Reciprocity and Patriotism
How to Reconcile Identity and Immigration[1]

Clara Sandelind, Politics Department, the University of Sheffield

Immigration is often conditioned on its ability to conform to a shared national identity. Such identity is claimed, by defenders of nationalism, to have at least instrumental value. This position entails that a shared national identity is necessary to generate the trust and solidarity between compatriots that can motivate citizens to cooperate in the democratic welfare state. There is thus a potential conflict between immigration and the basis for the democratic welfare state. This paper suggests that resolving such conflict is not necessarily a question of immigration policy. Instead, national identity can be altered to be more inclusive to immigration, while retaining its motivational capacity underpinning the democratic welfare state. When the political community is understood as a set of political and social institutions, rather than as a nation, the conflict between a shared identity and immigration is softened. This is not just a normative claim, but crucially an empirical one.

More specifically, this paper argues that a form of *constitutional patriotism*, or *institutional* patriotism, which emphasises identification with political and social institutions, can serve as mediator between parochial solidarities and welcoming attitudes towards newcomers. Importantly, in this paper I stress that, though the question of national identity and immigration is frequently addressed by normative theorists, it is in fact to a large extent an empirical question. The instrumental nationalist argument on immigration rests on two assumptions. First, that a shared national identity is necessary to generate trust and solidarity, which enables cooperation in the democratic welfare state. Second, that immigration may threaten such shared identity and thereby undermine the social basis for the democratic welfare state. Immigration may in this way threaten the instrumental pillars necessary to realise goals such as social justice and democratic deliberation.

In order to assess the nationalist argument on immigration I argue that we need to answer, at least, two empirical questions; what is an inclusive political identity and what sort of political identity can motivate citizens to cooperate in the democratic welfare state? The normative literature oddly lacks a discussion of these empirical claims, despite the importance of their validity for influential normative theories of nationalism. This paper contributes with such a discussion, though what is possible to achieve in one single paper in this regard is of course limited. The paper begins to assess the nationalist argument by focusing on the first question. It presents new empirical data consisting of in-depth interviews with 46 Swedish and British non-elite respondents.

From these interviews, three categories of identity and belonging emerged: nationalism, contribution and institutionalism. The latter two both challenge the nationalist argument and are associated with less negative attitudes to immigration. On this basis, the paper explores

---

alternative political identities that may have the capacity to motivate citizens to cooperate, yet be more inclusive towards newcomers. The paper is structured as follows. First, I outline the nationalist argument and the implications for immigration. Second, I present the new empirical study on the relation between identity and attitudes to immigration. Third, I discuss how these ideas can be understood as normative foundations of a shared political identity. This part is divided into a section on identity and democracy and a section on identity and redistribution. I argue that a form of institutionalised reciprocity, akin to Habermas's "constitutional patriotism", but perhaps better described as "institutional patriotism", is better placed to form an inclusive, yet solidarity and trust generating, political identity.

1. Instrumental Nationalism and the Case for Limiting Immigration

The assumptions made by political, or instrumental, nationalism have in recent years become rooted in the literature discussing social cohesion and the identity basis for liberal, democratic, welfare states.[2] Political nationalists maintain that in order for the democratic welfare state to function it needs the sense of solidarity, loyalty and mutual commitment that can only come about through sharing a common national identity (Miller 1995; Barry 1999; Goodhart 2013; Collier 2013). National identity has instrumental value in realising the normative goals of redistributive justice and democratic governance. To the extent that immigration is seen as a threat to a cohesive national identity able to perform its instrumental role, it can, on the political 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).

However, the nationalist reason for limiting immigration, i.e. that immigration might undermine a cohesive 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 objective threat factor to national identity, as the perception of immigration as a threat varies widely, seemingly independently of the actual impact of immigration. This variation is due partly to differences in understandings of national identity itself. Whether one has an ethnic or civic national identity is, for example, a good indicator of one's attitudes to continued immigration (Heath & Tilley 2005; Janmaat 2006; Pehrsson and Green 2010). In addition, while in most countries having a strong national identity is associated with negative attitudes to immigration, in others, notably Canada, the correlative relationship is the reverse (Johnston et al. 2010; Citrin et al. 2012).

Therefore, it is not simply immigration as such that impacts national identity. It is perceptions – attitudes – of immigration that, at least to a large extent, determine how national identity will be affected by immigration. Changing these perceptions, rather than restricting immigration, might therefore be another way of changing the impact immigration has on national identity and the instrumental value it is assumed to have by political nationalism.

---

[2] Other accounts of nationalism, which emphasise the intrinsic value of national identity, have been bracketed from this discussion.

The key point is that the case for limiting immigration, on the 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, trust and solidarity generating, political identity necessarily is associated with scepticism to newcomers. Below, I argue that this is not the case, albeit we need to move away from a specifically *nationalist* understanding of such shared political identity.

