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SAMMANFATTNING

Denna studie handlar om hur förtroendet för offentliga institutioner och myndigheter varierar bland olika grupper av invandrade i Sverige. Vi analyserar data från en storskalig intervjuundersökning i syfte att jämföra betydelsen av erfarenheter från olika politiska system. Därigenom försöker vi dra slutsatser om hur skillnader i anspråk och förväntningar kan påverka institutionellt förtroende. Studien visar att personer som invandrat från länder med utbredd korruption har en ljusare syn på de offentliga institutionerna i Sverige – detta i jämförelse såväl med invandrade från mindre korrupta länder, som med infödda svenskar. Våra resultat tyder således på att förtroendet för svenska politiska institutioner och myndigheter påverkas positivt av erfarenheter från sämre fungerande och mindre rättssäkra politiska system. Men studien visar också att ett initialt högt förtroende tenderar att plana ut i takt med den tid som en invandrad person har tillbringat i Sverige. Vi undersöker om denna gradvis minskande tilltro kan förklaras av erfarenheter av diskriminering, men vi finner inget empiriskt stöd för en sådan misstanke.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to increase our knowledge on the political trust of immigrants' in established democracies. Utilising Swedish survey data, based on a large oversample of respondents with a foreign background, we show that immigrants from countries more plagued by corruption place significantly higher trust in political institutions in Sweden in comparison with both immigrants from more auspicious institutional settings and with the native population. However, we also find that an initially bright view of the Swedish institutional qualities tend to attenuate over time, as immigrants from countries of high corruption develop more critical viewpoints. In contrast to reasonable expectations, we nonetheless find that this decrease in trust is not explained by experiences of discrimination. Overall, the hypotheses elaborated and tested in this paper may be regarded as a more general contribution to a theory on how political trust is related to experiences and expectations of political institutions.

Introduction

For some time, political trust—the overall confidence in the political institutions of a given polity—seems to have declined in most Western democracies (Klingemann, 1999, pp.49–52; Holmberg, 1999; Dalton, 1999, pp.66–69; Levi and Stoker, 2000, p.482; Dalton, 2006). Still, there may be considerable intra-country variations in political trust that deserve further examination. In this paper, we investigate differences in political trust among immigrants facing the comparatively well-functioning democratic and administrative institutions of Sweden. As these immigrants come from virtually all parts of the world, we hypothesise that they may have highly diverse expectations of the Swedish political system. In support of this line of thought, we find that the variation in expected system performance is consequential.

Why, then, should we care about political trust about in the first place? It is hardly controversial to argue that citizens' confidence in political institutions and politicians is an important issue in each democratic society. In its absence, the entire political system may be viewed as both unreliable and inefficient, in the end eroding legitimacy (e.g. Rahn and Rudolph, 2005, pp.530–531). Therefore, it is crucial to understand what causes this confidence to prosper and what causes it to decline. Knowledge on this particular matter is however surprisingly scarce. Socio-economic status, habitually proven to be highly important for political participation as well as for political interest and efficacy, seems to have, at best, modest explanatory power in this regard. True, political trust seems to be positively correlated with some attitudes captured in standard survey items, such as satisfaction with democracy and party identification (Holmberg 1999; Newton 1999). But there are good reasons to further explore the importance of subjective assessments of “system performance” (Easton, 1965; cf. Anderson and Tverdova, 2003).

One may assume that individual experiences of government activities influence evaluations of both elected politicians and of more or less abstract institutions of the bureaucracy (Kumlin and Rothstein, 2005). Aside from this individuals are also likely to make more implicit assessments of political institutions, being guided for instance by various impressions of other peoples' experiences and by mass media case reports. In this paper, we develop a theory based on the assumption that, depending on their background and expectations, people may in fact use different yardsticks when they evaluate political institutions. If this is correct, some members of a given polity may very well have strong political trust, while others are deeply critical of the same political institutions. In relation to this, it naturally becomes an important question what kind of system performance that in fact should be measured. While macroeconomic indicators are re-

currently analyzed in previous research, the effects of “real” political performance have rarely been recognized (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003, p.92). This, we argue, provides room for further empirical investigation as well as for theory development.

In what follows, we show that immigrants from countries more plagued by corruption tend to place higher trust in Swedish political institutions. However, we also demonstrate that such, initially bright, views tend to attenuate over time. The length of residence seems to be negatively associated with political trust. In trying to explain this pattern, we test a discrimination hypothesis according to which an optimistic point of view within certain groups of immigrants gradually will be replaced with a more critical outlook due to more frequent experiences of discrimination. As we conclude, however, that this hypothesis is not empirically supported, we tentatively also test another explanation, according to which former high-trusting immigrants are influenced by perceptions of general, rather than immigrant specific, circumstances. Although data do not permit any firm conclusions in this respect, the alternative explanation seems fully compatible with our empirical findings.

In the subsequent section, we position our study in relation to previous research. This is followed by a section elaborating our theoretical position. Next, we present the data and measures used, followed by a section describing our empirical findings. In the final section, we conclude the study and discuss some implications for further research.

