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Even in Sweden: The Effect of Immigration on Support for Welfare State Spending

Maureen A. Eger

While the politics of globalization and welfare state retrenchment have garnered much attention in recent years, scholarly research on public support for welfare state expenditure is comparatively sparse. Furthermore, new pressures, specifically international immigration and resulting ethnic heterogeneity, add a new challenge to the welfare state. In this article, I analyse support for social welfare expenditure in Sweden—the country that spends the greatest percentage of its GDP on social expenditure and, until recently, remained relatively ethnically homogeneous. Results from multilevel models reveal that multiple measures of immigration at the county-level have significant negative effects on support for the welfare state. Moreover, recent immigration has a negative effect on attitudes towards universal spending. Thus, this analysis provides clear evidence that ethnic heterogeneity negatively affects support for social welfare expenditure—even in Sweden.

Introduction

Scholars have devoted considerable energy to understanding how global changes affect the sustainability of welfare states—especially those states that spend substantial chunks of their GDP on welfare. Many have feared that globalization, defined typically as the extension of worldwide capitalism, would lead to a veritable ‘race to the bottom’ and to either the death of the European welfare states or its convergence on a less generous model (Scharpf, 1991; Kitschelt, 1994; Steinmo, 1994; Rhodes, 1998; Stephens, Huber and Ray, 1999). The logic of this argument stems from Okun’s (1975, p. 51) famous claim that economic ‘efficiency is bought at the cost of inequalities in income and wealth’. In reality, there is very little evidence connecting globalization to welfare state retrenchment (Huber and Stephens, 2001, 2005). Nevertheless, over the past 20 years, most countries have made changes to social programs that ultimately reduce the provision of social welfare benefits; however, these changes have been small, incremental, and

have not necessarily come at the expense of equality (Pontusson, 2005).

Considering the durability of institutions in general (North, 1990), this is not too surprising; yet, new pressures, in the form of immigration-generated diversity, add a new challenge to the welfare state. One only needs to pick up a newspaper or turn on the television to see that immigration and increasing ethno-cultural heterogeneity have become some of the greatest sources of political turmoil in recent years. In some journalistic accounts of these demographic changes, the politics of immigration are explicitly linked to attitudes about social welfare expenditure. For example, in a piece about the Nordic welfare states, a Swedish blue-collar union negotiator explains, ‘Sweden is a small country. . . . Up to 10 years ago it was very homogeneous as a country. Everything was very alike. Up until then all Swedes looked the same; almost thought the same. Because we are all so equal, we can share the pain of the problems. . . . As Sweden gets more divided, it’s more difficult to keep this idea of sharing the pain.’¹

The politics of institutional change and welfare state retrenchment have garnered much attention in recent

Table 1 Population by country of birth

Country of origin	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
Sweden	7,539,318	7,690,282	7,800,185	7,878,994	7,938,057
Other Nordic countries	320,913	341,252	319,082	279,631	273,991
EU27 without Nordic countries	139,194	151,349	175,679	187,883	216,488
Rest of Europe	41,161	54,402	71,167	174,482	203,431
Africa	4,149	10,025	27,343	55,138	75,405
Asia	5,949	30,351	124,447	220,677	309,606
North America	15,626	14,484	19,087	24,312	27,168
South America	2,300	17,206	44,230	50,853	58,221
Oceania	558	962	1,866	2,981	3,642
Soviet Union ^a	7,244	6,824	7,471	7,584	6,667
Foreign-born total	537,585	626,953	790,445	1,003,798	1,175,200
Total residents	8,076,903	8,317,235	8,590,630	8,882,792	9,113,257
Foreign born as percentage of all residents	6.7	7.5	9.2	11.3	12.9

Source: *Befolkningsstatistik, "Tabeller över Sveriges befolkning för 2006," Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2007.*
 (http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/BE0101_2006A01_BR_BE0107TAB.pdf).

^aIncludes data for Russia and other former Soviet states through 1990. Some recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union have not been naturalized into any of the 15 states, which is why there are data for 2000 and 2006.

years; however, scholarly research on public support for welfare state expenditure is comparatively sparse. Furthermore, while other research has considered the sustainability of welfare state spending due to demographic change, none has looked systematically at the effect of increasing ethnic heterogeneity on individuals' attitudes towards social expenditure—in particular, spending that benefits the collective. Therefore, this article seeks to explore the effects of demographic change on citizens' support for the welfare state in Sweden—the country that spends the greatest percentage of its GDP on social expenditure and, until recently, remained relatively ethnically homogeneous.

Case Study: Sweden

Sweden stands out as arguably *the* most egalitarian, humanitarian, and democratic country in the world. Indeed, all the key indicators point to just that. With consistently high economic growth and a strong welfare state that ensures low inequality,² Swedes enjoy a high standard of living, universal health care, education, and generous unemployment benefits. Further, the Economist Intelligence Unit's (2007) index of democracy ranks Sweden as the most democratic country, with a near perfect score.³ And, in a country where on average 80 per cent of the population votes in national elections, Swedish economic and social policies reflect a desire to include marginalized and potentially marginalized populations.

Sweden remained ethnically, linguistically, and religiously homogeneous well into the 20th century. In 1900, less than 1 per cent of the population was foreign-born; by 1950 this figure had only increased to 2.8 per cent. Because of this traditional homogeneity, economic and social inequality once constituted the only salient divisions in Sweden (Hammar, 1985, p. 22). The belief that Swedes were 'all in the same boat'⁴ contributed to the development of the most generous welfare state in the world and legislators crafted policies in order to eradicate inequality based on class and gender. However, in the recent years, successive and relatively large waves of immigration have prompted the Swedish government to pass new legislation to protect other minority groups from discrimination as well as create economic incentives for both employers and workers in order to integrate new populations of immigrants into the labor market. Currently, Sweden devotes more than 30 per cent of its GDP on social expenditure—more than any other country in the world.