Motivations

Political nationalism rests on assumptions about what motivates citizens to cooperate in large-scale communities like modern states. However, it is disputed whether a shared national identity actually is a necessary condition for such cooperation. In fact, the few studies that have looked at this mostly fins that the opposite is the case. Studies of the effect of national identity on redistribution suggest that national identification does not appear to be correlated with an increased willingness to redistribute, or to the prevalence of higher levels of redistribution (Shayo 2009; Martinez-Herrera 2010; Wright and Reeskens 2013; see Johnston et al. 2010 for partial support of the opposing hypothesis). Because it is disputed, it also entails that people's tendency of in-group favouritism cannot be taken at face value justification for restrictive immigration policies. The understanding of immigration as a threat factor may change if we consider that the claims of political nationalists are instrumental and that the evidence about the instrumental value of national identity is indeterminate (Moore 2001, pp. 82-4). "Liberals are presumably, first and foremost, people who want to see liberal institutions thrive. If, as seems plausible enough, Miller has correctly identified the conditions for their thriving, it would be a perverse liberal who would object to measures necessary for the fostering of those conditions" (Barry 1999, p. 57). But, likewise, liberals have no particular reason to favour nationalism if it does turn out that other political identities might be equally good at making liberal institutions thrive. If we accept that national identity can be constructed to relate differently to attitudes to immigration, political nationalists give us no reason to favour immigration restrictions over re-constructions of national identity to one more favourable to immigration, as long as the national identity can fulfil its instrumental role.

2. Constructions of National Identity in Sweden and Britain

The present study seeks to explore the nationalist argument regarding the link between national identity, on the one hand, and the democratic welfare state, on the other hand. It focuses mainly on the alleged conflict between a shared national identity and immigration, by asking what understandings of national identity 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, 46 respondents from the two countries were interviewed (25 British and 21 Swedish), using a strategic sampling method.[3] The aim was to

---

[3] 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,

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.

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 identity and a shared outlook, and that redistribution is underpinned by shared identity and shared solidarities. Moreover, the analysis employed an inductive method, where statements that deviated from the nationalist thesis formed new categories. 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.

Three main categories of identity emerged from the analysis of the interviews, two of which challenge the nationalist thesis. The categories were: *nationalism*, *contribution* and *institutionalism*. On the *nationalist* view, the political community is based on the idea of a nation, often 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. This is based on a sense of shared solidarity between co-nationals, which is reflected both in how the 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. In addition, many of the respondents in this category regard belonging to the political community as based on being born in the country (in contrast to acquired criteria, such as citizenship).

---

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.

An example of the nationalist identity is the quote by this respondent, which includes both the idea that there is a special solidarity-bond between co-nationals, and that this bond does not include immigrants:

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 per cent proud to be British, but like most Britain, no matter how down they are they always try to help others.

The nationalist understanding of belonging and identity was the most common amongst the sample and in both countries. It was also the one associated with the most negative attitudes to immigration. Thus a key conclusion is that while the nationalist thesis is confirmed by this study as a description of how people identify and how this relates to ideas of democratic deliberation and redistribution through the welfare state, it is also an exclusive identity in as far as it constructs barriers towards outsiders.

Those who share the *contribution* view understand 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. Contributions can be economic, social, cultural or political, thus if one is unable to contribute economically there are still pathways for belonging. Economic contributions were, 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 described below. 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. Within this category, however, respondents also held citizenship and self-identification as criteria for belonging. Few hold kinship or the jus soli principles as criteria for belonging, thus acquired criteria are more important than ascribed ones.

This respondent, discussing the right to vote, illustrates the contribution identity and shows how this can be more inclusive towards immigrants:

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.

Contribution as a way of conceptualising belonging and national identity is almost exclusively expressed by British respondents.[4] Moreover, those who express this identity are more favourable towards immigration than those within the nationalism category. It may therefore be the case that, if the democratic welfare state is based on ideas of this sort of evaluative reciprocity, there will be fewer identity-barriers towards immigrants. I discuss this further below, but it is worth noting that a few recent British studies have pointed to similar conclusions. Cultural worries related to immigration seem to be significantly mitigated by beliefs about the contributions immigrants make; for example, when immigrants are described as highly educated, their cultural background matters less in terms of eliciting support for immigration (Ford et al. 2012, p. 36). Moreover, people seem more willing to grant social benefits to immigrants who are contributing, than to natives who are not (Jolley 2013, p. 28).

Lastly, 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 their political community to be based on the institutional framework. These institutions include both the democratic and redistributive part of the political community, as well as those directing the integration of immigrants. The respondents in this category believe that the success of the welfare state, as well as the integration of immigrants, depends on the institutions of society rather than on individual behaviour. Individuals are not primarily to blame for societal failures, but the institutional set-up is. Likewise, some maintain that, in theory, it does not matter who lives in a country for democracy to work. However, they point out that some people who have lived in a non-democratic regime for a long time might need some more time to come to accept or adapt to a democratic society. The emphasis is therefore on how the democratic institutions shape democratic behaviour. 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 underlying those institutions and by those who are formally included via citizenship – a form of "institutional patriotism".

This view is, for example, expressed by this respondent, who is discussing immigrant integration and emphasising the institutional pre-conditions for integration:

Respondent S18	There is a lot that could be done, but it's the society, it's not the immigrants fault. It's the society that doesn't say that we expect you to accept this.

