Defenders of liberal, or instrumental, nationalism hold that immigration might undermine the specific identification relationship between co-nationals that acts as a basis for the democratic welfare state. Neither nationalism nor restrictions on movement across borders are intrinsically favoured, but are claimed to be necessary to achieve democratic deliberation and distributive justice. In this article, I argue that the potential threat immigration poses to such shared national identity may be a construct of understandings of that particular political identity. Different forms of identification relationships between compatriots, which are not based on nationalist ties, may result in more open attitudes towards immigration. Based on new empirical evidence, I argue that such identities may be based on either common institutions or on a contributory principle.

Thus this paper pursues two claims that contribute to the literature on the value of national identity. First, I argue that the normative claims put forward by so called instrumental nationalists rests on empirical and claims that are not very well understood. Second, I present the findings of a small-N study that suggest that other political identities than a nationalist one may construct less hostility towards immigration while still motivating people to cooperate in the democratic welfare state. The purpose is to challenge the instrumental nationalist thesis that posits a potential conflict between, on the one hand, immigration and, on the other hand, a trust and solidarity generating shared political identity using partly empirical evidence.

I pursue this argument by discussing the findings of a qualitative study on Swedish and British understandings of identity, belonging and exclusion. 47 in-depth interviews with non-elite respondent were conducted and resulted in three distinct categories of identity, belonging and exclusion. These were “nationalism”, “institutionalism” and “contribution”. The latter two challenge liberal and cultural nationalism by combining different ideas of what it means to be British or Swedish with different understandings of what the basis for the democratic redistributive community is, which resulted in more open views towards immigration.

Hence, this article contributes with empirical evidence to a debate largely dominated by normative analysis, yet which relies extensively on empirical assumptions about the relation between identity, the sources of motivations to cooperate in modern welfare states and attitudes to newcomers. The study contributes to philosophical debates on immigration and the moral boundaries of democratic
redistributive communities, by suggesting that the potential tension that exists between the two can be reduced if the common identity is redefined to be directed towards common institutions or a contributory principle. It also provides evidence for how concern about immigration can be countered by focusing on the identification relationships undergirding the democratic welfare state. Furthermore, the findings suggest in what institutional setting differently inclusive identification relationships are likely to be fostered, by for example highlighting the difference between selective and universal welfare states in this regard.

The article is structured as follows. I begin by outlining the instrumental nationalist case for limiting immigration and will argue that it relies too heavily on particular, yet unsubstantiated, empirical assumptions about the relation between national identity and attitudes to immigration. In the second section I describe the present study and how it can contribute with evidence that assess the validity of those empirical assumptions. Section three discusses the findings of the qualitative interviews and puts forward three categories of identity, belonging and exclusion. The concluding discussion, section four, draws out the wider implications of this study and points out how empirical studies of this kind are key devices when issues of identity, belonging and exclusion is being analysed from an instrumental perspective.

1. INSTRUMENTAL NATIONALISM AND THE CASE FOR RESTRICTING IMMIGRATION

A specific form of nationalism, which is only committed to the function of a shared national identity, has in recent years become rooted in the literature discussing social cohesion and the identity basis for liberal, democratic, welfare states. This so called instrumental nationalism maintains that in order for the democratic welfare state to function it needs the sense of solidarity, loyalty and mutual commitment that can come about through sharing a common national identity (Miller 1995; Barry 1999; Goodhart 2013; Collier 2013; see also Freeman 1986). The classification of an array of scholars as instrumental nationalists does extrapolate parts of some nationalist accounts while bracketing other parts that hold national identity to have intrinsic value, or value for other purposes such as individual autonomy.) National identity has instrumental value in realising the normative goals of redistributive justice and democratic deliberation and thus has not value independent of these

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1 A distinction between weak and strong instrumental nationalism ought to be made. Both have in common that they share the same normative goal, which is not bounds of with nationalism per se. For weak nationalists a national identity can constitute a condition for the democratic welfare state, yet it is neither necessary nor sufficient. For strong instrumental nationalists a national identity is a necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, condition for the democratic welfare state. Thus weak nationalists are open to the possibility that other forms of shared identity may construct the same sense of trust and solidarity as a nationalist one, whereas the strong instrumental nationalists hold that only a national identity can do this, but that there are other factors too that need to be in place in order for trust and solidarity to be fostered. The argument in this paper speaks readily to the weak nationalists, but it also challenges the claim of the strong nationalists that national identity is a necessary condition for cooperation in the the democratic welfare state. I’m thankful to David Owen for pointing this out.
goals. To the extent that immigration is seen as a threat to a cohesive and stable national identity able to perform its instrumental role, it can, on the instrumental nationalist view, be restricted. Immigration is thus conditioned on its ability to conform to a national identity: “On this view, egalitarian liberals cannot have their cake and eat it too; instead, they must choose which commitment – increased immigration or redistributive programs – takes precedence and accept that they will have to abandon the other” (Pevnick 2009, p. 148). I will argue below that this may indeed be, to an extent, a false choice: It depends on the extent to which the shared political identity constructs immigration as a threat.