Previous research

The nature of political trust may clearly be regarded as multifaceted. Easton (1965) developed a classic trichotomy by distinguishing between support for the community, for the regime, and for the authorities in power. This distinction—although widely accepted as relevant—has been developed in more recent studies. For example, Norris (1999) argues that ‘regime’ category should be divided into the three categories of regime principles, regime performance, and regime institutions. Utilizing these further distinctions has proven fruitful. Several empirical studies have shown that citizens in general support regime principles, but often are much less trusting with regard to how the regime, including its institutions and actors, behaves in practice (e.g. Dalton, 1999; Inglehart, 1999). It has also been discovered that different dimensions of trust may influence each other; e.g. it has been shown that trust in political institutions is positively associated with the degree of overall satisfaction with a given democratic system (Zmerli, Newton and Montero, 2007).

A recurring result in the literature is that those who identify more strongly with the ruling party (or parties) show higher levels of political trust, and vice versa (Newton, 1999). Quite plausibly, this is related to individuals' political preferences, as reflected in a certain level of support for incumbent politicians. Attachment to the local community also seems to have a positive effect (Zmerli, Newton and Montero, 2007). Socio-economic status, on the other hand, shows only minor explanatory power; the impact of factors such as education and income on the level of political trust seem to be, at best, modest (cf. Newton, 1999; Holmberg, 1999).¹ Thus, previous scholarly efforts notwithstanding, propositions on other factors potentially related to political trust seem highly warranted.

It seems reasonable that a given individual's level of political trust to some extent depends on the actual set of political institutions that she or he is confronting. Hence, assuming that (actual as well as perceived) performance of political institutions varies across countries, a focus also on contextual properties should be rewarding. Exploring attitudes towards government from a cross-country perspective, Anderson and Tverdova (2003) present interesting evidence in this respect. They find country corruption level to be associated with more negative individual level evaluations of governmental practices (see also Mishler and Rose, 2001). Building upon their result we attempt to include not only current impressions of governmental performance, but also past experiences. To this end, a focus on immigrants is clearly relevant, as cross-country migration entails experiences from potentially different political systems.

According to several studies, immigrants in Western Europe tend to be less active in political life than the native population (Bäck and Soininen, 1998; Adman and Strömblad, 2000; Fenema and Tillie, 2001; Togeby, 2004). Although recent findings suggest that the partition of diverse forms of political activism is decisive for the conclusions that may be drawn (Myrberg, 2007), immigrants also tend to articulate a more negative view on perceived possibilities for political influence.² As for political trust, however, previous research is unexpectedly scarce.

¹ Although not further addressed in this paper, scholarly findings indicate that there are important links between political and social trust. In a comparative study, Zmerli, Newton and Montero (2007) find social trust to be a strong predictor of political trust. It is worth noting that their conclusion opposes the results found in several earlier studies (e.g., Kaase, 1999, p.13). Further, Lolle and Torpe (2010) uncover strong relationships between confidence in political institutions and social trust in Denmark and Sweden.

² As for Sweden Myrberg (2007, p.103) has shown that immigrants score lower on measures of *internal political efficacy* (referring to a given citizen's confidence in her/his own political competence), but not

Intuitively, one may expect to find profound distrust, at least among immigrants from countries characterized by severe political repression. For immigrants with such a background, one may assume that previous negative evaluations of political institutions are ‘sticky’, and hence that their gut-level response when asked about political authorities and institutions should be quite pessimistic, or even deprecating. But a recent study by Maxwell (2010a) in fact rather demonstrates the opposite. Maxwell shows that the levels of trust in parliament and satisfaction with national government are generally higher among immigrants than among native born citizens in Western Europe. Moreover, and particularly interesting in the light of our own hypotheses, Maxwell’s study also indicates that the country of origin status in terms of level of democracy is important for immigrants political trust. Contrary to derived expectations concerning ‘barriers to integration’ (Maxwell 2010a, p.38) immigrants from *less* democratic countries tend to express higher levels of political trust.

However this positive effect should be explained, Maxwell’s study also shows that ‘second-generation migrants’ (i.e. people having foreign born parents) generally express lower levels of political trust, more on par with the autochthonous population (i.e. with people having no migrant background). In line with this finding, Michelson’s (2003) study on Mexican-Americans in the United States suggests that members of this group who have gained American citizenship tend to trust the government less than non-citizens. Michelson concluded that confidence decreases among many Mexican-Americans as they become more “acculturated” (in this case measured by language proficiency).

A limitation of Michelson’s analysis is that it only included one specific category of immigrants in one specific setting. For several reasons, the situation of Mexican immigrants in the United States may not be readily transferable to a Western European context. The study by Maxwell on the other hand includes 24 European countries, along with migrants within these countries from all parts of the world. Given this large scope, however, no particular attention was paid to the possible interaction between the time factor and experiences from other political systems. Precisely this is facilitated through the design of our own study.

external political efficacy (referring to a given citizen’s overall confidence in politicians’ ability and willingness to be responsive). Also, previous research has found no significant differences in political interest (Adman and Strömblad, 2000).