---

[4] Why we observe this country-level variance is beyond the scope of this paper to explore. Here, instead, I am interested in the normative conclusions we can draw from this study. Elsewhere, I have argued that this is due to experiences of different democratic welfare regimes, i.e. it depends on the structure of the democratic welfare state itself.

Institutionalism is found predominantly amongst the Swedish respondents. These respondents are also the most positive to immigration. These results are in accordance with existing cross-national research, which show that pride in a country's democratic and social institutions is negatively correlated with xenophobia (Knudsen 1997, p. 232; Figuiredo and Elkins 2003, p. 186). Consequently, we can think of political identities and how they can help motivate citizens to cooperate and deliberate in the democratic welfare state, without necessarily constructing a case for restricting borders as a way of protecting the foundation of the democratic welfare state. However, as shown by the results of this study, such identity will probably not be a nationalist one. Instead, it could be based on ideas of contributions and institutions – ideas that seemingly are connected to less exclusive forms of political identity.

Below, I discuss what such identity might look like. I start by discussing identity in relation to democracy and in particular to democratic deliberation. A key part of the instrumental nationalist argument is that a shared national identity facilitates democratic deliberation through generating trust, by encapsulating shared values and a common outlook. From the qualitative study presented here, it is also clear that shared values and principles are key across the different understandings of national identity. It is particularly important for those within the institutionalism category, who were also most positive towards immigration. What follows is a discussion of how this can be reconciled with an inclusive form of identity.

3. Identity and Democracy

Rejecting the ethnic/civic distinction of national identity, Cecilé Laborde has put forward four layers of identity that are more helpful in distinguishing the different positions: "we can identify at least four layers of identity in a national community. The first is that of ethnic, 'primordial' links based on birth and kinship. The second is that of the broad culture, language, ways of life and social customs characteristic of a particular community. The third is that of the political culture, embodied in political institutions, practices, symbols, ideological and rhetorical traditions, and so forth. The fourth level is that of abstract, universalist political ideas and procedures, usually expressed in the form of general principles outlined in the constitution" (Laborde 2002, p. 598). To summarise, the four layers of identity in a political community are:

1)   Kinship

2)   Culture

3)   Political culture

4)   Universal principles and procedures

We can see how the first two levels were associated mostly with nationalism and the latter two connected to institutionalism. The contribution category cannot be clearly located, as it was more associated with ideas of redistribution that will be discussed below, though respondents within this category expressed versions of layer two and three. Key to our understanding of an inclusive political identity is that identification with layer four and to some extent three cut across all three identities, though they were more strongly expressed by

the institutionalists. While Laborde favours a combination of level two and three, which she calls "civic patriotism", the form of identity that comes closest to the institutionalist category is Habermas's "constitutional patriotism", which is located in levels three and four. However, I will argue that it may be better described as "institutional patriotism", which simply 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 are seemingly best supported when they are part of an institutional framework, akin to Rawls's "basic structure" (Rawls 1993).

Constitutional patriotism entails that the kind of loyalty and commitment held by citizens of a political community, which nationalists maintain that only a national identity can yield, can instead be directed towards the values underpinning the constitution, as well as participation in the democratic process (Habermas 1994). Patriotism is based on a commitment to universal principles, though interpreted in a particular political culture and democratic procedures. When this happens, citizens take part in what Habermas calls the "'we' perspective on self-determination" (Habermas 2001, p. 65). This is meant to ensure loyalty and commitment to the democratic project; both of which he agrees with nationalists that democracy requires (Habermas 1996, p. 499). Therefore, according to Habermas, while democracy does not require a national identity, it does require that "every citizen be socialized into a common political culture" (Habermas 1996, p. 500).

Three immediate issues emerge from this position. The first questions whether universal values are enough to elicit allegiance to a particular political community (Canovan 2000; Joppke 2008). The second is a worry that this sort of identity will still exclude those not seen as adhering properly to the common values of the community. After all, viewing shared values as a basis for belonging was not unique to the respondents with the more positive attitudes to immigration. This is also part of the nationalist identity. As a result, on the one hand, the basis for this identity is too universal and, on the other hand, when we counter this by making it part of a particular identity, we might revert back into exclusiveness. The third issue relates to a conceptual problem of separating a political culture from the wider culture.

Universalism and Particularism

The first two issues, the tension between the universal and the particular, can be demonstrated by looking at some of the interviews. Layer four, universal values and procedures, was sometimes expressed by the respondents 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, however, is consistent with 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 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). However, I do believe we have to be somewhat more cautious when situating values in particular political identities than advocates of patriotism, such as Laborde and Habermas, suggest. 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. I refer here to the 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. While this might appear like hair splitting, the distinction does have consequences for exclusion. Compare the respondent above with this respondent, 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.