Although Sweden is not generally thought of as a country of immigration, in reality, it has become just that (see Table 1). In a short time, Sweden has transitioned from a fairly homogenous society to one characterized by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. In 1960, foreign-born persons made up a mere 4 per cent of Sweden's population, with well over half emigrating from Finland, Denmark, and Norway. Furthermore, a relatively small percentage of these immigrants were refugees. By the late-1970s and

early-1980s, immigration patterns had changed substantially and the number of asylum-seekers skyrocketed. Over the past few decades, refugees have come from as far away as the former Yugoslavia, Chile, North Africa, and the Middle East. By the mid-1990s, over 10 per cent of all Sweden's inhabitants were foreign-born, and 13 per cent were either foreign-born or Swedish-born with two foreign-born parents. Currently, 13 per cent of the population is foreign-born—which is the same percentage foreign-born as in the United States—and 16.7 per cent is either foreign-born or Swedish-born with two foreign-born parents. Twenty per cent has at least one foreign-born parent.⁵

Although the issue was curiously omitted from the political debates leading up to the 2006 national election, it is obvious that immigration has become a national phenomenon. As a percentage of the total population, the largest numbers of foreign-born people reside in the county of Stockholm, which includes the capital city of Stockholm, its districts, and 26 other municipalities. However, the municipality with the highest concentration of foreign-born residents includes the southern city of Malmö, located only a bridge's distance from Copenhagen, Denmark. Segregation in and near these cities is rampant, with a large proportion of foreign nationals and foreign-born living in suburban ghettos, such as Stockholm's Rinkeby or Malmö's Rosegård.

Today, almost all immigrants come to Sweden seeking asylum or family reunification (Swedish Migration Board, 2007a, b).⁶ According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in 2006, Iraqis became the largest nationality to seek asylum in Europe. In that year, over 40 per cent of all Iraqi applications for asylum in Europe went to Sweden, and according to Statistics Sweden, 91 per cent, or ~9,500 Iraqis, received residence permits. This increased the number of Iraqis residing in Sweden to ~83,000. In 2007, the total number of asylum seekers doubled from the previous year to over 36,000. For a country of only 9.1 million people, this is no small thing. While most countries require that refugees prove that their lives are in extreme peril, from 2003 to 2007, Sweden made an exception for Iraqis, who needed only to demonstrate that he or she was fleeing central or southern Iraq to receive asylum. Moreover, Sweden's updated Aliens Act (Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2006) expands the definition of refugee to include people who are persecuted because of their gender or sexual orientation.

Unlike other European countries that have been reluctant to recognize that immigrants do not necessarily desire to return to their countries of origin, Sweden's

forward-thinking policies have made it relatively easy for refugees to obtain citizenship. In fact, it is easier for foreigners who come to Sweden with asylum permits to apply for citizenship than it is for those who come with work or study visas. Granting citizenship, of course, stimulates more immigration, and according to the Swedish Integration Board (2006), family reunification is the most prevalent reason for immigrating to Sweden.

Thus, in a relatively short period of time, Sweden has evolved into a multiethnic society. Do Swedes still possess the same sense of solidarity and believe they are *all* in the same boat, or have emergent in-group/out-group boundaries changed how individuals feel about universal social welfare benefits? I argue that increasing ethnic heterogeneity makes real and perceived differences more salient. This in turn affects people's willingness to contribute to the collective welfare when the collective now includes people not in one's in-group.

In the following sections, I first offer a critique of previous explanations of support for the welfare state and show that the majority of these approaches assume that popular attitudes are either functions of economic position or regime type. Moreover, these approaches assume attitudes are relatively static and immune to broader societal change. Then, I review the micro-level theory of in-group bias, from which I derive my hypothesis about the effects of immigration-generated diversity on attitudes towards the welfare state.

Explanations of Support for Welfare State Expenditure

According to the power-resource model, which is considered the dominant approach to the study of the welfare state, individual class position predicts one's level of support for welfare state expenditure. More specifically, low-income individuals favour redistribution and therefore support generous welfare state spending. Those with high incomes do not. Thus, this theory sees the welfare state as the outcome of distributive conflicts among class-based actors. It is the relative power of these actors that is significant for policy outcomes (Korpi, 1980; Esping-Andersen, 1985, 1990; Huber and Stephens, 2001).

Iversen (2005, p. 5) maintains that the power-resources model fails to see the relationship between production and social protection. He argues that capitalists also have an interest in a strong welfare state as well because of the 'Janus-face' of this particular institution. The welfare state is not just a mechanism for redistribution; it is also social

insurance. 'The welfare state is simultaneously an arena for distributive struggles *and* a source of comparative advantage' (Iversen, 2005, p. 13; emphasis in original). According to Iversen, protection against risk is essential for a successful economy, especially as countries enter the world market. Without this insurance, employers or employees would have little incentive to invest in new technologies or human capital. Capitalists and other wealthy individuals, therefore, who may not enjoy the redistributive properties of the welfare state, nonetheless support its existence in order to insure against risk.

Both these theories contend that one's individual economic position determines support for social welfare expenditure; in fact, the later posits that it is in the economic interest of all—both low income and high income—individuals to support the welfare state. However, variation in welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hall and Soskice, 2001; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Pontusson, 2005) suggests the role of institutional variables in explaining these attitudes. The comparative welfare state literature maintains that different institutional arrangements affect the structure of support for social welfare expenditure. Specifically, regimes with 'universal' versus 'selective' or means-tested social programs are more likely to garner higher levels of public support (Korpi, 1980; Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Forma, 1997; Svallfors, 1997; Gilens, 1999). In other words, social programs that potentially benefit all are more likely to enjoy general popularity, whereas programs that benefit the poor or another subset of the population are less likely to receive widespread support. According to this approach, individual income—as well as age and gender—help explain attitudes towards the means-tested programs.