Theory

What would be the appropriate standard—or “benchmark”—if you ask someone to evaluate the trustworthiness of democratic institutions? The answer is likely to differ depending on who you ask. For persons who have spent their whole lives in a well-established democratic system, the standard would perhaps be something like “ideal democracy”. True, for most people the image of a theoretical ideal is probably quite abstract. Still, if the only available basis for evaluation is the “best of worlds”, one may very well anticipate a fairly critical view of the actual institutions, which after all hardly could be regarded as perfect in an absolute sense. Nevertheless, we assume that citizens of long-time stable democracies in general do not believe that actual political institutions elsewhere are much more trustworthy. Following this line of thought, we assume that political trust would not change much for someone who migrates from a well-established democratic state to another, for example from the Netherlands to Sweden. It seems likely that such an individual, being accustomed to comparatively high standards regarding the quality of democratic government, roughly would expect the institutions of her or his new country to work equally well. Hence, the migrant in this case would neither be more worried, nor anticipate any great improvements in terms of how political representatives or government agencies perform their duties.

On the other hand, the situation may very well be significantly different for migrants from countries run by corrupt political regimes with poor, if any, democratic traditions. It may be reasonable to assume that migrants sharing such a history develop an image of institutions working more or less perfectly from a democratic point of view, in established democracies like Sweden. Furthermore, in case of a deliberate choice of migration to a country like Sweden, hoping that life-circumstances there would improve significantly, this is also a “psychological investment” that probably would imply positive attitude towards Swedish institutions once the immigration process is completed (cf. Escobar, 2006; Maxwell, 2010a). Thus, in absence of previous experience of “good government”, migrants may consider reasonably well-functioning democratic countries to be much closer to the ideal in comparison with the country of origin. Therefore, when asked to judge political institutions in the new country, their comparative outlook is likely to result in evaluations that, all else being equal, are more positive than those observed either within the non-migrant population, or among immigrants from other stable democracies. Consequently, and in line with Maxwell’s observations (2010a, p. 34) of immigrants’ political trust in Europe, we should expect high levels of political trust within large shares of the immigrant

population in countries like Sweden, as it is reasonable to assume that many non-Western immigrants perceive the political institutions in these countries as more reliable and trustworthy. In fact, along with a few other democracies, Sweden—the country that we focus on here—may be regarded as a “most likely” case for a positive outcome of comparative evaluations in this regard. Sweden is habitually found to be among the “cleanest” in comprehensive comparisons of corruption, and the country enjoys a world-wide reputation of being a well-functioning democracy.³

As indicated above, though, it is important to take time into consideration. Even if immigrants from countries of high corruption initially judge institutions in Sweden as very reliable and trustworthy, experiences and perceptions of how these institutions actually work may lead to a more negative view over time (cf. Michelson, 2003; Maxwell, 2010a). If this is the case, it is reasonable to expect that such a change in attitudes is related to experiences of discrimination, especially discrimination experienced during encounters with representatives of host country institutions (cf. Waters, 1999; Schierenbeck, 2004; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller, 2005; Karlsson and Tahvilzadeh, 2010).

We should be able to empirically evaluate these expectations by estimating the effect of past experiences, which we will capture by the overall level of corruption in the country of origin, on current political trust, simultaneously taking into account immigrants’ length of residence in the host country.

From the reasoning above, we derive the following two hypotheses, for which we contend that international migration to Sweden has prepared a propitious test bed:

H1: Immigrants from countries marked by high corruption initially trust political institutions in Sweden more than immigrants from other contexts, but this difference decreases with length of residence in Sweden.

³ In the Corruption Perception Index of 2008 (a measure which we utilize in the empirical analyses of this paper) Sweden received, along with Denmark, the highest observed score of 9.3, on a scale ranging from 0 (‘highly corrupt’) to 10 (‘absolutely clean from corruption’).

H2: Given *H1*, the decrease in political trust among immigrants from countries marked by high corruption is explained by experiences of discrimination in Sweden.

Our hypotheses are supported, should we find that (A) corruption experience has a positive effect on political trust, (B) there is simultaneously a negative effect of the interaction between corruption experience and length of residence in Sweden, and (C) this interaction effect is explained by variations with respect to experiences of discrimination.

Preparing for empirical scrutiny, we translate our theoretical scaffolding (with respect to *H1*), into the following analytical model:

$$\textit{Political trust} = f(\textit{Corruption experience}, \textit{Time}, \textit{Corruption experience} \times \textit{Time})$$

In order to explain the assumed interaction effect (with respect to *H2*), we also fit the following, more complete, model:

$$\textit{Political trust} = f(\textit{Corruption experience}, \textit{Time}, \textit{Corruption experience} \times \textit{Time}, \textit{Discrimination})$$

Data and measures

In the empirical analyses, we rely on the large-scale *Swedish Citizen Survey 2003* (“Medborgarundersökningen 2003”). This survey employed face-to-face interviews with a stratified random sample of inhabitants in Sweden (age 18 and over). It consists of a large over-sample of immigrants (originally selected on the basis of official registry data). The total sample includes 2,138 respondents of which 858 have immigrated to Sweden.⁴ The Swedish Citizen Survey 2003 is particularly useful for the purpose of our study, while it, aside from including questions on confidence in different political institutions in Sweden, also contains numerous questions on immigration-specific experiences and life circumstances.

Given that our hypotheses are based on the assumption that immigrants (more or less consciously) compare the performance of political systems, we chose to exclude persons who migrated during childhood from the analysis, as they hardly could have developed any well considered opinions about the political institutions in their country of origin. Hence, the empirical analysis is based only on respondents who had reached the age of 15 when they migrated to Sweden, assuming that persons of this age have had chances to form at least some experience based views of their (former) political system. The chosen cut point is of course somewhat arbitrary. However, we have also experimented with other restrictions (thus setting the “qualification” age of immigration above as well as below 15 years), but results tend to be very similar to those reported below.