On the instrumental nationalist account, a shared national identity increases trust and understanding necessary for deliberative democracy. “Democratic politics”, argues Kymlicka, “is politics in the vernacular” (Kymlicka 2001, p. 213). In addition to facilitating deliberative democracy national identity is thought to support the advancement of social redistribution by instilling mutual trust and solidarity. “A shared identity carries with it a shared loyalty, and this increases confidence that others will reciprocate one’s co-operative behaviour” (Miller 1995, p. 97). The kind of social solidarity that is necessary for large-scale redistribution to take place can develop within a nation state because people who otherwise would have very little in common feel connected and will therefore be more willing to make the kind of sacrifices social solidarity involves (Spinner-Halev 2008, p. 609).

In sum, for instrumental nationalism the nation is not valued in its own right, but in terms of its instrumental value in realising democracy and social justice. Should this instrumental value turn out to be empirically non-valid, there is nothing further that commits instrumental nationalism to the nation (Stilz 2009, p. 149). This conditional commitment to nationalism is an important presumption when discussing the issue of immigration. Instrumental nationalism is not committed to wider notions of obligations between co-nationals that are not grounded in the instrumental role of specific identity relationships in securing cooperation in the democratic, redistributive state. If alternative shared identities to the nationalist one can be constructed, which can secure the motivational basis of the democratic welfare state yet that is associated with inclusionary attitudes to immigration, these accord with the normative aims of instrumental nationalism (which are directed towards democratic governance and social justice).

Why might there be a conflict between instrumental nationalism and immigration and how may we resolve such conflict using partly empirical investigation? David Miller argues that a nation-state can legitimately decide to restrict immigration in order to protect its national identity, as citizens have an interest in preserving it for the reasons laid out above (Miller 2007, pp. 217 and 223). The worry is that an influx of immigrants would change the culture of the receiving society with such speed that national identity ends up fragmented and thus no longer can provide the collective identity
deliberative democracy and the welfare state require. These claims are problematic because i) it is attitudes to immigration that to some extent determine how immigration will affect national identity, not merely immigration as an independent variable and ii) these attitudes, or perceptions, depend to a certain extent on national identity itself. Hence, national identity and immigration are interdependent concepts, meaning that changes in how national identity is understood may also change how immigration affects national identity. National identity is one amongst many possible shared political identities and it is not clear from existing research that it is the most suitable one for the instrumental purposes outlined above (e.g. Shayo 2009).

National identity constructs beliefs about what “ties that bind” members of a political community and who belongs to the democratic redistribute community are. On the basis of these beliefs, formed due to the existence of a certain identification relationship between the members in a particular political community, immigration will be seen as more or less problematic for the stability of the identification relationship. In this way, national identity establishes the parameters by which immigration is judged. If the “ties that bind” are perceived to be based on shared values, for example, it is likely that the stability of a shared identity will be perceived as less threatened by the entry of newcomers than if it is based on ancestry. This is why those individuals who understand their national identity as foremost civic are more positive to admitting immigrants than those with an ethnic identity: whether one has an ethnic or civic national identity is, for example, a good indicator of one’s attitudes to immigration (Heath & Tilley 2005; Janmaat 2006; Pehrsson and Green 2010).

Instrumental nationalists are usually not committed to an essentialist conception of national identity, but rather allows for a more fluid and to some extent constructed conceptualisation. Thus Miller asks “[why] should immigrants pose a threat to national identity once it is recognized that that identity is always in flux, and is moulded by the various sub-cultures that exist within the national society?” (1995, p. 128). The implication is that national identity can be re-constructed to adapt to immigration, since the content and the historical elements of national identity are to an extent imagined (Miller 1995, p. 35; see also Spinner-Halev 2008, p. 609 and 620; Yack 2001, p. 526; Renan 1882). For example, Miller claims that it would be self-defeating for a nation to have just one characteristic as its defining feature, as this is likely to exclude those who are in minority with regards to that specific feature, such as religious minorities (Miller 1995, p. 92). Hence in the case of religious pluralism, it would be better for the nation to “de-emphasize” this particular part of national identity and instead find other mutual characteristics around which to base a collective identity. The further implication is that immigration may have different consequences for the possibility of a stable shared identity depending on how the understanding of national identity relates to the real and perceived characteristics of immigrants.
As discussed above, Miller consequently argues that immigration can be restricted if it undermines the possibility of a shared national identity. It is current members’ subjective perceptions of the impact on the shared identity that matters in this instance (thus their attitudes); when a community feels threatened and group conflict occurs, further immigration has to be halted. The rate of immigration should be limited “according to the absorptive capacities of the society in question” (Miller 1995, p. 129). According to the argument that I have put forward here these “absorptive capacities” depend to some extent on the kind of national identity that is prevalent in a society. Certain kinds of identification relationships may have greater “absorptive capacities”; they will be less likely to elicit sentiments viewing immigration as a threat.

The case for restricting immigration on the instrumental nationalist account therefore rests on the empirical assumption that immigration undermines national identity in certain ways; it undermines trust and solidarity that motivates people to cooperate in the democratic welfare state. Yet this empirical assumption would benefit from also being clarified empirically. This is because the instrumentalist nationalist argument (in particular the strong version) rests on it being valid, but also because if we want to increase the absorptive capacities of a society we need to know how, and if, national identity can be reconstructed in such as way.