This respondent 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 constitutional patriotism, as the allegiance is primarily to the nation and not to the values as embedded in the political community. This does not imply that constitutional patriotism cannot be an exclusive form of identity. There are tensions between constitutional patriotism and immigration, because immigration can change the "ethical-political self-understanding of the nation" (Habermas 1994, p. 137). Since this understanding is a foundation for political culture, which in itself is necessary to provoke allegiance to the universal values democracy rests on, constitutional patriotism may warrant restrictions on immigration in order for such changes not to be too sudden. According to Habermas, states are justified in assimilating immigrants into the common political culture (Habermas 1994, p. 139). If this is understood

to take place on an institutional or structural level, through for example civic education incorporating the rights and obligations of citizens as laid out in the constitution, this seems to accord with the institutionalist understanding of identity, which can be reconciled with an open view on immigration policy.

When Laborde tries to resolve the issue of particularist allegiances by thickening constitutional patriotism to what she calls "civic" patriotism, her position ends up very similar to Habermas's. In fact, it is difficult to see how her approach diverges from Habermas's in any meaningful way: "Civic patriotism seeks to promote a *mainly political identity*, whose predominantly political nature makes it compatible with a variety of practices and beliefs, but whose thin particularistic content justifies citizens' commitment to specific institutions and practices" (Laborde 2002, p. 609, emphasis in original). This appears to be an exact replica of Habermas's argument, unless his position is (mis)interpreted as only entailing a commitment to universal, non-situated, political principles. Laborde argues that political identity is shaped by political activity itself, as opposed to the wider culture that is inherited to a larger extent. Again, this seems to be in line with Habermas's idea of law-making as constructing a political identity (Habermas 2008, p. 92; Stilz 2009, p. 164; Cronin 2003, p. 4).

What both Habermas and Laborde fail to emphasise, however, is the embeddedness of the political culture in the political and societal institutions. The stress of the respondents in this study was not on the deliberative process, but on the institutional influence exerted on individuals through socialisation. Thus in a sense the respondents suggest a more passive understanding of citizens than the notions of "law-making" and political activity. This respondent, for example, worry that democratic values may be more difficult to uphold if immigration from non-democratic countries increase:

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.

Habermas does invoke the idea that institutions must produce certain results in order to be stable. Thus, allegiance to universal values alone may not generate trust in the specific institutions of one's political community. "Taking the long view, the only kind of democratic process that will count as legitimate, and that will be able to provide its citizens with solidarity, will be one that succeeds in an appropriate allocation and a fair distribution of rights" (Habermas 2001, p. 77). But in addition to recognising the importance of institutional performance, discussed further below, is also the insight, stressed by the respondents, that democratic and social institutions have a socialising function. Democratic citizens are fostered by democratic institutions and not solely through deliberation and participation, but also through public and civic education. While participation (in particular in terms of non-

marginalisation) is certainly important to give institutions a sense of being "ours", socialisation and performance are two key variables in creating attachment and patriotism.

After all, what binds people together is not necessarily the idea of belonging to a "nation" – a transcendental collective based on largely mythical notions of a common past and a shared destiny – but the fact that their lives and opportunities are determined or at least shaped by the same social and political institutions, that they have grown up within the same institutional structure, including the same educational system and the same welfare regime. Recognising this does not undermine the idea of deliberative democracy. Instead, it simply means that, in contrast to the nationalist claim that a national identity is a prerequisite for democratic deliberation, shared political and social institutions upholding shared values constitute such prerequisite.

Liberal Exclusion

While the common political culture, embedded in political and social institutions, is meant to facilitate public deliberation by generating mutual understanding and trust, it nonetheless restricts it to some extent. For rather than judging laws on the basis of their moral, universal, value, they are being judged on the basis of adhering to 'national' values, i.e. specific interpretations of universal values. This entails that there is a restriction on what positions can enter the public discourse, as the framework of the political culture creates boundaries for what interpretations of moral principles that can enter the public arena at any given point in time. While this may well be a legitimate trade-off, it should nonetheless be recognised as precisely a trade-off. As many have argued, liberal principles can be exclusionary themselves (Canovan 2000; Joppke 2008; Lægaard 2007). Adding a particular political-ethical interpretation of these principles, as well as situating them in a particular institutional context, make them potentially more exclusive. In terms of immigration, it is important not to make allegiance to universal values by citizens conditional on them adhering to the particular political culture of the country. "Civic patriots have always subordinated their allegiance to a country to their love of liberty, even if it is their allegiance to this or that particular polity which coloured their understanding of liberty" (Laborde 2002, p. 599). For nationalists, it may be the other way around. If we are concerned with constructing a national identity open to immigration, political discourse should strive to follow the former hierarchy of allegiances.

Sune Lægaard has argued that when liberal values are appealed to in public discourse as national values, they should be classified as nationalist insofar as they construct social boundaries of "us" and "them" (Lægaard 2007). He maintains a distinction between, on the one hand, when liberal values are made part of a national identity and, on the other hand, when liberal values are simply interpreted differently cross-nationally (Lægaard 2007, p. 48). The problem with Lægaard's view is that he employs an implausibly broad definition of nationalism and national identity. Anything that is made part of a political identity cannot be a national identity simply because it constructs social boundaries and distinctions between members and non-members. Identities of all kinds necessarily produce an "us" and a "them"; this is not unique to nationalism.