Though following conventional approaches, we measure our dependent variable, *political trust*, quite comprehensively through each respondent’s stated confidence in no less than eight institutions: the *parliament*, the *courts*, the *police*, *politicians* (explicitly expressed in this, very general, sense), *political parties* (again, generally expressed), the *municipal board* (“kommunstyrelsen”), the *civil service*, and the *national government* (“regeringen”).⁵ All assessments were made using a scale from 0–10, where higher values represent more trust. We summarized respondent answers in an additive index variable of overall political trust, which finally was re-

⁴ The Swedish Citizen Survey 2003 employed a complex sampling scheme, increasing the selection probability for refugees and for immigrants from developing countries, while under-representing immigrants from Nordic and Western European countries. At the same time, the design allows for necessary adjustments to produce representative samples of the total population, the native population and the population of immigrants, respectively.

⁵ The political trust items were identically introduced, as follows: “I will now read out the names of various institutions such as the police, the government, the civil service, etc. Please tell me how much confidence you have in each of these institutions”.

scaled so that the minimum value on the dependent variable is 0 (for a respondent expressing minimum trust across all institutions) and the theoretical maximum is 1 (for a respondent expressing complete trust, no matter which institutional sphere).⁶

To evaluate the potential importance of experiences from other political systems, we utilize the *Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)*, developed by Transparency International (2008). Published annually since 1995, this index is widely regarded as the most ambitious and reliable source of information on worldwide differences in corruption (Anderson and Tverdova, 2005, pp.95–96; cf. Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). We take advantage of this measure by matching CPI data for all countries of origin mentioned by the immigrated respondents in the Swedish Citizen Survey 2003. Thus, for each person in our data having a background in another country, the information is completed with a contextual measure on the corruption level of the country in question.⁷ The CPI is originally expressed on a continuous 0–10 scale, where higher values indicate *less* corruption. To facilitate interpretation in this study, however, we reversed the measure, thus letting the CPI range from lowest perceived corruption level to highest perceived corruption level (i.e. from “good to “bad”). Additionally, we recode the reversed 0–10 index to a (still continuous) 0–1 variable, analogous to the scale of our political trust variable.

Discrimination is coded 1 for respondents who reported that they (“during the past 12 months”) had been badly treated because of their foreign background, and 0 for those who did not report any such experiences of discrimination. This question was specified by explicit reference to each of the following contexts and situations: when looking for a dwelling; in other housing-related contacts; when looking for work; in other work-related contacts; in contacts regarding

⁶ The construction of the political trust index is supported by dimensional analyses. A principal component analysis reveals that only one factor survives the Kaiser criterion (i.e., has an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0). The single retained factor explains 61 percent of the variance in the eight variables, with an Eigenvalue of 4.9. Furthermore, we have replicated all analyses treating each of the eight measures of political trust as separate dependent variables. The results (not shown) generally tend to be very similar to those shown in table 1 and 2 below, although coefficients are not statistically significant in each single case.

⁷ We used the 2008 CPI scores (which, at time of analysis, constituted the most recent figures) although ideally, the scores should be “time matched” as well. That is, in the best case scenario, we should be able to include the CPI score for Country A at the time when the respondent actually migrated from A. However, due to data shortage (CPI is a rather novel index) this is not possible. To the benefit of the study, it should be mentioned that the world wide pattern of corruption levels tend to be very similar across evaluations over time. For instance, we found the rank correlation to be a respectable 0.95 between the CPI evaluations from 1996 and 2008 (using all 54 countries included in both surveys). Thus, the measure we use may still be regarded as a reasonable proxy, at least tapping present and past *relative* variations in country corruption levels.

studies; in contacts regarding medical services; in contacts as a parent of a school child; in contacts with other public authorities (e.g., the tax office, the social security office, or the police); when visiting a restaurant, dancehall or a sports event; when buying or hiring something as a private customer; during encounters in the street or in public transport; in contacts within another context than those mentioned.

We also add a set of basic control variables to the statistical models: *Female* is coded 1 for women and 0 for men; *Age* is the respondent's age at the year of the interview; and *Education* measures the number of years spent in combined full-time schooling and occupational training (the measure refers to education accomplished outside of Sweden, since we primarily wanted to obtain controls for as genuine background variables as possible).⁸

Empirical findings

In a series of regression analyses, we carry out systematic tests of our hypotheses. Table 1 summarizes the main results with respect to H1. In this table, Model 1 considers the pure additive effects of previous corruption experiences, taking into account only the set of control variables. In support of our first hypothesis, the statistically significant and positive regression coefficient of the CPI variable suggests that immigrants from more corruption plagued countries tend to score higher on the political trust index. That is, they generally tend to have more confidence in Swedish political institutions, taking into account demographic and educational differences. In substantial terms, the analysis suggests that the effect translates into a maximum difference of about 10 percentage points higher political trust. Thus, all else being equal, an immigrant from a country with high corruption is expected to trust the political institutions significantly more than an immigrant with a background in a country on a par with Sweden in terms of corruption level. Although age seems to make a slight difference, the control factors overall proved to be virtually unimportant (in fact excluding them all, the CPI coefficient would still remain approximately the same).