Hence, the instrumental nationalist reason for limiting immigration, i.e. that immigration might undermine a trust and solidarity generating national identity, fails to take into account that different conceptions of national identity relate differently to attitudes to immigration. Immigration cannot be seen as an independent threat factor to national identity, as the perception of immigration as a threat varies widely, at times seemingly independent of the actual impact of immigration. The key point is that the case for limiting immigration, on the instrumental nationalist account, depends on whether the relation between national identity and immigration that the account poses is empirically valid. This, in turn, depends on whether a shared political identity necessarily is associated with scepticism to newcomers. This paper aims at investigating this question empirically. If we accept that political identities can be constructed to relate differently to attitudes to immigration, instrumental nationalists give us no particular reason to favour immigration restrictions over reconstructions of national identity (to other political identities more favourable to immigration), as long as the identification relationship between compatriots can fulfil its instrumental role. While previous studies have investigated how different national identities relate to attitudes to immigration, the question of how people’s national identity relates to a more comprehensive understanding of the “ties that bind” in a democratic welfare state remains largely unanswered. The present study employs a qualititative method to gain such understanding in order to address the instrumental nationalist worry that only a specifically national identity can create the social bases of the democratic welfare state and that this may be undermined by immigration.
2. CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SWEDEN AND BRITAIN

The present study seeks to explore the nationalist argument regarding the link between national identity, as one amongst many potential political identities, and the democratic welfare state. It focuses on the alleged conflict between a shared, trust and solidarity generating national identity and immigration, by asking what understandings of political identity and belonging are associated with negative attitudes towards immigration. To this end, it has two case studies, Sweden and Britain, which are cases of liberal-multiculturalist citizenship and integration regimes, with universal and selective welfare states, as well as consensus and majoritarian democracies, respectively (Wright 2011, p. 610; Esping-Anderson 1990). In total, 47 respondents from the two countries were interviewed (26 British and 21 Swedish), using a strategic sampling method. The aim was to get a good spread of respondents on two key variables: level of education and skill level in current occupation, as these variables may have a significant impact on attitudes to immigration (see e.g. Kessler and Freeman 2005; Wilkes et al. 2008; McLaren and Johnson 2007). Whilst the sample was slightly biased towards those with a high skill level in their current occupation, there was a good balance of the variable level of education. In addition, respondents were sampled from several different regions in both countries and there was a fairly even spread of age, though more men than woman were interviewed. For the UK, only respondents living in England were sampled, in order to avoid an array of problems related to minority nationalism and debates of Scottish independence (for discussions of English versus British identity, see e.g. Aughey 2010; Kumar 2010). Nonetheless, the focus was still on British national identity, to make it clear that the “out-group” is international migrants rather than the Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish.

2 The respondents were recruited using different methods. Some were recruited through their employer or, for the job-seeking respondents, via job centers. Others were recruited via mutual acquaintances of the researcher, albeit these were not close. In most cases these respondents were neighbours or colleagues of an acquaintance of the researcher. No one who knew the researcher prior to the interview was interviewed and only in the odd case did they even know of the researcher. The different methods employed to recruit respondents ensured that the sample was varied and unbiased. The main aim was to avoid selection bias, in other words that the respondents would only represent an interested minority of the population. The risk of this was especially high as no compensation was offered and participation therefore came down to interest and goodwill. To minimise the number participating solely because of interest, it was preferable to recruit through some kind of mutual acquaintance as these respondents participated mainly as a favour (though not a favour to the researcher, who they did not know) rather than out of interest. Three respondents, namely the job-seeking ones, were offered a small compensation, as this subgroup proved especially hard to recruit through either of the mentioned methods.

3 List of interview locations: Rotherham, Sheffield, Nottingham, Middlesbrough, Stevenage, Wolverhampton, Dronfield, Göteborg, Södertalje, Malmö, Halmstad and Gnosjö.
Interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics: Identity and National Identity, Democracy, Welfare, and Immigration. The interviews were transcribed and manually coded. The analysis was partly pre-coded, as it coded statements according to the nationalist argument, holding that deliberation is facilitated by a shared national identity and a shared outlook, and that redistribution is underpinned by shared national identity and shared solidarities. The analysis also employed an inductive method, where statements that deviated from the nationalist thesis formed two new categories; contribution and institutionalism.

While the nationalist theme was easily identified focusing on trust, mutual understanding and solidarity between co-nationals, the two new themes emerged very much as a response to the nationalist understanding of belonging. At an early stage, observations were made that some respondents talked about identity, democracy, redistribution and immigration in ways that could not be seen as stemming from understanding belonging to the political community as based on a particular nation. These respondents did not engage with ideas of particular ties between co-nationals and sometimes rejected this outright in favour of other ties, such as contributions or common institutions. In addition, respondents were coded according to what they understood their national identity to be based on, such as kinship or values and principles, and whether or not they identified strongly or weakly with their nation. Lastly, respondents views on immigration were coupled with their understanding of what it means to have a certain political or national identity and “the ties that bind” in the democratic welfare state, to form three comprehensive understandings on identity, belonging and exclusion. Two of these, as will be discussed below, emerge as alternatives to nationalism, for which “the ties that bind” – which undergird cooperation in the democratic welfare state – present less of a potential conflict with immigration.

