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BOOK REVIEW

DAVID ANDREAS BELL 

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The field of welfare chauvinism—the desire among majority populations to exclude immigrants from the welfare system—has in the last decade become a prominent research field within the social sciences. One of the findings that seems the most robust across studies on exclusionary attitudes toward immigrants is that higher education has a liberalizing effect on these attitudes. More education is therefore often seen as the solution to move toward a more tolerant society. ‘If only more people became educated and more knowledgeable surely these attitudes would disappear’ is a common conclusion in several studies. However, Gianna Maria Eick challenges this notion in her new book *Welfare Chauvinism in Europe: How Education, Economy and Culture Shape Public Opinion*, showing how welfare chauvinism is quite prevalent among the more privileged socioeconomic status groups, including the more highly educated. The book is therefore a refreshing addition to the field of welfare chauvinism and serves as a great reminder to all researchers of how effect sizes in quantitative methods are just as important, if not more so, than whether there is a significant relationship between variables.

The book consists of seven distinct chapters where we as readers are introduced to the concept of welfare chauvinism and its predictors before Eick shows how it varies across countries, time, and policies with a focus on how education plays a part across these aspects. In Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Eick situates the book within the field, explaining the theoretical assumptions behind the relationship between education and welfare chauvinism and argues that this relationship is significantly shaped by national economic and cultural contexts. Eick introduces three overarching theoretical explanations for the book—self-interest theory, cultural ideology theories, and institutional theories—arguing that the institutional context can shape the context between how self-interest theory, cultural ideology, and education affect welfare chauvinism.

Chapter 4 delves into how welfare chauvinism and the effect of education vary considerably across countries. Eick highlights how welfare chauvinism varies in much larger part between countries than between the less and more highly educated within

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

David Andreas Bell

Department of Social
Work, Faculty of Social
and Educational Sciences,
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology
(NTNU), NO

david.a.bell@ntnu.no

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countries. Granted, individuals with lower levels of education are on average more welfare chauvinistic than more highly educated individuals, but there are still sizeable levels of welfare chauvinism among more highly educated groups. In Sweden for example, the percentage of more highly educated individuals who hold welfare chauvinistic views are a few percentage points under 30%, while the individuals with lower levels of education who hold welfare chauvinistic views amount to a few percentage points over 30%. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, for example, the difference is nearly nonexistent, leading Eick to conclude, correctly, that both less and more highly educated groups hold considerable levels of welfare chauvinistic views. Furthermore, using a multilevel analysis, the chapter shows how the national context also shapes the effect of education, finding that, in countries where economic conditions are less favorable and stronger authoritarian norms are present, the educational divide on welfare chauvinism is smaller.

Chapter 5 builds on the previous chapter by exploring changes in welfare chauvinism across time. Interestingly, the educational gap on welfare chauvinism had not changed significantly between 2008/2009 and 2016/2017, a period when Europe faced many crises, foremost among them the 2008 financial crisis and the so-called refugee crisis of 2015–2016. The chapter further shows how changes in authoritarian values over time do *not* impact the educational divide on welfare chauvinism; however, in countries that saw a decrease in their economic prosperity, the educational divide on welfare chauvinism became significantly smaller.

While the whole book is an impressive study of welfare chauvinism in Europe, I find Chapter 6, where Eick investigates welfare chauvinism across policies, to be by far the most interesting and novel part of the book. Eick finds that welfare chauvinism varies *considerably* across social policies. Although education does indeed have an effect, the differences between levels of welfare chauvinism between more highly and less highly educated groups is much less important than what social policies native populations wish to exclude immigrants from. One could also argue that this chapter provides an answer to what policies respondents actually think of when they answer the question ‘When should immigrants obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?’. This is often the most common measure of welfare chauvinism across studies in Europe. Eick compares the ‘standard’ question to ask respondents about welfare chauvinism with a more detailed comparison of different policies such as schooling, healthcare, childcare, unemployment benefits, social assistance, etc. In general, both high and low education groups are much more willing to give immigrants the benefits connected to healthcare and schooling. In addition, welfare chauvinism within these policies is considerably lower than the ‘standard’ way to measure welfare chauvinism. Welfare chauvinism within the field of social assistance and unemployment benefits are at a similar level as the general level of welfare chauvinism for both educational groups. In my view this may indicate that, when we measure welfare chauvinism in cross-country studies, what we are actually measuring is the respondents’ unwillingness to grant immigrants unemployment benefits and social assistance, i.e., compensatory policies, which is a significant point to highlight. By far the highest level of welfare chauvinism Eick finds for both educational groups are within child benefits connected to children living abroad. She further concludes that individuals are in general more willing to grant immigrants social investment policies, rather than compensatory policies.

Nevertheless, no book is perfect, and an aspect that could perhaps elevate the book would be a more detailed investigation into different forms of welfare chauvinism. This warrants some critical discussion. The measurement of welfare chauvinism in the

book is based on the following question: 'Thinking of people coming to live in [country] from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?' The respondents could then choose between five different answers: (1) Immediately on arrival; (2) After living in [country] for a year, whether or not they have worked; (3) Only after they have worked and paid taxes for at least a year; (4) Once they have become a [country] citizen; and (5) They should never get the same rights.

Eick dichotomizes this variable so that categories 4 and 5 constitute *welfare chauvinism*. While I absolutely agree that both categories can easily be treated as welfare chauvinistic attitudes, I would argue that they are two quite different forms of welfare chauvinism. The attitude of *never* wanting immigrants to obtain the same rights as the native majority is quite an extreme attitude, while those who would wish that they should receive these benefits and services once the immigrants have obtained citizenship are also very strict, but the difference is that they *would* actually grant immigrants the same rights as the native majority. In Finland, for example, the extreme form of welfare chauvinism makes up around 2.5%, while the strict form of welfare chauvinism makes up around 42% of the respondents in the European Social Survey data (Bell, Valenta & Strabac 2023).¹ This is quite a drastic difference. It would therefore be of interest to explore whether this educational gap also holds within these different types of welfare chauvinism, or whether one educational group is more represented in one kind of welfare chauvinism than the other.

All in all, this is fresh and excellent study within the field of welfare chauvinism. It would benefit both newcomers to the field as well as more established scholars. This includes broader migration scholars who wish to gain insight into the tension between migration and welfare in contemporary European societies. The book challenges and nuances the discussions surrounding exclusionary attitudes in Europe toward immigrants. It also shows how the relationship between education and exclusionary attitudes, such as welfare chauvinism, is not as straightforward as is often taken for granted. Particularly Chapter 6 regarding the educational gap between welfare chauvinism across different social policies is an excellent and welcome addition.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

David Andreas Bell  orcid.org/0000-0001-5005-6895

Associate professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), NO

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¹ While in Hungary both categories get around 30% of the respondents. Indicating, as Eick argues, that there are significant differences between countries that must be taken into account.

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