Other scholars argue that preferences, norms, values embedded in different institutional arrangements or welfare state regimes explain variation in attitudes towards social welfare expenditure. Brooks and Manza (2007) find between-country variation in the relative contribution of economic considerations, social cleavages, and institutions on welfare state policy preferences. However, their 'embedded preferences' approach to explaining both attitudes and welfare state output suggest that policies and the support for them are merely artifacts of a particular country or institutional type. Similarly, Rothstein (1998) argues that a country's political institutions give rise to social norms; policies congruent with the social norms act to reinforce those norms, thus indirectly legitimating the political institution. According to Rothstein, 'a just system must generate its own support' (Rothstein, 1998, p. 143).

However, Rothstein's approach to explaining support for the Swedish welfare state implies that citizens' preferences are uniform and do not change.

Many have identified 'American exceptionalism', or Americans' distinctive cultural values, as the key obstacle to widespread support for social spending in the United States (e.g., Lipset, 1963). Tocqueville ([1848]1969), who admired Americans' experiment with democratic rule, was the first to document Americans' reverence for the individual and preoccupation with their own self-interest. Feldman and Zaller (1992) find that economic individualism, or 'the commitment to merit as the basis for the distribution of rewards in society and the belief that people ought to work hard', contributes to negative attitudes towards welfare. According to these authors, Americans do not like the idea of others getting something for doing nothing, whether or not that is the reality of the situation, and this generates opposition to increases in social expenditure. Values and norms may help us understand mean differences in aggregated country-level attitudes, but by relying on these approaches we gain little in explaining variation in support for social spending.

A fourth approach points to institutional processes to explain attitudes towards social welfare expenditure. Pierson (1994, 2000) finds that individual interests, even the interests of the ruling party, matter less than institutional effects. Specifically, path dependency, or increasing returns, makes it more difficult to undo policies than implementing them in the first place. He argues that welfare states, by creating constituencies, secure their own support. Even if citizens hate paying taxes, they nonetheless benefit and therefore remain attached to public provision. Pierson shows that even when a conservative, market-liberal party is in power (as in the cases of Reagan and Thatcher) '... the welfare state stands out as an island of relative stability' compared to other government policies (Pierson, 1994, p. 5).

Each of these approaches argues that individual attitudes are functions of either one's country of residence or one's location in the class structure. Attitudes may vary from class position to class position or from welfare regime to welfare regime, but that is it. While I do not discount the importance of economic interests and class position on attitudes nor do I pretend that regime types do not affect support for social expenditure, I argue that these explanations are limited in that they presume attitudes are relatively constant. In other words, these explanations imply that attitudes change only if one moves up (or down) the economic ladder or to another country.

More importantly, none of these explanations consider other sources of variation within countries.

Theoretical Framework

A more promising approach to explaining attitudes towards the welfare state takes into account the politics of difference, specifically the effects of racial and ethnic diversity on support for social welfare. In an analysis of the United States, Luttmer (2001) finds a negative relationship between nonblacks' support for welfare⁷ and the percentage of black welfare recipients in a respondent's community. He also finds a negative relationship between blacks' support for welfare and the percentage of nonblack welfare recipients in one's community. Interestingly, he finds no relationship between the percentage of nonblack recipients and nonblacks' support for welfare, or does his analysis demonstrate a relationship between the percentage of black recipients and blacks' support for welfare spending. This suggests it is not the presence of 'poor people' in general or even the presence of black recipients that affects welfare state attitudes but instead the presence of welfare recipients who are members of ethnic out-groups. Indeed, other research confirms that the greatest difference in support for redistribution is not between the rich and poor but instead between blacks and whites (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Alesina and La Ferrara, 2000).

Gilens (1999) finds that racial stereotypes about blacks' work ethic negatively affect white Americans' attitudes towards social welfare spending. Furthermore, he finds the magnitude of this effect greater than the effects of 'American individualism' and economic self-interest on welfare state attitudes. Fox (2004) assesses the relationship between the presence of Latinos and whites' attitudes towards welfare spending. Fox finds that the percent Latino does matter in shaping whites' beliefs about Latinos' work ethic; however, she also finds that the type of stereotype that whites hold has no effect on whites' welfare spending preferences. In states with a small population of Latinos, whites are more likely to believe Latinos are lazy and want to spend less on welfare. In disproportionately Latino states, whites are more likely to find Latinos hard-working. Yet, holding constant their views of blacks, whites in these states also want to spend less on welfare. Put more simply, whites' stereotypes about Latinos, both positive and negative, decrease support for policies intended to assist poor Americans. This finding suggests that the presence of an ethnic minority itself contributes to attitudes about social welfare expenditure.

In a relatively short period of time, increased migration has altered the demographic makeup of countries worldwide—including Sweden. Do these changes negatively affect citizens' attitudes about the generosity or universality of social welfare benefits? Recent sociological research demonstrates that the presence of ethnic minority groups has a negative effect on Americans' support for social welfare. I argue that this relationship is not limited to the United States and hypothesize that ethnic heterogeneity, in this case produced by international migration, has a negative effect on Swedes' attitudes as well.