3. IDENTITY, BELONGING AND EXCLUSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC WELFARE STATE

In analysing the interviews, two alternative identification relationships to national identity did indeed emerge amongst the respondents, for which belonging was based on contributions and institutions, instead of an idea of a nation. The three identification relationships discussed below thus all represent distinct answers to questions of what it means to be British or Swedish, what “ties that bind” in the democratic welfare state and how this relates to welcoming newcomers. This presents a richer understanding of how a political shared identity may support the democratic welfare state and in what instances immigration threatens such identity, than what previous predominantly quantitative studies
have provided. For the respondents themselves, however, the categories were not always mutually exclusive – one respondent may express versions of two or even all of the categories. Therefore, the discussion will feature quotes from respondents who may belong to more than one category, though the quotes themselves only fit in one of the “ideal types” of shared identities. When describing the research results below, respondents have been anonymised apart from their nationality, which is indicated by an “S” for Swedish and a “B” for British.

**Nationalism**

Many of the respondents expressed a kind of cultural nationalist identity akin to the one favoured by instrumental nationalists. On this view, the identification relationship of the political community is based on the idea of a nation, understood in terms of a shared culture, kinship, shared values and a sense of mutual solidarity. It involves a sense of entitlement based on a shared national identity and an idea of effortless belonging to the nation. The latter point entails that natives simply share a national identity without having to prove worthy, whereas immigrants have to achieve something in order to belong. Many of the respondents in this category regard belonging as based on being born in the country (in contrast to acquired criteria, such as citizenship). For example, this respondent insists that nationality cannot be acquired:

**Respondent S19**

I think that you’re really Swedish if you’re born in Sweden and you have a Swedish background. I don’t really think that it’s enough to speak Swedish to be Swedish. You should be, parents and grandparents, then I think you’re really Swedish. You don’t really have to have the mind-set, but if you’re grown up, the foundation, the background, I do think, then you can’t be anything other than Swedish whether you like it or not.

These respondents further emphasise that belonging ought to be qualified for immigrants:

**Respondent B24**

No rubbish, you come here, and read my documents about coming to my country. And wherever you come from, if you commit a crime mate, you’re out. If you’re unsociable in my pub, you’re out aren’t you.

**Respondent B3**

I think it’s better for someone who’s been given residency for their progress to be monitored. And if they’re obviously going to be out of place, then they should return to their country.
Often, the idea that immigrants’ right to belong is conditioned on their integration has a cultural element to it;

Respondent S2 Of course they should have the right to be Muslim and have the Islamic faith, but perhaps they have to accept that we have our Christian background, by tradition 400, 500 years. They have to understand that we won’t become a Muslim country.

These understandings are also based on a sense of shared solidarity between co-nationals, which is reflected both in how the democratic redistributive community is perceived, and the content of national identity. Only respondents in the nationalist category view their identity as being based on ties similar to those in a family and this particular kind of identification relationship was connected to the most negative attitudes to immigration amongst the respondents, at least in terms of admission; those identifying along nationalist lines mostly wanted reductions in the number of immigrants entering the country. The nationalist understanding of identity and belonging is based on close yet effortless ties and on certain cultural characteristics that make up a bond between co-nationals that may be threatened by immigration.

For example, this respondent in the nationalist category thinks that being British entails sharing certain values, but he or she also thinks that democratic institutions need a common outlook (in an extensive sense including their personal life) in order to work.

Respondent B9 Very difficult [for democracy to work] with such a diverse cultural society. It’s very easy for those New Zealanders with five million population to say “right let’s go this way” and everybody is doing the same thing. With a diverse society everybody’s got their own morals, religion you know their own sort of ideas of how they want to live their life and their society should be. It’s basically, how do you merge those and integrate society? I think it’s probably impossible.

In a different passage of the interview, the same respondent believed that immigration had diluted British culture and at yet another time he/she thought that people cared less about the country due to immigration. Hence in this case, there is a clear pattern of the nationalist category replying to questions of what it means to be British, what “ties that bind” that are necessary to uphold the democratic welfare state and how this may be threatened by immigration. Nationalists, in this respect, are thus worried that immigrants will undermine their particular way of life, culturally as well as politically;
Respondent B3  
Well there are people who come here and it seems that some who want to change the whole way of living, the way we govern, the way we do things. They come with ideas, so they haven’t come to integrate, they’ve come to pursue their own strange principles.

The nationalist identification relationship is also based on entitlement and solidarity-bonds between co-nationals, to which immigrants do not immediately qualify and might in fact threaten. It relates to the idea of family-like ties between people sharing a national identity, as for example expressed by these respondents:

Respondent S3  
I heard about this incident, we’ve got a neighbour whose son has ADHD and they’d been to a meeting, she, the mum, has told me herself, they went to a meeting with the school and now they’re getting family migration children from Somalia who apparently are in Kenya at the moment. They are going to come here now, about 70 to 100 of them who’re coming this autumn or spring. And this boy has some special teaching, they get that those kinds of children. Then they’d said that if these children come this autumn he won’t get his teaching, because they can’t afford it. And then you might start thinking that if they’re going to cut down on what’s ours, though I have to say, I’m sure I’m not properly informed about it all.