⁸ We have replicated all analyses using an alternative measure on education, capturing the total number of years in schooling regardless of whether it took place in Sweden or in another country. The results (not shown) are very similar to those shown in table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Predicting political trust by corruption experience (CPI) and years in Sweden, controlling for other explanatory factors (OLS regression)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
CPI	0.101*** (0.032)	0.054 (0.035)	0.187*** (0.063)	0.214*** (0.063)
Years in Sweden		-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
CPI × Years in Sweden			-0.006** (0.002)	-0.007*** (0.002)
Discrimination				-0.079*** (0.021)
Female	-0.013 (0.016)	-0.016 (0.016)	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.016)
Age	0.009** (0.004)	0.011*** (0.004)	0.013*** (0.004)	0.013*** (0.004)
Age squared	-0.00009** (0.000)	-0.00009** (0.000)	-0.00012*** (0.000)	-0.00012*** (0.000)
Education	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
Constant	0.357*** (0.102)	0.380*** (0.101)	0.257** (0.112)	0.283** (0.111)
R^2	0.049	0.066	0.075	0.099
N (weighted cases)	516	516	516	516

Statistical significance: *** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Note: Entries are un-standardized regression coefficients (ordinary least-squares estimates) with standard errors in parentheses. The sample is weighted to be representative of foreign born people living in Sweden. The analyses only include those who were 15 years or older upon immigrating to Sweden. The dependent variable *political trust* is a continuous scale running from 0 (very low trust) to 1 (very high trust). *CPI* is the Corruptions Perceptions Index, rescaled to run from 0 (very low levels of corruption) to 1 (very high levels of corruption). See the main text for a description, including information on coding, of the other independent variables. See appendix for descriptive statistics.

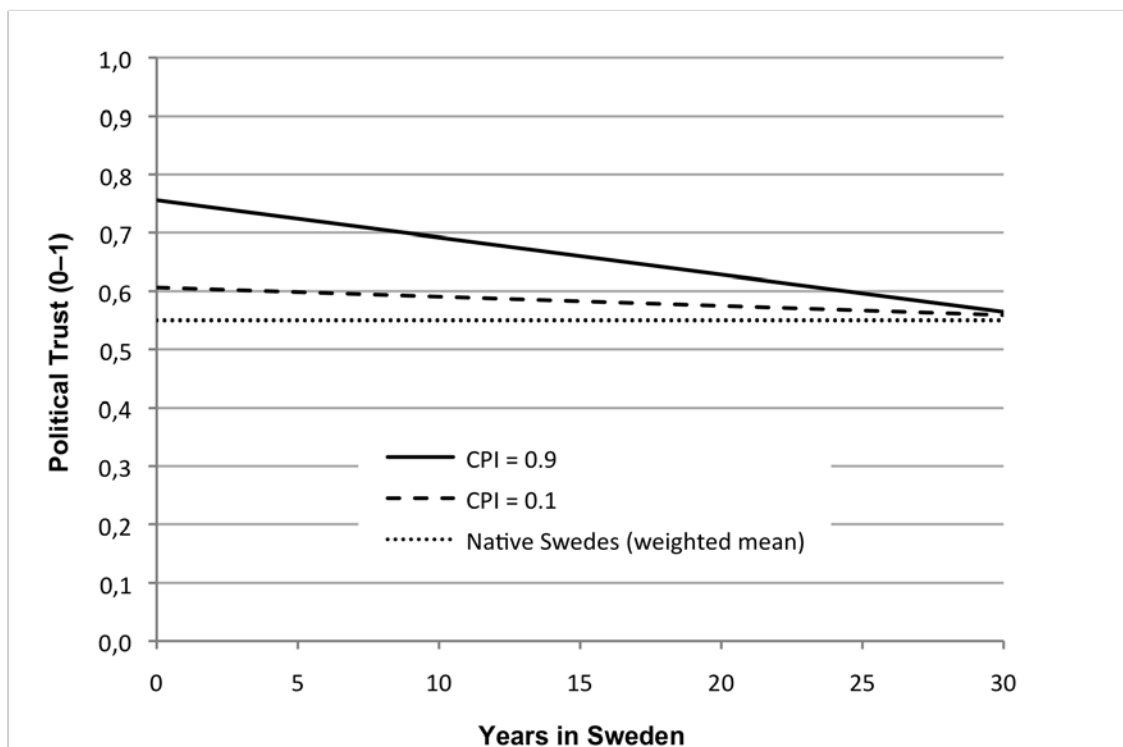
Primarily for the sake of transparency, we include the important time factor in two separate steps. Model 2 is expanded with the measure on length of residence in Sweden, but disregarding possible interaction effects. The number of years since immigration at first seems to be associat-

ed with decreasing trust as this variable shows a statistically significant and negative effect. Moreover, including the time factor reduces the corruption experience effect to about half of its size leaving it statistically insignificant; a result suggesting that immigrants from countries with high corruption tend to have spent a shorter period of time in Sweden.⁹ Yet, although mean length of residence differs among immigrants from different parts of the world, the estimation of Model 3 elicits a more complete picture. This analysis also considers the interaction effect between corruption experience and length of residence, whereby the positive effect of corruption experience on political trust is strongest among recently arrived immigrants.¹⁰ And continuing the support of H1, the result suggests that the positive effect of corruption experiences decreases with number of years spent in Sweden (as we find a significant negative interaction effect).