Lægaard makes a further distinction (following Oliver Zimmer) between voluntarist and organic social boundaries, where the latter implies a deterministic view on the characteristics of different identity groups. As an example of the latter, he takes the view held by some that Muslims *qua* Muslims are incapable of adopting liberal values (Lægaard 2007, p. 49). When such deterministic view is expressed, Lægaard argues, "the nationalisation of liberal values exhibits clear affinities with nationalism" (Lægaard 2007, p. 50). This is an important point, but it is more relevant to a primordial understanding of national identity (layer one above), than to nationalism as such. It would be a very reductionist understanding of nationalism to equate it with organic and deterministic understandings of identity groups. Moreover, it is important to recognise that all identities are to some extent "exclusive" in the sense that they mark members from non-members. The distinction that Lægaard makes between voluntarist and organic identities is of course important, but it is just another way of making the same distinction that has previously been described as ethnic/civic or ascriptive/voluntarist and applying it to the use of national values. Exclusion does not only take place on the organic/ethnic/ascriptive understanding, but as I argued above, exclusion takes place on the civic/political/voluntarist account too – it excludes those who are not liberals and it excludes to some extent certain interpretations of liberal principles at any given time. If we assume, as I have done, that some form of political identity is required to generate political trust, then there will always be a tension between citizens and potential newcomers. This political identity can be, or so I have argued, constructed to minimise these tensions, but it would be an illusion to think that they could be eradicated.

Nevertheless, the example of the particular kind of exclusion of Muslims given by Lægaard is an important one. As discussed above, the institutional understanding of belonging found in the interviews was characterised also by viewing the democratic citizen as shaped by the democratic institutions themselves. 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. For example, this respondent answers the question on whether or not it matters who lives in a country for how democracy works:

Respondent S18:   It's obvious that you can't expect as much of people from Somali or perhaps those who come directly from Afghanistan, that they should get out 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.

Lægarad's discussion of the exclusion of Muslims as a group highlights that an inclusive political identity based on liberal universal values seemingly also needs to be based on an appreciation of democratic institutions' formative capacity. Hence, identifying with the

particular democratic institutions of one's political community also entails that one recognises the impact these institutions have had on one's identity and the impact they can potentially have on new members. But this also entails that a difference is made between members and non-members that can justify treating immigrants differently in an initial state, given that they come from a different institutional background (this is the case even if their country of origin was a democratic one, as it will still have had a different political culture). However, this should still make the identity more inclusive in terms of welcoming immigrants in the first place, even though the implications for naturalisation and integration are to some extent "exclusive". This is because the success of integration and the preservation of political culture are seen as primarily dependent on the performance of institutions, rather than on immigrants themselves.

The Political and the Wider Culture

There remains, however, a tension between political culture and simply culture, in other words between layer two and three on Laborde's framework. Habermas draws a clear distinction and only requires of immigrants that they assimilate into the political culture. The qualitative interviews also showed that people having a more cultural understanding of their national identity tended to be more negative to immigration, whereas those for whom the political culture was embedded in the political institutions were more positive. For Habermas, it is important that the political culture is "freed" from the majority culture, to allow citizens from different cultures to identify with it (Habermas 2001, p. 74). Thus in contrast to nationalists, Habermas regards the separation of the majority culture from the political culture as a way of ensuring cohesion. But is such a clear separation plausible? "The problem, of course, is that the very concept of political culture blurs the distinction between (universalist) norms and (particularist) cultures. […] At any point, it is obvious that no easy distinction can be drawn between the domain of 'politics' and the domain of 'culture'" (Laborde 2002, pp. 597 and 600).

Laborde holds that all that "can be required of citizens is that they be willing to engage in the conversation, that they see it as their own, and that they learn the skills which allow them to participate in it" (Laborde 2002, p. 611). Now the skills that allow citizens to participate in the political culture and in law-making may certainly be of a cultural character, rather than a strictly political. This is perhaps where the two concepts meet and, as Laborde argues, become inextricable. While I do not think there is any satisfactory answer to this conceptual problem, I do not think that it undermines the idea of a political identity based on a common political culture. For though we will never be able to say exactly where the line is drawn between the political and the wider culture, this does not entail that the political culture simply collapses into the cultural one.

This boundary problem always confronts us when trying to distinguish between different kinds of cultures. This does not mean that they do not exist as different cultures. Cultures overlap with one another, which does not entail that there are no important differences between them, and there is no reason we cannot accept this conceptual overlap when differentiating between a political culture and a wider one. Laborde is correct in saying that a

political culture – "political institutions, practices, symbols, ideological and rhetorical traditions" – is more or less always bound up with the majority or wider culture. But to some extent this is a trivial point, so long as it is not the case that any particular culture of society is seen as incompatible with the political culture because the latter is intrinsically linked to the majority culture. It is important that the political culture is a construction in process and can be reconstructed as the cultural composition of society changes. For it to have any meaning, though, it needs to have certain characteristics at any given point of time. As a consequence, immigrants will have to acquire some political-cultural skills in order to participate in democratic law-making. Again, when allegiance is focused on institutions, and the formative and socialising impact of these institutions and their political culture is recognised, there is no reason why this should lead to hostility towards newcomers. On the contrary, respondents within the institutionalism category discussed issues and problems relating to immigration and immigrant integration focusing on the institutional framework that to a large extent determines the consequences of immigration, without necessarily concluding in favour of stricter immigration controls.