Respondent B16  
There aren’t any jobs going around. I’m not against other cultures or anything, but Britain lets in a lot of immigrants and stuff like that. They swamped in here and took work, and all sorts. I guess a lot of Britain at heart feels it’s left itself down. I do feel like it’s let itself down. I wouldn’t say I’m 100% proud to be British, but like most Britain, no matter how down they are they always try to help others.

The latter respondent, B16, thus express the idea that being British is about showing solidarity, yet this does not include, and is in fact undermined, by immigrants. Hence, judging by the in-depth interviews conducted in this study, basing a shared political identity around the notion of a particular nation with trust and solidarity generating, family-like ties, more readily constructs immigration as a threat. These results are in accordance with some recent studies on the function of national identity. Wright and Reeskens (2013) find that only ethnic forms of nationalism increase the willingness to redistribute, and it is also this kind of identification that is associated with the most negative attitudes to immigration. They conclude that “While it is true that NI can undergird support for redistribution, the only kind that does so is exclusive to immigrants by definition […]” (Wright and Reeskens 2013, p. 1458). The conflict posited by instrumental nationalism between a solidarity enhancing national identity and immigration thus is a real one. However, in this study two alternative identification
relationships emerged amongst the respondents. These seemed to draw on different “ties that bind” to generate trust and solidarity in the democratic welfare state, and were also associated with more positive attitudes to immigration.

TWO ALTERNATIVES

Contribution

The first of these, found predominantly amongst the British respondents, is “contribution”. Those who share the contribution view understand the identification relationship of the political community to be based less on family-like ties and more on an evaluative reciprocity; belonging to the community depends on whether one is contributing to it or not. Contributions can be economic, social, cultural or political, thus if one is unable to contribute economically there are still pathways for belonging. Economic contributions are, however, stressed more than other forms of contribution by the respondents. The contribution category is also connected to ideas of shared values and shared culture, though these notions are less important than for the nationalist category and, regarding shared values, than for the institutionalist category. Importantly, contribution itself is held as the sole criteria for belonging by many respondents in this category and it is sometimes seen as more important than citizenship itself:

Respondent B15

Citizenship and that kind of identity doesn’t really mean much to me, as long as you’re acting, contributing to society then it doesn’t matter to me whether you’re a citizen or otherwise.

As an example of how contribution as the basis of belonging constructs fewer barriers to immigration, this respondent emphasises the importance of people contributing for democratic and welfare institutions to function and also has a distinct understanding of identity and belonging:

Respondent B15

Just because I’m white and because I was born in a mining family, who cares about that? If you’ve lived here a certain amount of time and you’ve contributed to society, speak English may help you contribute to society more, but why should we assume that everyone should speak in English?

While introducing a timeframe, the respondent nevertheless rejects the nationalist understanding of identity as based on nativism, culture or even language. This is a unique and comprehensive view on who belongs, and what it means to be British or Swedish;
Respondent B5  I think for British people I don’t mind which country they come from, but they need to contribute to the economy and the culture and be helpful to others in the country, which is often the way British people are anyway.

The key difference between the contribution and the nationalist identification relationship is that, in theory, for the former, no differentiation is being made between natives and immigrants. No one belongs effortlessly – everyone needs to contribute, as this respondent expresses when discussing immigrants’ right to vote;

Respondent B14  I genuinely think that after a certain number of years, even if you don’t have residency status, if you’ve contributed, if you’re working and you’re part of society, why not? Why not vote? I don’t understand. In fact, if we had a limited number of votes, I would rather take a vote from somebody who has no intention of using it, who doesn’t contribute to society the slightest, and give it to somebody who does contribute to society. It doesn’t matter where someone is from, if they’re adding value to their local community, whether they’re volunteering or they’re working or whatever they’re doing, if it’s adding value to their community and they’re influencing the community, then why can’t they vote? It’s seems ridiculous to me.

Now, as far as attitudes to immigration are concerned, the contribution-based version of the identification relationship undergirding the redistributive community still carries some potential for conflict. It relies on public information of others’ contributions and such information is notoriously incomplete or even false. This is perhaps most clearly seen in precisely the immigration case, where immigrants are constantly viewed as an economic burden despite economic research (in the UK case) showing that they are in fact (as a group) net contributors (Dustmann and Frattini 2013). Even when simply estimating the number of immigrants in the country, people mostly get it quite wrong, and UK citizens seem to get it wrong more than others (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014, p. 23). Provided that contribution as a basis for belonging has been identified as a British alternative to a nationalist identity, this is particularly worrying. In other words, those whose sense of belonging is most based on estimating the contributions of others, seem to also get such estimations wrong more than others.

To avoid this problem, the third identification relationship found amongst the respondents, institutionalism, may be more compatible with inclusive attitudes to immigration. This form of shared identity moves issues of trust and solidarity away from discussions of various groups’ right to belong, their cultural characteristics or their economic capacities. Instead, institutions can be scrutinised

without comparing the contributions or cultural characteristics of any of the members of the reciprocal scheme and in this way cooperation is ensured.