⁹ This is also confirmed by an analysis with years in Sweden as the dependent variable. Controlling for gender, age, and education, there is a statistically significant negative effect of CPI on years spent in Sweden.

¹⁰ At the same time, one should note that the pure additive time effect becomes insignificant once the interaction is accounted for. Hence, in line with our theoretical reasoning length of residence does not affect political trust among immigrants from countries with very low levels of corruption.

Figure 1. Graph illustrating the interaction effect of years in Sweden and level of corruption in the country of origin on political trust (0–1). Regression-based predicted levels are based on a hypothetical male immigrant from either a high corruption (CPI = 0.9) or a low corruption (CPI = 0.1) country, (all control variables, aside from gender, are set to their means). The mean level of political trust among native Swedes provides a reference line



The results in model 3 are further illustrated by Figure 1, displaying predicted levels of political trust given the length of residence in Sweden, and taking into account that immigrants from different countries are not equally affected. We clearly notice how the time factor seems to be much more important for some categories of immigrants than for others. For the solid line, we calculated predicted values for a hypothetical immigrant from a high-corruption country (CPI = 0.9), while the dashed line depicts the situation for a hypothetical immigrant from a more Sweden-like country (CPI = 0.1). Although no other parameter is allowed to vary, the differences are obvious. The positive effects of experiences of corruption are observed among immigrants with a relatively short length of residence (reading the graph vertically, at a point closer to zero on the x-axis). Simultaneously, we notice that the dashed line is considerably flatter, due to the interaction between previous corruption experiences and time spent in Sweden. Hence, the time-

related decrease in political trust is much more significant for immigrants in Sweden coming from corrupt regimes. At first, they may regard the political institutions in their new country as admirably trustworthy (in comparison with other immigrants as well as with native Swedes; note that the dotted line in the graph represents the mean political trust level in the latter category). Over time, though, they seem to reconsider their initially bright view, ending up with considerably more moderate, and—as suggested by the graph—more host-country typical, levels of political trust.

Returning to the estimations reported in Table 1, Model 4 represents a test of our second hypothesis, according to which political trust decreases over time as a result of experiences of discrimination. In line with reasonable expectations, discrimination has in itself a negative and significant effect on political trust. Immigrants who report being victims of discriminatory behaviour of some kind tend to have less confidence in Swedish political institutions. In contrast to H2, however, the inclusion of this variable does not reduce the interaction effect of corruption experiences and length of residence at all. Thus, although experiencing discrimination is associated with lower levels of political trust, inter-category variation in this respect does not explain the specific “time effect” among immigrants who are no longer newcomers in Sweden.¹¹

¹¹ Further analyses (not shown) prove the reason, in analytical model terms, to be that the interaction effect of corruption experiences and length of residence on discrimination is too weak (interaction effect is very close to 0 and not statistically significant). We have also undertaken analyses with a discrimination index variable based on items only referring to perceived discrimination in relation to *government* institutions (i.e. disregarding other public or economic spheres). The results tend to be very similar to those reported here.

Table 2. Predicting political trust by corruption experience (CPI) and years in Sweden, controlling for satisfaction with democracy and external efficacy (OLS regression)

	Model 1	Model 2
CPI	0.226*** (0.061)	0.097* (0.053)
Years in Sweden	-0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
CPI × Years in Sweden	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Discrimination	-0.072*** (0.020)	-0.036** (0.017)
Internal efficacy	0.241*** (0.045)	-0.018 (0.044)
Satisfaction with democracy		0.339*** (0.035)
External efficacy		0.284*** (0.041)
Female	-0.024 (0.016)	-0.011 (0.013)
Age	0.014*** (0.004)	0.013*** (0.003)
Age squared	-0.00012*** (0.000)	-0.00012*** (0.000)
Education	-0.004* (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Constant	0.170 (0.110)	-0.152 (0.098)
R^2	0.146	0.378
N (weighted cases)	516	516

Statistical significance: *** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Note: See note to Table 1.

Next, we put H2 through a somewhat more generous test. In this case, we consider the possibility that an attitudinal change related to discrimination does not necessarily have to involve one's own experiences. It may suffice that one observes people similar to oneself (such as other immigrants from the same country, or even from the same part of the world) being treated worse than others, and/or having fewer possibilities to affect their situation as well as societal conditions (cf. Maxwell, 2010b, p.91). In Model 1 of Table 2, we therefore consider also variations in terms of internal political efficacy, i.e. the extent to which one believes that people like oneself could have a say in politics.¹² However, even though this variable (quite reasonably) has a positive and significant effect on political trust, it does not have any impact at all on the interaction effect of corruption experiences and length of residence. Thus, the more extensive test of H2 does not lend it any empirical support either.