Next, I will consider how political identities can be more inclusive yet yield the solidarity necessary for redistribution in the welfare state.

4. Identity and Redistribution

Recalling from the discussion above, nationalist theorists claim that only a common national identity can provide the sense of solidarity that is claimed to be necessary for large-scale redistribution in a welfare state. The qualitative interviews also suggest that many respondents see their compatriots as a form of extended family to whom they owe special obligations and these respondents were classified as having a nationalist identity. In contrast, the other two identities that were found amongst the respondents did not stress a communal identity when reflecting on redistribution and the welfare state. Instead, they focused either on the contributions others made to the community or on the institutions that ensured such contributions were made and redistributed fairly and effectively. These two alternative understandings on who belongs to the redistributive community emerged as less hostile to immigration. In searching for political identities constructed to be open to immigration, I therefore focus on how these alternative understandings of belonging can generate solidarity and facilitate cooperation within the welfare state.

At the heart of all three identities – nationalism, contribution and institutionalism – lies the notion of reciprocity and the question of what motivates people to cooperate in the scheme of redistribution. The nationalist answer is that you reciprocate because you identify with those belonging to your nation and that engenders in you a sense of solidarity towards them. Miller, in defending this position, denies that this is a relationship of "strict" reciprocity (Miller 1995, p. 65). Instead he claims 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). So this is not a relationship of "strict" reciprocity in the sense that if I contribute with X I can be assured that I will get X in return. But few reciprocal relationships work like that. The key is that the individual agent can see that s/he stands to benefit from the cooperative scheme in some way because s/he can trust that others will reciprocate her/his cooperative behaviour, not that each contribution must be matched by an equivalent benefit. In recognising this, it may be easier to find alternatives to nationalism that may otherwise, in comparison to the nationalist position, have looked unattractively based on self-interest. This is thus also the case for nationalist solidarity; identification works as a means to ensure to agents that their cooperation will be reciprocated.

Anna Stilz (2009) has in her book *Liberal Loyalty* suggested that these sorts of reciprocal motivations stem from citizens rationally recognising their dependence on one another, which gives rise to duties of justice to cooperate (Stilz 2009, p. 186). She holds that the democratic welfare state is "a shared intentional practice", because members have a common goal, to realise justice, and they recognise that this goal is not possible to fulfil unless they cooperate. And because we are members of this intentional practice and not another, our fellow citizens rely on us to play our part in order for justice to be realised. If we did not cooperate, we would violate our "natural duty of justice", because we would be manipulating others who are part of and contributing to our particular shared intentional practice, i.e. our political community. As an example, Stilz explains why a Swedish taxpayer should pay tax in Sweden rather than move his money elsewhere. "Other members are relying on the Swedish taxpayer's contribution to secure their rights, and by refusing to orient himself to Sweden's tax laws, he is coercing them in a way that is unjust" (Stilz 2009, p. 207). The problem with Stilz's account is that, while it is rich in giving reasons for why we have obligations to cooperate, it is poor in explaining why we will also be motivated to do so. Alas, it is the latter that nationalists claim requires something beyond a commitment to universal values such as justice. Stilz holds that "a member is only under an obligation to perform her part in the collective enterprise if she believes her fellow members also intend to perform theirs" (Stilz 2009, p. 190). But apart from our "natural duty of justice", she provides few reasons that could give citizens such assurance of reciprocity.

Because, according to Stilz, the democratic state allows us to pursue goals that we care about, such as the realisation of justice, "[it] is a collective in which it is possible to feel a rational sense of membership, and we do not need to invoke a shared national culture to undergird it" (Stilz 2009, p. 205). While she is right that this idea is no more mysterious than the idea of a national identity, a gap still remains between our rational sense that contributing would be beneficial, and right as a matter of justice, and our belief that our contributions will be reciprocated. Her view relies equally on the assumption that individuals need to feel that they stand to benefit from the redistributive scheme as Miller's nationalist theory does, but it does not provide a satisfactory answer to the "motivational problem".

Both Stilz's and Miller's views thus rely to a large extent on the abstract notions of national identity and a natural duty of justice, respectively. What seems clear from the institutionalism and contribution views expressed by the respondents in this study, as I discussed above, is

[15]

that these respondents want more concrete assurance than that. Respondents in the institutionalism category, which to some extent reflect a social-democratic tradition, maintain that they can get this assurance from the welfare institutions themselves, so long as they are seen as fair and robust. Thus, institutional performance, both delivery of services and their perceived effectiveness, is crucial in motivating citizens to cooperate. This argument may appear circular and I discuss this more below.