In an effort to understand better the mechanisms involved in this relationship as well as provide empirical support for my argument, I turn to cognitive social psychological theory and robust experimental evidence that demonstrates the effects of group boundaries and in-group bias on resource allocation.⁸ Whatever informal or formal group an individual associates with or belongs to at a certain point in time constitutes an in-group. These groups can range from one's family to one's sports team or from one's ethnic group to one's nation of origin. According to Festinger (1954), in-group formation results from the cognitive process social categorization, and in-groups comprise individuals who are similar on some salient dimension. One's out-group includes individuals who do not share that salient physical or social trait. In-group formation is not necessarily a conscious process but instead an automatic response to one's environment. Furthermore, these groups need not be solidaristic or instrumentally created organizations. More importantly, an in-group's boundaries are neither definite nor immutable. Depending on the circumstances, these group boundaries may fall in and out of salience as well as shift to expand or contract over time.⁹

In-group bias, or the tendency to favour one's own group, is a simple concept but one that has significant implications for society—especially in the treatment of in-group and out-group members. Experiments show that people strongly prefer members of their own group, even when one's 'group' is the result of random assignment and has no consequence for the subject (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971; Brewer, 1979). Using normless 'minimal' group situations, social psychologists demonstrate how easily people will group themselves using categorical distinctions and then engage in differential treatment of in and out-group members (Tajfel, 1970, 1978, 1981, 1982; Tajfel and Billig, 1974).

It is important to note, however, that in-group bias does not always lead people to discriminate against an out-group in an overt fashion. Allport (1954, p. 42)

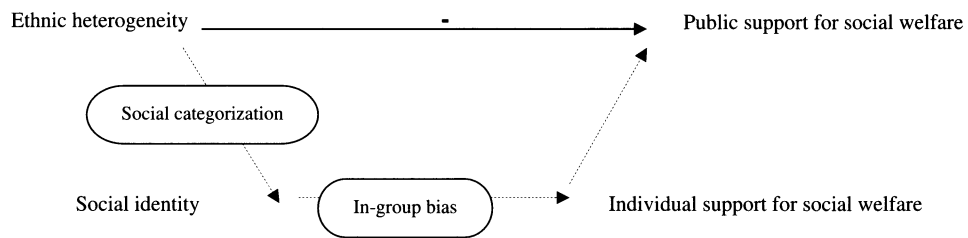


Figure 1 Theoretical model

maintains that in-group attachment, preference, and favouritism are not necessarily reciprocally related to out-group contempt, hostility, or overt discrimination, and Brewer's (1999) research confirms that positive in-group identification does not systematically correlate with negative attitudes towards or treatment of out-groups. In other words, although immigration makes national and ethnic in-group/out-group boundaries salient, in-group bias does not necessarily lead to anti-immigrant sentiment or hostility towards foreigners. An illustrative example comes from Norris's (2005) analysis of cross-national variation in the rise of radical right parties. She does not find a significant relationship between the percentage of a country's residents that is foreign-born or the number of asylum-seekers with residence permits and the electoral success of political parties with xenophobic platforms.

Although in-groups do not always confer costs to out-groups, in-group members are nevertheless willing to differentially distribute benefits to their own group versus members of other groups (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971; Turner, 1975, 1981, 1984; Brewer, 1979; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Mullen, Brown, and Smith, 1992). This robust finding is attributed to members' motivation to maintain a group's positive identity, distinctiveness, and boundaries. These behaviours emerge not only in 'minimal' group settings but also amongst natural groups (Brewer and Campbell, 1976).

I argue that as countries and sub-regions experience increases in ethnic heterogeneity due to international migration, citizens within that geographic unit are less likely to support generous welfare state expenditure that benefits the collective—even though this means that they too would receive fewer benefits (see Figure 1). Indeed, experimental research shows that in-group members will allocate resources so that there is the greatest *difference* between groups, even if this means that in-group members receive a lesser amount (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Thus, I posit that immigration will have a negative effect on attitudes towards not only means-tested spending but also universal spending.

I use data from Sweden because of its strong social democratic tradition and welfare state institutions as well as its recent history of increasing immigration. Therefore, an analysis of Swedes' attitudes will be an especially good test of the theory.

Data and Methods

I rely on attitudinal data, *Åsikter om den Offentliga Sektorn och Skatterna*, or 'Opinions about the Public Sector and Taxes', collected by Stefan Svallfors and his colleagues at Umeå University in Sweden (Svallfors, 1986; Svallfors *et al.*, 1992; Svallfors and Edlund, 1997, 2002). The sample is a pooled cross-section with data from 1986, 1992, 1997, and 2002. I sort subjects by län code, Sweden's first level administrative and political subdivision,¹⁰ and attach regional-level census data from the Swedish census, *Statistiska Centralbyrån*. The primary responsibility of Sweden's 21 län is the provision of welfare benefits such as healthcare and education.

For my dependent variable, I use an index of attitudes towards social expenditure. For each of the seven spending items, I coded responses so that respondents who want to see an increase in spending receive a 2; those who want spending to stay the same receive a 1; and those who want to see spending decreased receive a 0. Missing values for any of the seven items were assigned the mean value for that year. In order to create an index that ranges from 0 to 100, respondents' scores were then aggregated to give a range of 0–14, divided by the maximum value of 14, and multiplied by 100.¹¹ Figure 2 shows the mean scores for the spending index (left *y*-axis) and means scores by spending item (right *y*-axis) over time.

I also created a spending index that includes only items that are universal in nature. This second dependent variable measures attitudes towards health care, elder care, and primary/secondary school expenditure.