True, the measuring of experiences of discrimination of course has its difficulties. It is not hard to imagine that a specific type of situation may be interpreted as an experience of "being badly treated because of one's foreign background" by one individual but not by another. Still, we contend that the measure used here is rather ambitious, specifying no less than 12 different contexts/situations in which discrimination may occur. Respondents were in this case assisted in picturing a somewhat clearer image of what a discriminatory situation may be (at least in comparison with a general question on experiences of discrimination). Hence, we believe that the results are credible, and that the lack of support for H2 is not due to a methodological flaw. The decrease in political trust among immigrants from countries marked by high corruption does not seem possible to explain by experiences of discrimination in Sweden.

The obvious follow-up question is what may then explain the decrease in trust? Case studies, focusing on Latino immigrants in the USA and Muslim immigrants in the UK, suggest that immigrants are often very positive towards their new political institutions, not least due to the "psychological investment" mentioned above (Waters, 1999; Michelson, 2003; Escobar, 2006; Maxwell, 2010b). Over time though, they become more sensitive to experiences and perceptions

¹² Internal political efficacy is analysed with an additive index based on three interview questions concerning the possibilities (1) to make one's opinions known to politicians, (2) to make politicians take account of one's opinions, and (3) to obtain redress if one is treated wrongly by an authority. For all three questions, respondents were asked to indicate their opinions using a scale from 0 ("much smaller opportunity than others") to 10 ("much greater opportunity than others"). We imputed missing values by assigning a value if a respondent answered at least two of the three questions. The final index variable is rescaled to run from 0–1 (higher values indicating a higher sense of internal political efficacy).

of how institutions work in practice, resulting in less optimism and, eventually, in a decline of political trust. As we concluded this is not driven by experiences of discrimination, at least not in Sweden, the pattern must be explained by some other cognitive process.

One possibility is that initially high-trusting immigrants over time start perceiving institutions as far from perfect when it comes to their performance in relation to people in general, i.e. native Swedes as well as other immigrants. Such an impression may still be based on one's own experiences, as well as on information obtained from others and from mass media. We try to capture possible variations in this respect indirectly, by including two potentially important variables: satisfaction with democracy and external political efficacy. Both these variables describe how individuals assess the overall possibilities of political influence in a democracy, and their respective positive associations with political trust have been demonstrated in previous research (e.g. Mishler and Rose, 2001; Lawrence, 1997).

Model 2 is augmented with measures of satisfaction with democracy and external political efficacy available in the Swedish Citizen Survey 2003.¹³ And we note that the estimation in this case indeed reveals a different picture. Simultaneously incorporating satisfaction with democracy and external political efficacy, the interaction effect in focus of this study is drastically reduced and no longer statistically significant. Furthermore, expected positive effects are found for both newly introduced variables.¹⁴ Substantially, this result tells us that initially high-trusting immigrants over time tend to be less satisfied (yet not necessarily displeased in an abso-

¹³ Satisfaction with democracy is based on the question "Are you generally very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Sweden? The original variable was recoded into a 4-point scale from 0 ("not at all satisfied") to 1 ("very satisfied"). External political efficacy is measured with an additive index based on three interview questions concerning (1) ordinary people's possibilities to present their opinions to politicians, (2) the weight politicians attach to opinions presented to them by ordinary people, and (3) the possibilities to obtain redress for someone who has been wrongly treated by an authority. For all three questions, respondents indicated their opinions using a scale from 0 ("none at all") to 10 ("very large"). We imputed missing values by assigning a value if a respondent answered at least two of the three questions. The final index variable is rescaled to run from 0–1 (higher values indicating more efficacy).

¹⁴ Further analyses (not shown) reveal that satisfaction with democracy and external political efficacy contribute to roughly the same extent (i.e., the interaction effect would be less reduced and still statistically significant, should only one of the factors be included). It is also worth mentioning that the interaction effect of corruption experience and length of residence is negative and statistically significant, in models where satisfaction with democracy and external efficacy respectively are dependent variables (controlling for background factors).

lute sense) with Swedish democracy and the responsiveness of the political system.¹⁵ Developing such more critical standpoints may quite plausibly go hand in hand with diminishing political trust. The causal ordering of variables arguably remains an open question given the cross-section data at hand. But still, our results confirm that the recently introduced explanatory variables, satisfaction with democracy and external political efficacy, perform differently in the analysis in comparison with experiences of discrimination and internal political efficacy.¹⁶ As an additional analytic control (results not shown), we also examined the results reported in Table 2 by means of multi-level modelling techniques. Fitting a random intercept model, in which country of origin was specified as the level-2 variable (rendering 87 unique contexts, with an average representation of 5.6 respondents), essentially provides the same answers as the OLS analysis. True, in this additional analysis the interaction effect proved to be significant ($p < 0.10$) also in the final model (i.e. corresponding to Model 2 in Table 2). However, it should be noted that in this case, the complexity of the survey design (involving unequal sampling probabilities for different categories of immigrant respondents) is not taken into account.