**Institutional patriotism**

Contrary to nationalism and contribution, those expressing institutionalism as the basis of belonging are not primarily concerned with the characteristics or behaviour of fellow citizens. Instead, they understand the identification relationship of the political community to be mediated by its social and political institutional framework. “The ties that bind” are the institutional framework of the community. Within this category we can observe a greater stress on shared values than in the other two categories. Moreover, a large proportion of the institutionalists hold citizenship as the criteria for belonging to the political community. Understanding ones community as being based on a set of institutions is thus linked to seeing one’s political identity as shared by those who respect the basic values embedded in those institutions and by those who are formally included via citizenship. This category is therefore distinctly a form of identity that is situated in the institutions of the political community and the values they sustain and it is linked to the most positive attitudes towards immigration amongst the respondents. It is also most commonly found amongst the Swedish respondent.

These respondents stress the importance of being committed to democratic and redistributive institutions, as well as the values they embed, but also the formative power these institutions have. This is reflective of views on immigration too, as it is not the cultural or economic characteristics of immigrants as such that matter, but they institutional framework they come from and to.

**Respondent S10**

It depends on what values you have deep down and what kind of background you have. If you’re used to living under a dictatorship, it might be a completely different thing. How do you deal with a democracy then? To us it’s so natural.

Another example from the institutionalism category is respondent S18, who is adamant that democratic institutions shape the behaviour of people, so that it is the institutions themselves that establish the conditions for democratic cooperation.

**Respondent S18**

It’s obvious that you can’t expect as much of people from Somalia or perhaps those who come directly from Afghanistan, that they should get our democratic society. It won’t work. Perhaps they’re moving 200 miles, but they’re also moving 200 years in development in some respects. They do one journey and end up in the society that has taken us 200 years to get to. To think that they are going to get and understand how it works at once, it won’t
work. And I think that we’ve been bad at explaining how our society works. And to be very clear that there are a lot of rights here, but there are also a hell of a lot of duties that you need to accept.

When asked about what it takes to be Swedish, the same respondent replies:

**Respondent S18**

To me it is all those who want to be in this society and who agree with the rules and the possibilities that we have built here.

The respondent emphasises that this is true both of natives and of immigrants, hence there is a distinct understanding of identity and belonging as foundation for cooperation within the political community, which does not construct immigration as a threat to the same extent as nationalism.

Yet even though the emphasis on institutions significantly reduces the potential threat of immigration to an identification relationship undergirding the democratic welfare state, conflict may still occur, as is clear from some of the quotes above. This is because democratic and redistributive institutions foster a certain set of values and behaviours; a political culture. The institutionalist identification relationship can in this way be seen as a form of constitutional patriotism, as put forward by Jürgen Habermas (1994). Habermas holds that the political culture is the “common denominator for a constitutional patriotism” and that “the democratic right of self-determination includes, of course, the right to preserve one’s own political culture, which includes the concrete context of citizen’s rights, though it does not include the self-assertion of a privileged cultural life form” (Habermas 2003, pp. 162 and 173). Contained in this notion is thus an arbitrator of belonging based on the preservation of a political culture, an issue that I return to below.

Though the institutionalist category resembles constitutional patriotism in this way, it is perhaps better understood as institutional patriotism. This shifts the focus from attachment to a constitution to attachment to particular democratic and social institutions. Hence, rather than locating universal values in a specific constitution, and yielding loyalty to it that way, these values may be better supported when they are part of an institutional framework, akin to John Rawls’s “basic structure” (Rawls 1993). According to Rawls, just institutions are self-sustaining as they generate their own support (Rawls 1993, pp. 141 and 160; see also Hibbert 2008, p. 169). This comes about in two ways; citizens growing up under just institutions “acquire a sense of justice and a reasoned allegiance to those institutions sufficient to render them stable” and the institutions are regarded as legitimate as they are based on an “overlapping consensus”, which is a political conception of justice based on reasonable comprehensive doctrines of the good (1993, p. 142). Thus this is very similar to the institutionalists experience of institutions as bearers and transmitters of universal values.
Respondents within the institutionalism category, such as respondents S1 and S18 above, emphasise how institutions shape the behaviour and commitment of citizens. Thus many respondents held that, in theory, immigrants would have no problem becoming Swedish/British, but if they had lived and grown up under illiberal institutions it might be difficult for them to embrace the liberal values that underpin the Swedish/British political identity. It is in this sense we may talk about institutional rather than constitutional patriotism, as there was a strong recognition of how universal values are embedded in the democratic institutional framework. But respondents also stress that institutions need to be fair in order to generate support, thus lending support to Rawls’s claim that it is just institutions in particular that are able to generate their own support.

There are consequently two features about what I have described as institutional patriotism that create a sense of belonging to the democratic welfare state. First, identification with institutions comes about through a certain familiarisation with the institutions and, second, in order for such familiarisation to generate support for the institutions they need to be fair and also effective. The latter entails that respondents would like to see that they stand to benefit from democratic and welfare institutions. These features together create a certain sense of identity and the “ties that bind” that construct immigration less of a threat than a national identity.