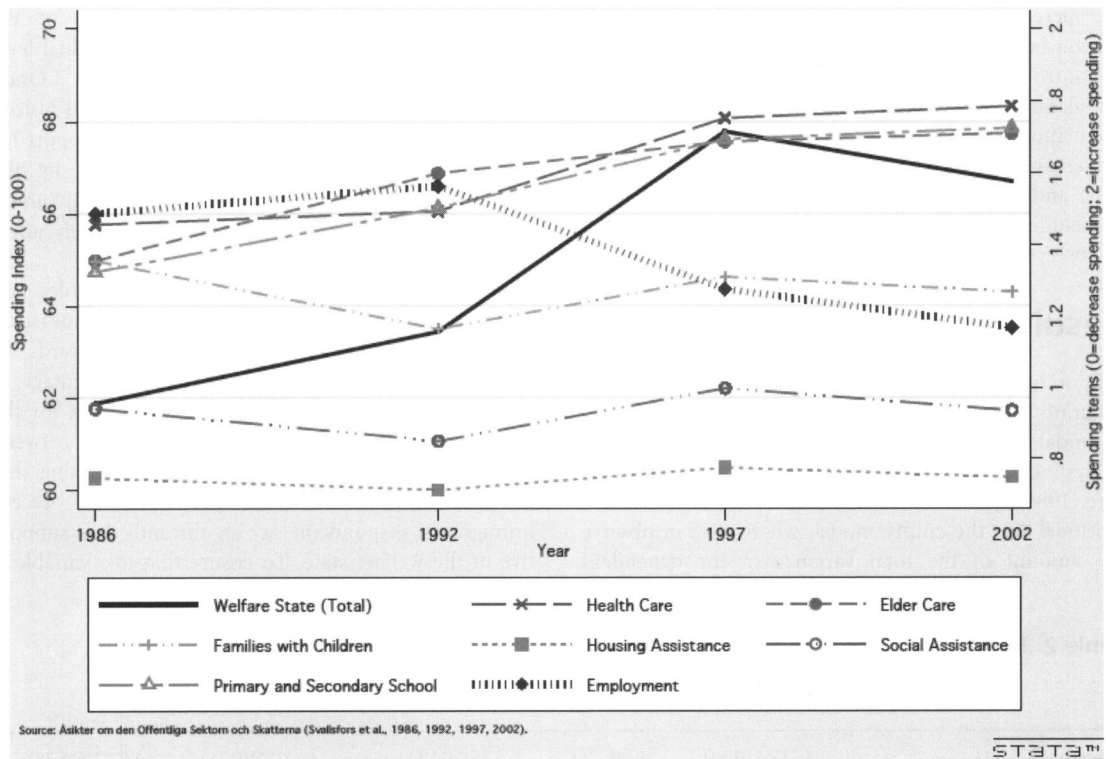


Figure 2 Mean scores for attitudes towards social expenditure, by type and year

The first set of independent variables includes individuals' sociodemographic characteristics.¹² I include a continuous measure of age and a dichotomous measure of gender. Education is an ordinal variable, where respondents choose their highest level of education (0=primary; 1=secondary; 2=some university/college; 3=university or college degree). Because one of the items included in the dependent variable measures attitudes towards social spending on families with children, I also include a question about whether or not there is a child in the respondent's home. I use Kingston's (2000, p. 85) conception of 'income classes' to capture my subjects' economic position. I created four income categories based on the median disposable income for each year: below the median; 100–200 per cent above the median; 200–300 per cent above the median; and above 300 per cent of the median.

While all Swedes enjoy universal access to health care, education, childcare, elder care, and economic support for children under the age of 16, the next set of independent variables captures the respondents' relationship to means-tested spending. I include two variables that ask whether or not respondents have

been unemployed for at least a week in the past 3 years and whether or not respondents have received social assistance in the last 3 years. The next two questions measure political affiliation and union membership. Sweden is a multi-party, parliamentary democracy; however, the Social Democrats, who are the architects and long-time protectors of Sweden's universal and generous welfare state, have governed Sweden 65 out of the last 75 years. The Left Party and the Green Party are also mainstream, relevant parties that are consistently pro-welfare state.¹³ Therefore, I use a dichotomous measure of party affiliation where respondents are coded as either supporting the Social Democratic, Left, or Green Party or supporting any other party. Union membership is also a dichotomous variable.

In order to assess the effects of demographic, political, economic variables on Swedes' attitudes towards social expenditure, I sort subjects by county and year and then attach regional-level census data that corresponds with the survey year. I use three different measures of immigration in my analyses: the percentage of the county population who immigrated to Sweden in that calendar year, the percentage of the county population that is a foreign citizen, and

the percentage of the county population that is foreign-born. I use three other county-level variables as controls: the percentage of the county's working-age population that is employed, the percentage of the population that receives social assistance, and the percentage of the votes cast for the Social Democratic, Left, and Green parties in the last election. Finally, I include a year variable in order to control for unobserved effects of time.

Results

I fit a two-level, random intercept model using the program `gllamm` for Stata (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2005). In Table 2, I report results from my analysis of Swedish attitudes towards social expenditure, 1986–2002.

Model 1 is the empty model, where we can observe the amount of the total variance in the dependent

variable. In Model 2, I assess the effects of the individual-level variables. As expected, individual-level variables affect support for social expenditure.¹⁴ One's economic position, educational attainment, and history of receiving social assistance affect Swedes' support for the welfare state in the manner predicted by the power-resource model. Gender, parenthood, union membership, and left party affiliation positively affect support.

When the effects of county-level variables are assessed in models 3–5, we see that different measures of immigration consistently affect attitudes towards the welfare state. Each unit increase in the percentage of new immigrants in that year decreases support for the welfare state by -8.84 . This measure varies between 0.18 and 1.00 per cent ($m = 0.46$), demonstrating that in counties with a high proportion of recent immigrants, respondents are significantly less supportive of the welfare state. To ensure that this variable is

