Finland, NL=Netherlands, PT=Portugal, SE=Sweden, GR=Greece, FR=France, GB=Great Britain, IE=Ireland, DK=Denmark, CH=Switzerland, DE=Germany, NO=Norway, BE=Belgium, CZ=Czech Republic, EE=Estonia, ES=Spain, SL=Slovenia

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