The idea of self-sustaining institutions is expressed for example by these respondents:

Respondent B3          The vast majority of people just want to live a reasonable life and will follow the democratic rules, if they are fair.

Respondent B12         [People have to show loyalty] … but it relies on society showing loyalty to the citizens, on the existence of some justice in a system at least.

The importance of institutional fairness for generating support for the welfare state and reduce the threat perceived to be post by immigration is stressed in a study by Staffan Kumlin and Bo Rothstein: “Specifically, equal and impartial treatment is key in such an approach. The assumption is that if the state apparently treats one with equal concern and respect, that says something about the preferences and moral standing of the majority that has created, that support, and that is affected by those institutions. Institutional fairness, in other words, can have informational value beyond the immediate situation as institutions structure a myriad of relationships and behaviours - not only one’s own” (Kumlin and Rothstein 2010, p. 68). In their study, using Swedish survey data, they also show that institutional fairness does have cushioning effect on the perceived threat of immigration.

Likewise, the evidence from this study also shows is that an institutional foundation of the social bases for the democratic welfare state is more compatible with immigration, at least in terms of the views of current citizens. This is because such identity removes a sense of belonging from the
nationalist idea of a people, a culture or certain family-like solidarity ties, and instead grounds trust in the institutions of the political community and the shared values embedded in them.

As I pointed out above, a worry when basing an identity on shared values is that it will yet again become exclusive and reintroduce the conflict between a trust generating political identity and immigration. This study has indeed pointed out how an institutional identity can come to construct immigration as a threat, as it relies to some extent on a shared political culture generated by common institutions and their embedded values. This is expressed, for example, by this respondent in the institutional category:

Respondent S1: I do think that us humans, we’re born as an empty shell and our way of growing up marks us 100 per cent. [...] So because we grow up and live under different conditions, it does affect us very, very much. For example if Sweden, it the Swedish people would become a very small minority and we’d just a load of, well have many immigrants who had very strong opinions and completely different democratic values than we have, then that would obviously impact on society.

It is clear that immigration may still be regarded as a threat under the idea of institutional patriotism. Any identity does by definition construct boundaries between members and non-members. The way in which values are incorporated in the shared identity did however matter for how the respondents in this study viewed immigration.

In the interviews, a commitment to universal values and procedures was sometimes expressed through an acknowledgment of shared values as national values; hence, they were not necessarily experienced as universal values, but rather as “British” or Swedish” values. This is consistent with non-nationalist identification relationships, such as constitutional patriotism, as the universal principles should be interpreted in the “ethical-political” understanding of the political community (Habermas 1994, p. 137). Moreover, it is not necessarily inconsistent to hold universal values as particular to a certain political community and to make this part of one’s identity. Take for example this respondent who is reflecting on the question of whether s/he ever feels Swedish:

Respondent S10: Yes of course you do. You’re Swedish, it’s something you’re proud of. Of course.

Interviewer: In what way?

Respondent S10: Well you like being Swedish. Probably if you go back to the values, that you stand for the values that Sweden stands for.
Interviewer: Which values do you have in mind?

Respondent S10: Freedom and democracy, all those parts.

This respondent has a Swedish identity and feels an allegiance to Sweden on the basis of the universal values of freedom of democracy, which are clearly not particularly “Swedish”, but that are embodied in the idea of being Swedish, in the Swedish constitution and belonging to the Swedish political community. As Cecile Laborde recognises, making certain values a matter of a common identity and thereby attaching to them sentiments of shame and pride does not strip these values of their universal value (Laborde 2002, p. 602). Situating universal values in identity may make it easier to mobilise citizens around these values, but it may also turn them into a means of exclusion. Yet in terms of exclusion there is a crucial distinction between, on the one hand, being Swedish because it embodies universal democratic values and, on the other hand, endorsing the same values because one is Swedish. Compare the respondent above with this respondent from the nationalist category, who is answering a question on how s/he would describe democracy and what it means to her/him:

Respondent B24: Even now in this country, some religions, still the woman walks ten steps behind the man. I don’t agree with that. If they’ve come to Britain, do what the British do. I respect what goes on where I go and I don’t agree with them trying to come here now, and still live in little ghettos and not integrate.

Even though, from the interview as a whole, it is somewhat unclear as to whether this respondent holds these values to be universal or not, here she/he implies that gender equality is an important value because it is a British value, not because it is universally valid. Such understanding of the contextualisation of universal values into a political culture and identity cannot be compatible with institutional patriotism, as the allegiance is primarily to the nation and not to the values as embedded in the nation. Institutional patriots can be sceptical to newcomers on grounds of shared values. But there is an important difference in how nationalists understand values as part of their identity and how the so called institutionalist patriots understand the relation between values and identity, which is captured by the two examples from the interviews above.

In sum, the first part of locating a sense of belonging in institutions requires of them to be perceived as fair and effective. The onus of generating trust and solidarity therefore falls on the democratic welfare state itself, rather than on citizens. The second part consists of the institutions also yielding a commitment to shared, yet universal, values. But, and this is important, those values cannot be viewed simply as a product of certain institutions or of a particular community, but citizens must have a prior commitment to them as universal values. Thus it is in a sense the values themselves that elicit trust in institutions if these are regarded as bearers of these values.
In the final section I will briefly discuss the role of the welfare state itself in construction these different kinds of identities and understandings of belonging and exclusion.