Table 2 Multilevel models of support for social welfare expenditure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Intercept	66.15 (0.34)	59.09*** (1.31)	55.24*** (11.13)	60.77*** (9.71)	53.02*** (11.38)
<i>County-level variables</i>					
Percent immigrant (year)			-8.84*** (1.59)		
Percent foreign citizen				-0.55*** (0.17)	
Percent foreign born					-0.47** (0.14)
Percent employed			0.01 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.09)	0.02 (0.11)
Percent social assistance			0.30 (0.23)	0.54† (0.28)	0.63* (0.25)
Percent left vote			0.04 (0.05)	0.02 (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)
Year			3.01*** (0.43)	2.33*** (0.42)	3.07*** (0.53)
<i>Individual-level variables</i>					
Gender (ref. = male)		4.01*** (0.53)	3.69*** (0.52)	3.69*** (0.51)	3.70*** (0.51)
Age		0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Education		-1.49*** (0.22)	-1.59*** (0.23)	-1.61*** (0.23)	-1.61*** (0.23)
Income (ref. = 100–200 per cent)					
Below median		1.14* (0.52)	1.99*** (0.47)	1.96*** (0.48)	1.95*** (0.47)
200–300 per cent median		-6.55*** (0.73)	-6.71*** (0.75)	-6.69*** (0.73)	-6.64*** (0.72)
Above 300 per cent median		-9.09*** (1.02)	-8.76*** (1.03)	-8.80*** (1.07)	-8.69*** (1.07)
Child (ref. = none)		2.13*** (0.53)	1.95*** (0.57)	2.01*** (0.56)	2.00*** (0.57)
Union (ref. = no)		2.86*** (0.65)	2.94*** (0.69)	2.97*** (0.70)	2.93*** (0.70)
Left party (ref. = no)		7.82*** (0.67)	8.01*** (0.67)	7.97*** (0.67)	7.99*** (0.67)
Unemployed (ref. = no)		1.68* (0.74)	1.08 (0.73)	1.09 (0.71)	1.09 (0.72)
Social assistance (ref. = no)		10.17*** (1.07)	9.81*** (1.06)	9.98*** (1.03)	9.87*** (1.04)
<i>Variances and covariances of random effects</i>					
Level 1	288.74 (10.41)	244.36 (8.39)	237.28 (8.38)	237.71 (8.43)	237.42 (8.53)
Level 2	4.49 (1.19)***	1.60 (1.23)***	0.81 (0.54)***	1.31 (1.23)***	0.88 (.60)***
Log-likelihood	-19,689.696	-1,4291.243	-14,238.435	-14,243.140	-14,239.754
N	4,628	3,427	3,427	3,427	3,427

† $P < 0.10$; * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.

Group variable is *län* code. Robust standard errors reported in parentheses.

not acting as a proxy for some other feature of Swedish counties, in Model 4, I replace percent immigrant with the percentage of residents that are foreign citizens and in Model 5 with the percentage of residents that are foreign-born. Each unit increase in percent foreign citizen reduces support by -0.55 . This measure varies between 0.86 and 10.05 per cent ($m=4$), thus this measure of immigration also has a large effect on attitudes. Nevertheless, Model 5, which assesses the effects of percent foreign-born, has a better fit than Model 4. This is not surprising, as it may be difficult or impossible to distinguish between foreign citizens and naturalized Swedish citizens, although signs of cultural integration (i.e., style of clothing) could indicate the latter. A unit increase in the proportion of residents who are foreign-born decreases support for the welfare state by -0.47 . This measure has a minimum value of 2.84 per cent and maximum value of 18.12 per cent ($m=7.74$), producing an effect that rivals many of the individual-level variables.

Employment rates do not have an effect on individual-level attitudes towards social spending. This finding may be partly due to the nature of the Swedish welfare state itself. This institution depends on high employment in order to sustain itself; therefore, unemployment is treated like the common cold rather than a chronic disease. The state provides education and assistance to the unemployed in order to ensure that its tax base remains high. Consequently, inequality is low and the standard of living in Sweden is relatively high, which affects the salience of economic difference.¹⁵ To be sure, economic hardship is not as *visible* as it is in other countries, which suggests that class is not as salient a social division as ethnic difference. As a result, the latter is more likely to trigger social categorization and in-group bias. Nevertheless, the proportion of county residents who receive social assistance appears to have a positive effect on attitudes.

I also regress a dependent measure of universal spending items (education, health care, and elder care) on the same county-level and individual-level variables. In Table 3, I report the results from the only full model where a measure of immigration is significant.

Conclusion

Previous research on the political sociology of the welfare state has not considered seriously the role of immigration on support for social expenditure. While institutional theories help explain differences in countries' aggregate levels of support and welfare state output, they are less helpful in accounting for

Table 3 Multilevel model of support for Universal Social Welfare Expenditure

	β	SE
Intercept	58.30***	13.82
<i>County-level variables</i>		
Percent immigrant (Year)	-6.47^{**}	2.38
Percent employed	0.05	0.13
Percent social assistance	1.11^{***}	0.22
Percent left vote	-0.07	0.07
Year	7.80^{***}	0.36
<i>Individual-level variables</i>		
Gender (ref. = male)	4.37^{***}	0.63
Age	0.01	0.02
Education	-0.89^{***}	0.27
Income (ref. = 100–200 per cent)		
Below median	-1.25^{\dagger}	0.68
200–300 per cent median	-4.25^{***}	1.05
Above 300 per cent median	-5.42^{***}	1.22
Child (ref. = none)	2.13^{***}	0.55
Union (ref. = no)	3.29^{***}	0.54
Left party (ref. = no)	3.14^{**}	0.57
Unemployed (ref. = no)	-0.46	0.87
Social assistance (ref. = no)	2.14^{***}	1.23
N	3,427	

$^{\dagger}P < 0.10$; $^{*}P < 0.05$; $^{**}P < 0.01$; $^{***}P < 0.001$.

Group variable is *län* code. Robust standard errors reported.

attitudinal heterogeneity within a population. Results from the current analysis certainly support power resource theory and the importance of economic interests for welfare state attitudes. However, this research also provides evidence that the proximity and salience of an out-group negatively affects attitudes about the allocation of resources.