For those in the contribution category, assurance of reciprocity is more problematic, because 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 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 (Ipso/MORSI 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, belonging, and reciprocity, should be based on institutions themselves. Making reciprocity a matter of institutional robustness could move issues of trust and solidarity away from discussions of various groups' right to belong, their cultural characteristics or their economic capacities. Institutions can be scrutinised without comparing the contributions or cultural characteristics of any of the members of the reciprocal scheme.

A similar argument to the one put forward here has been pursued by Andrew Mason, who proposes a distinction of two kinds of belonging akin to the one observed in the interviews of this study. He argues that, on the one hand, people can belong together as a people, independent on whether or not they share the same territory, or, on the other hand, they can belong to the same polity, which means that they identify with its major institutions and practices (Mason 2000, p. 127; 2010, p. 871). This distinction mirrors the difference between the nationalism category of belonging found amongst the respondents and the institutionalism and contribution understandings of belonging, also observed amongst the Swedish and British respondents respectively. The latter, more inclusive, understandings fits with belonging to a polity in Mason's sense, as they do not see any other reason than sharing the same institutions or contributing to the same institutions to why they belong where they do. Mason's argument is primarily that such understanding of belonging can generate trust more effectively than national identity, especially in diverse societies. The empirical work of this study also highlights that such view of belonging would seemingly be associated with more positive attitudes to immigration.

Mason argues that "[when] a person identifies with an institution or practice, he regards himself as lying in a special relationship to it: he sees it as his in an important sense. In order to be able to identify with it, he must in general be able to perceive it as valuable, see his concerns reflected in it, think that he can trust it to operate in accordance with the rules which are constitutive of it, and feel at home in it" (Mason 2010, p. 871). Thus similarly to the

argument pursued here, people need to have faith and trust in that institutions will be effective and valuable. This can be interpreted as a notion of institutional performance, which, to some extent, is both independently important to motivate citizens to cooperate and also a prerequisite for their identification with the political and redistributive institutions. While Mason claims that this understanding of belonging does not "require citizens to share values in any demanding way", it nonetheless strongly resembles the kind of constitutional – or institutional – patriotism defended here (Mason 2010, p. 871). For the argument incorporates several of the key points made here: First, it fits neatly with the empirical observation that allegiance to institutions requires individuals to regard these institutions as fair and effective. Second, it 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.

In order to foster a sense of belonging to a polity, to its institutions and practices, Mason argues that people need to have reason to value their institutions and that they need to not be marginalised (Mason 2000, p. 133). They do not, he claims, need to share values beyond a commitment to the desirability of their major institutions and practice. For example, he asks rhetorically whether it is shared values or a commitment to the institutional machinery that "provide the Swiss citizens with a sense of belonging of the relevant kind?" (Mason 2000, p. 131). However, this claim seems to oddly strip a polity's "institutions and practices" of any embedded and underpinning values. A commitment to liberal institutions, which guarantee even illiberal groups to continue with their practices, does by definition imply a commitment to some basic liberal values, such as the value of freedom of association, of non-interference and of the freedom of speech. Not only does attachment to liberal institutions presuppose a commitment at least to a sort of "minimal liberalism", institutions also tend to develop their own value-based structure that persists despite a turnover of the individuals who maintain them. Shared values can only be regarded as distinct from the institutions that uphold them if they are regarded as a priori (in the nationalist sense, they would stem from the national, pre-political character), but this does not seem plausible given the reifying nature of institutional value-structures themselves. Hence, contrary to what Mason claims, institutions and shared values cannot be easily distinguished, but should rather be seen as mutually reinforcing.

Circularity

The argument may appear circular. Nationalists argue that a national identity is required to establish the conditions for redistribution by engendering solidarity and trust. Therefore, the existence of redistributive institutions cannot be what creates solidarity and trust. My claim is that while a political identity as described above could generate trust to some extent, this is not enough, at least not for the sort of identity that would be associated with more positive attitudes to immigration. Furthermore, the argument pursued here is no more circular than appealing to a national identity is. For a plausible conception of national identity must recognise that it is in itself constructed through the democratic welfare state, in other words, the sense of mutual solidarity between co-nationals stem from sharing the same welfare institutions, rather than from an *a priori* identification. Consequently, it is not more circular to claim that the welfare state itself constructs certain solidarities and trust in institutions,

[17]

than to recognise that the welfare state constructs a shared sense of identity that has the same claimed effect.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the potential conflict between a shared national identity and immigration, as posed by nationalists, needs to be addressed empirically as well as normatively. By introducing a new empirical study on the relation between understandings of national identity and attitudes to immigration, this paper contributes with such discussion. On the basis of this new qualitative data, I argued that patriotism based on institutions and shared values softens the conflict between a shared identity and immigration. Trust and reciprocity is better thought of as embedded in the institutional framework of a country, rather than a notion of an identity based upon a nation. When we think of our country as a set of political and social institutions, rather than as a nation, which shapes the parameters of our society and the bases for cooperation, trust and reciprocity becomes features of those institutions rather than of the characteristics of its members. The aim of moving the solidarity-generating variable from nationality to institutionalised reciprocity is thus to construct political identities that are less hostile to immigration. If immigration is nonetheless seen as negative, the blame will fall primarily on the institutions for failing to instil reciprocity in the new members, rather than on the new members themselves.