The Welfare State, Belonging and Immigration

As Andrew Geddes has suggested, welfare states change understandings of migration as they regulate membership, belonging and identity (Geddes 2003, p. 152). I have argued that institutions need to generate their own support by being seen as effective and fair, as well embodying shared values. In doing so, they thus also contribute to constructions of identification relationships such as those discussed here. It might therefore be the case that different welfare models are better suited in generating their own support and, as a consequence, construing immigration less as a threat. Looking specifically at the welfare state, Gary Freeman (1986) has argued that welfare states necessarily are bounded systems as they regulate who is a member and who is not. Like instrumental nationalists, he argues that migration may threaten the identity and subsequent solidarity created in such a bounded system. But, as has been argued, welfare states do not have to be founded on this particular form of shared identity – it does not have to be a *national* identity. The contribution and institutionalist identities found as alternatives amongst the respondents are also associated with motivations to cooperate in the welfare state that stem from more insurance-based understandings of redistribution, yet they are more positive to immigration.

It might thus be the case that certain types of welfare states that has a stronger contributory part are better as constructing these more welcoming “ties that bind” (also see Banting 2010, p. 802). Social-democratic welfare states are typically associated with such an institutional organisation, of which Sweden is a good example. Because social-democratic, or universal, regimes are designed more like universal insurance schemes “[all] benefit; all are dependant…” (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 28). This can be exemplified by some observations from the institutionalist identification relationship in the interviews, such as:

Respondent S21

If people are going to be willing to pay in and pay tax then they have to be able to see that they’re getting something back as well. That way I think you become loyal to doing it as well.

Respondent S10

I just think it’s the tradition. That we’re used to, like you’re used to paying your tax in order to get this and accept the system and have confidence in it. That what the hell, I’m getting something out of this, it’s nothing that just go straight down the pockets of the politicians. If you compare to Greece, I think the attitude down there is that if you’re paying tax it will only feed the politicians, it’s nothing that will go back to me.
This is also bound up with identity, as trust in institutions may generate a certain identification, a sense of belonging to them:

Respondent S11: As long as you feel Swedish you will be expecting certain things to be there and then you’ll also be prepared to pay for them.

In contrast, the nationalist position entails that in a national community, individuals’ self-interests become bound up with the interests of the community, which serves to “soften the conflict [between individual’s interests and the interests of others in the group or community] so that ethical behaviour becomes easier for imperfectly altruistic agents” (Miller 1995, p. 67). When you cooperate in a national community, you regard your own “welfare as bound up with the community to which [you] belong” (Miller 1995, p. 67). This, it is claimed by nationalists, delivers much stronger social bases for redistributive institutions than the interest-based accounts. However, the difference between the two accounts, at least in terms of their reliance on self-interest, seems overstated. Key to both is that the individual agent can see that she/he stands to benefit from the cooperative scheme in some way because she/he can trust that others will reciprocate her/his cooperative behaviour, whether this is because of identification with a nation of with political institutions as such.

Thus, while a common identity may be necessary for the bounded welfare state, whether a nationalist or an institutional patriotic one, the welfare state itself also creates boundaries and identities. Welfare states dictate who is “deserving” and who is a member – who belongs (see e.g. Geddes, 2003; Pevnick 2009). The welfare state has the power to create a different kind of identity that is less threatened by immigration. Because the welfare state determines who belongs and who does not, its construction – the way in which it distributes rights and resources – can be shaped so that immigrants can more readily be included in the community. On the basis of this small-N comparative study, we cannot make any conclusive claims. But since the Swedish respondents had more of an institutionalist identity linked to ideas of a universal welfare state, there is a case for suggesting that welfare regimes matter and that some may be better suited than other in terms of eliciting more inclusive political identities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to challenge some instrumental nationalist assumption on a neglected part of their argument, namely that questioning their empirical assumptions that are crucial to their argument. I have argued that a different identity basis for the democratic welfare state can generate trust and solidarity, whilst constructing immigration less as a threat. An identity based on shared institutions, rather than shared culture, seems to be associated with less hostility to immigration. Thus, nationalism may not be the only way to motivate people to cooperate in the democratic welfare state. In fact, current empirical evidence does not support the thesis that national identification increases
people’s solidarity towards one another (e.g. Shayo 2009). Judging by the interviews of this study, there might be other mechanisms that motivate people. Identification with institutions themselves, provided they are perceived as just and inclusive, or an emphasis on contributions, are two such mechanisms. This requires further research is required to explore these alternatives more fully, which could have crucial implications for the way in which shared identities can be extended beyond the borders of nations.

This study has made an important contribution to the issue of how immigration may threaten a shared political identity and, in turn, the bases for the democratic welfare state. Because issues of identity are complex and rely on subjective interpretations of belonging, they require qualitative research based on people’s own experiences. Yet these have been lacking in the current literature. Since this research has used such qualitative methods in a comparative analysis, it has also been able to identify political mechanisms as potential drivers of identity formation and attitudes to immigration. It has also pointed out the power that welfare states may have in shaping ideas of belonging.

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