Both recent immigration and proportion foreign-born reduce support for the Swedish welfare state. Indeed, immigration is the only county-level variable that negatively affects Swedes' attitudes, and it is the only regional variable that is significant across models. When universal spending is assessed by itself, recent immigration still has a negative effect on support, which demonstrates that these analyses are not merely picking up the effect of immigration on support for redistribution. Regardless, the redistributive nature of the Swedish welfare state is an integral part of the institution and is inextricably linked to its ideological roots—the idea that all Swedes are 'all in the same boat'. In an analysis of attitudes in eight countries in 1992, Svallfors (1997) finds Swedes' support for the redistributive nature of the welfare state to be *lower* than other social democratic and even conservative

regimes. Results from the current analysis suggest that increasing immigration may be part of this story.

These analyses only include data from 1986 to 2002; thus, it is difficult to know if overall support or support for specific programs was higher in previous decades or has declined in the recent years. Rates of immigration, however, have increased, and results from this analysis suggest that recent immigration would negatively affect current levels of support. Would, then, a shift in public opinion pose a real threat to the Swedish welfare state? Institutional change itself tends to be incremental (North, 1990); however, if the democratic theory of politics (Downs, 1957; Dahl, 1961) is correct, changes in public opinion will eventually lead to changes in leadership and policy. Recent research does demonstrate that public opinion plays a significant role in policy outcomes. In fact, when public opinion is considered, other political factors such as party strength or political organization recede in importance (Burstein, 1999; Burstein and Linton, 2002). Brooks and Manza (2007) find that mass public opinion is central in explaining welfare state expenditure and the variation between welfare-state regimes in their welfare state effort. The researchers also find that aggregate public opinion tends to change slowly and over time due to the effects of partisan hegemony and institutions.

Sweden, however, has already seen a change in leadership, which proves a rare event in a country where one political party has had incredible, if not hegemonic, authority and influence. While no right-wing parties with a xenophobic platform garnered enough votes to earn a seat in Parliament, the 2006 election did result in a historic shift towards more liberal economic policies and the ousting of Social Democrats from the prime ministry and the government's ruling coalition. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, leader of the Moderate Party, and the ruling coalition have already brought about changes to the welfare state—reducing spending on both universal and means-tested programs.¹⁶

Despite the fact that Sweden's economy grew 5.6 per cent in the last quarter of 2006, employment and social welfare expenditure were the big issues of the election. The centre-right alliance campaigned for a reduction in taxes and the parties' leaders said that too many people relied on welfare for too long. Immigration as an *issue* did not come up, as both coalitions claimed to desire liberal immigration policies. Nevertheless, downsizing the welfare state is one way to limit immigrants' desire to come to Sweden. A reduction in taxes and expenditure also could mean that fewer benefits go to immigrant populations.

In Sweden, it is taboo to discuss immigration as a political issue, even in an election year, which is one way that its political climate differs greatly from other countries—the United States being the most obvious example. Public discussions about ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity are viewed as politically incorrect, and political rhetoric describes multiculturalism as a public good versus a challenge that needs attention. Nevertheless, economic policies and demographic make-up are inextricably linked even if politicians do not make that connection salient. The only party that weighs in on the growing number of immigrants is the right wing party, the Swedish Democrats, who won local seats in southern Sweden in the 2006 election. Unlike New Democracy, which experienced brief electoral success in 1992, this party's platform is both anti-immigrant and pro-welfare.

Recent research points to the effects of ethnic and racial heterogeneity on actual social spending. Alesina and Glaeser (2004) find that racial and ethnic fractionalization explains a significant portion of the variation between social expenditure in the United States and in European welfare states. Such findings suggest that ethnic heterogeneity and in-group bias, disguised as individualism, may have played a role in the development of the American liberal welfare state. Lipset and Marks (2000, p. 267) maintain that 'ethnic, racial, and religious cleavages were more powerful sources of political identity for most American workers than was their commonality as workers' and that working-class cleavages contributed to the failure of socialism in the United States. While the exceptional diversity that the United States has experienced since its birth as a nation distinguishes it from other advanced post-industrial societies, globalization and increased immigration may serve to decrease 'American exceptionalism' as other Western democracies also become increasingly multiethnic. Future research is needed to investigate other sociological implications of immigration-generated diversity.

Data limitations do not permit me to answer a number of important questions about attitudinal change. This research relies on pooled, cross-sectional data and therefore cannot speak to whether or not individual attitudes have changed over time. As previously mentioned, the data only cover a 16-year period. Thus, we do not know if aggregate support for social expenditure was higher in previous decades or if overall support for the welfare state declined since 2002. Future research is necessary. Comparative analyses are also important to gauge the effect of immigration on welfare state attitudes in Sweden relative to its effect in other countries. Is this effect

stronger in countries with weaker welfare states or in countries with a different history of immigration? Do cross-national differences in immigration and integration policies temper or amplify the effects of in-group bias?

Dahl (1996, p. 642) noted that altruistic tendencies diminish as the scope of the group increases. In a homogeneous group, 'egoism merges indistinguishable with altruism;' yet, 'as the group expands in numbers, as homogeneity declines, and as conflicting interests increase' it becomes more difficult to sacrifice one's own interests in order to advance another's. Due to recent large-scale immigration, ethnicity has become a salient social division in Sweden. Results from the current analysis demonstrate that the presence of foreign-born residents negatively affects support for social expenditure in Sweden—the country that boasts the most generous and inclusive welfare state in the world. Immigration is not the entire story, of course, but this analysis reveals something significant that previous research has not.