Bibliography

Aughey, A. (2010), 'Anxiety and injustice: the anatomy of contemporary English nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 16 (3)

Barry, B. (1999), 'Self-Government Revisited' in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, State University of New York Press: Albany, pp. 247-278

Canovan, M. (2000), 'Patriotism is Not Enough', *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (3)

Citrin, J., Johnston, R. and Wright, M. (2012), 'Do Patriotism and Multiculturalism Collide? Competing Perspectives from Canada and the United States', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45 (3)

Collier, P. (2013), *Exodus*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

Cronin, C. (2003), 'Democracy and Collective Identity: In Defence of Constitutional Patriotism', *European Journal of Philosophy* 11 (1)

Dustmann, C. and Frattini, T. (2013), 'The Fiscal Effects of Immigration to the UK', CreAM Discussion Papers NO. 22/13

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990), *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Polity Press: Cambridge

Figueiredo, R. J. P. and Elkins, Z. (2003), 'Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-Group Pride', *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (1)

Ford, R., Morrelland, G. and Heath, A. (2012), 'Immigration: "Fewer but better"? Public views about immigration' in Park, A., Clery, E., Curtuce, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 29ᵗʰ Report*, London: NatCen Social Research, available at www.bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk

Goodhart, D. (2013), *The British Dream*, Atlantic Books: London

Habermas, J. (1994), 'Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State' in Gutmann, A. (ed.), *Multiculturalism*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, pp. 107-148

Habermas, J. (1996), *Between Facts and Norms*, Polity Press: Cambridge

Habermas, J. (2001), *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, The MIT Press: Cambridge

Habermas, J. (2008), *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Polity Press: Cambridge

Heath, A. F. and Tilley, J. R. (2005), 'British National Identity and Attitudes towards Immigration', *International Journal of Multicultural Studies* 7(2)

Holtug, N. (2010), 'Immigration and the politics of social cohesion', *Ethnicities* 10 (4)

Ipso/MORSI 2014

Janmaat, J. G. (2006), 'Popular conceptions of nationhood in old and new European member states: partial support for the ethnic-civic framework', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29 (1)

Johnston, R., Banting, K., Kymlicka, W. and Soroka, S. (2010), 'National Identity and Support for the Welfare State', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43 (2)

Jolley, R. (ed.) (2013), *State of the Nation*, British Future January 2013 available at http://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/State-of-the-Nation-2013.pdf

Joppke, C. (2008), 'Immigration and the identity of citizenship: the paradox of universalism', *Citizenship Studies* 12 (6)

Kessler, A. E. and Freeman, G. P. (2005), 'Public Opinion in the EU on Immigration from Outside the Community', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43 (4)

Knudsen, K. (1997), 'Scandinavian Neighbours with Different Character? Attitudes Toward Immigrants and National Identity in Norway and Sweden', *Acta Sociologica 40*

Kumar, K. (2010), 'Negotiating English identity: Englishness, Britishness, and the future of the United Kingdom', *Nations and Nationalism* 16 (3)

Laborde, C. (2002), 'From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism', *British Journal of Political Science* 32 (4)

Lægaard, S. (2007), 'Liberal nationalism and the nationalisation of liberal values', *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (1)

Martinez-Herrera, E. (2010), 'The Unbearable Lightness of British "Liberal Nationalism"' in Karolewski, I. P. and Suszycki, A. M. (eds.), *Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, Lexington Books: Plymouth, pp. 31-55

Mason, A. (2000), *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance,* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Mason, A. (2010), 'Integration, Cohesion and National Identity: Theoretical Reflections on Recent British Policy', *British Journal of Political Science* 40 (4)

McLaren, L. and Johnson, M. (2007), 'Resources, Group Conflict and Symbols: Explaining Anti-Immigrant Hostility in Britain', *Political Studies* 55

Miller, D. (1995), *On Nationality*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

Moore, M. (2001), The Ethics of Nationalism, Oxford University Press: Oxford

Pehrson, S. and Green, E. T. (2010), 'Who We Are and Who Can Join Us: National Identity Content and Entry Criteria for New Immigrants', *Journal of Social Issues* 66 (4)

Pevnick, R. (2009), 'Social Trust and the Ethics of Immigration Policy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 17 (2)

Rawls, J. (2005), *Political Liberalism; Paperback edition*, Colombia University Press: New York

Shayo, M. (2009), 'A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class, and Redistribution', *American Political Science Review* 103 (2)

Stilz, A. (2009), *Liberal Loyalty*, Princeton University Press: Princeton

Wilkes, R., Guppy, N. and Farris, L. (2008), '"No Thanks, We're Full": Individual Characteristics, National Context, and Changing Attitudes Toward Immigration', *International Migration Review* 42 (2)

Wright, M. (2011), 'Policy Regimes and Normative Conceptions of Nationalism in Mass Public Opinion', *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (5)

Wright, M. and Reeskens, T. (2013), 'Of what cloth are the ties that bind? National identity and support for the welfare state across 20 European countries', *Journal of European Public Policy* 20 (10)