Notes

1. Cowell, A. Letter from Sweden: An Economy with Safety Features, Sort of Like a Volvo. *The New York Times*, 10 May 2006. The quote belongs to Ingemar Goransson.
2. In 2000, Sweden's Gini coefficient was 25 versus the United State's 40.81.
3. Incidentally, the United States was ranked 17 of 28 'full democracies'.
4. *Vi sitter alla i samma båt*.
5. *Befolkningsstatistik* (2007), *Statistiska Centralbyrån*, <http://www.scb.se>.
6. Tobias Billström, Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy, argues that Sweden must shift from an immigration policy based solely on asylum-seeking to one that also includes high-skilled labor migration. He said that diversifying the ways in which one migrates to Sweden should have an effect on attitudes towards immigration in general (Personal interview with Tobias Billström, 13 June 2007). In May 2008, the government submitted a bill to parliament proposing new rules that would make it easier for Swedish firms to recruit skilled workers from outside Sweden and the EU.
7. It is important to note that in the United States, the general public perceives 'welfare spending' to include only unemployment insurance and other forms of means-tested spending. Thus, it is safe to assume that this question measures attitudes towards this type of spending and not attitudes towards the prototypical welfare state, which includes other types of expenditure. Luttmer's analysis and conclusions also imply this.
8. While testing this micro-level hypothesis is beyond the scope of the current project, I rely on robust experimental evidence in order to strengthen my argument.
9. For example, one could argue that for a period after September 11, many ethnic, religious, and political group boundaries within the United States declined in salience as the terrorist attack and aftermath heightened other group boundaries based on nationality. Or, to use an example from Sweden, in the postwar period, Finns constituted the largest and most prominent out-group in Sweden (Hammar, 1985). Although Finland is Sweden's Nordic neighbor, Finns are not linguistically (and some have argued not culturally) Scandinavian. Today, however, the Finnish experience in Sweden is much closer to the experience of the native-born. Finnish immigrants and those with Finnish background are seen as more culturally similar than immigrants who come from the Middle East or northern Africa.
10. Ideally, I would also sort respondents by a lower geographic unit, the municipality or kommun, and run additional analyses to measure the effects of local variables on the dependent variable. However, because there are 290 municipalities in Sweden, the number of cases in the survey is not large enough to allow for structuring the data set this way. Regardless, because people's knowledge of current affairs is not limited to one's immediate surroundings (i.e., the neighborhood, town, or city), I believe the län, or county, is an appropriate choice for a study that assesses the effects of immigration on attitudes. People do not need to interact with immigrants to have knowledge that they live and/or work nearby. Moreover, considering over 80 per cent of län expenditure goes to the provision of healthcare and education, this geographic unit has practical relevance for its

residents. Furthermore, although the proportion of municipalities' population that is foreign-born varies within län, it varies less than one might expect. For example, in 2002, the Stockholm county municipality with the largest percent foreign-born was Botkyrka (32.85 per cent). The municipality with the smallest proportion of foreign-born residents was Ekerö (8.30 per cent). The city of Stockholm and its districts had 19.22 per cent. The mean was 15.67 per cent with a standard deviation of 5.68 per cent ($N=26$). Finally, immigrating to Sweden does not mean that one remains where he or she initially lives. Although asylum reception centres are located in over 30 municipalities throughout Sweden, currently there is no law that mandates that refugees or their families live in a particular kommun.

11. The measure I created follows the guide outlined by Svallfors (2006) and is similar to his six-item index.
12. An alternative hypothesis is that foreign-born bring anti-welfare state attitudes *with* them when they immigrate to Sweden; therefore in areas where there is a high concentration of foreigners, we would find less support for the welfare state. Thus, it would be ideal if I could also control for whether or not the respondent is foreign-born or has foreign background. These measures were not included in all four data sets. According to the PI, the sample is nationally representative: all (legal) residents were included in the sampling frame, regardless of ethnicity or citizenship, and foreign-born populations were not over-sampled in areas with relatively large foreign-born populations. Furthermore, the questions were asked in Swedish, which also suggests to me that it is unlikely that the most recent waves of immigrants were included at any of the time points. Nevertheless, because a measure of foreign background is available in the 1992 survey, I ran separate analyses for that year. Respondents who are either foreign-born or native-born with two foreign-born parents make up 12.25 per cent of the sample in 1992, which is consistent with national statistics. The respondents' ethnic background and the dependent variable are weakly correlated ($r=0.05$), and it is important to
- emphasize that the relationship is positive. Furthermore, I regress all individual-level variables, including ethnic background, on the dependent variable. Having foreign-background versus Swedish background does not have a significant effect on one's attitudes towards the welfare state. Even if the findings for 1992 are not generalizable and recent immigrants are less supportive of the welfare state, a negative effect is not inconsistent with the theory. I argue that ethnic heterogeneity negatively affects support for the welfare state and not that the presence of foreigners *only* affects native-born Swedes' attitudes. Based on the theory of in-group bias, there is little reason to believe that immigrants would be any more likely to support the allocation of resources to ethnic out-groups than native-born Swedes.
13. The Left Party has won seats in parliament in every election between 1985 and 2002. The Green Party won seats in four of the six elections during that time.
14. Using attitudes to help explain another attitude is analytically problematic, especially if the attitudes are theoretically related. Yet, to be sure that respondents' attitudes towards those who receive means-tested support is not driving their support for the apparatus of redistribution, I control for those attitudes in an unreported analysis. Not surprisingly, attitudes towards people who are unemployed and people who receive social assistance have a negative effect on support for social expenditure; however, including this variable does not alter the results presented here.
15. To verify the robustness of these findings, I also ran analyses with other level-2 economic controls: wealth tax contributions per capita and real estate tax contributions per capita. Including these variables instead of percent employed does not change the results. Furthermore, neither of these measures is significant when included instead of the measures of immigration.
16. At the start of 2007, the government reduced sickness and unemployment benefits by increasing the fees for benefits and simultaneously reducing pay from those benefits. The cost of public transportation increased and museums began to charge admission instead of remaining

free to the public. Union fees are no longer tax-deductible. In 2008, property taxes and the wealth tax were abolished.

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