The quite sensible results notwithstanding, causal effects in both directions seem likely. To be fair, in absence of panel data it is hardly possible to draw firm conclusions on the relationships between the suggested mechanisms and political trust. It may very well be that external efficacy and satisfaction with democracy partly explain the time-related reduction in political trust among certain groups of immigrants, but perhaps not to the extent suggested by Table 2. Yet, in an extensive series of further estimations, we examined the impact of the following set of potentially confounding factors: various indicators of socioeconomic status at the time of the interview, political interest, political discussion, political knowledge, party identification, political preferences (left vs. right), civic virtues, social trust, involvement in voluntary associations, tolerance, political recruitment, civic skills, Swedish language skills, media consumption, citizenship (Swedish vs. non-Swedish), and reasons for immigration (refugee vs. other reasons). We

¹⁵ Moreover, in model 2 where satisfaction with democracy and external efficacy are also controlled for, the effect of internal efficacy is no longer statistically significant and the effect of discrimination is reduced to about half of its size. This result strengthens the conclusion that internal efficacy and discrimination do not function as causal mechanisms in this context.

¹⁶ Further analyses (not shown) reveal that the overall conclusions are not changed if controls are made for which part of the world one has migrated from. In this case, we categorised immigrants into the three group of “West” (Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand), “East” (Eastern Europe and Russia), and “South” (Africa, Asia, including the Middle East, and Latin America). This trichotomy is admittedly crude, but following Myrberg (2007) it is nonetheless theoretically and empirically motivated, at least in the Swedish context.

moreover analysed the effects of various indicators on relations to the welfare state, subjective feelings of integration in the Swedish society, and community attachment (on several levels). Noteworthy, however, none of these factors contribute to explain the interaction effect in any way similar to satisfaction with democracy and external efficacy. Hence, concluding that immigrants in Sweden evaluate political institutions on the basis of general, rather than group-specific, impressions of performance seems reasonable.

Concluding discussion

A democratic system is hardly considered as legitimate if citizens do not have at least some confidence in their political institutions. Therefore, it is not surprising that inter-country differences (or, similarly, time series evaluations of single country differences) have attracted much scholarly attention. In this paper, however, we have highlighted *intra*-country differences in political trust, by analysing trust levels among immigrants with potentially different institutional experiences. The approach constitutes somewhat of a ‘quasi-experiment’, as international migration provides a basis for the comparisons of institutional performance among a large group of residents. We started out with the assumption that migrants make system level comparisons, based on their past and present experiences of the quality of government; while for non-migrants, the institutional evaluation is assumed to be purely theoretically derived.

Immigrants in Sweden come from all parts of the world, and hence their expectations concerning the Swedish political system are likely to differ. A possible objection to our theoretical reasoning is that attitudes such as political trust are primarily developed early in life as a part of an individual’s political socialization, and therefore are resistant to changes in institutional conditions (Bueker, 2005). However, our findings in this study clearly support the opposite view, according to which people in this regard are able to “re-learn”. Specifically, the results in this paper suggest that variations in *expected* system performance are consequential, as immigrants from countries more plagued by corruption initially place higher trust in Swedish institutions. This, we argue, is because they have a very different system to compare with, unlike either the majority population or immigrants from countries with low—and hence more Swedish-like—levels of corruption.

Further, our results confirmed that an initially bright view of Swedish institutions tend to be less bright over time, as immigrants from countries of high corruption develop more critical viewpoints of the state of affairs in Sweden. We expected this change to be explained by experiences

of discrimination but, surprisingly, the analyses did not provide any support for this hypothesis. We put forward an alternative explanation, according to which immigrants' perceptions of institutional performance is likely to concern all kinds of people rather than being restricted to purely subjective, or group-specific, experiences. Given this line of thought, the former high-trusting immigrant over time develops the impression that political institutions habitually, although impartially, fail to live up to initially high expectations. As a consequence, political trust decreases. The data at hand does not permit a full-fledged test of this competing explanation, but at the very least we consider the indirect support it has received in this study as a good qualification for further research on how the time-related trust decrease should be explained.

In what may at first seem as a disappointing result, migrants from countries with poorly functioning institutions, or outright authoritarian regimes, tend to become more distrustful with increasing length of residence in Sweden. However, a reduction in levels of political trust does not necessarily mean that Utopia has become Dystopia in the eyes of these immigrants. Rather it is possible that they, after a number of years in Sweden, develop a more realistic view of governmental authorities and political elites. From a democratic point of view, a certain amount of political distrust is clearly warranted, and a politically engaged citizenry is probably not the most contented one (e.g. de Vreese, 2005). The attitudinal change, observed in this study, would then be possible to interpret as a sign of increasing political integration.¹⁷ Such an interpretation may also be regarded as defensible in the light of our finding that the decrease in trust does not seem to be a consequence of discrimination.

In any case, we hope that our contribution may stimulate further explorations on political trust along the routes suggested in this paper. More research should preferably be conducted on how perceptions and expectations affect the evaluation of political institutions. Similarly, we encourage further development of theories concerning system level comparisons. Moreover, future studies should ideally involve more countries, and thus several types of democratic regimes (for an effort in this direction, see Strömblad and Adman, 2010). It would be interesting to explore if our findings based on the Swedish case are replicable in other parts of Europe, where it is arguably harder to maintain a good reputation for legislative, executive and judicial institutions.

¹⁷ Our expectation resembles a finding in previous research on immigrants in Sweden, where it is concluded that the longer time an immigrant has lived in Sweden the more political active this person is (Adman and Strömblad, 2000, p.22–25). For further studies indicating that integration tend to increase with time, see Perlmann and Waldinger, 1997; Alba and Nee, 2003.

Studying perceptions of different immigrant groups in different countries, utopian as well as dystopian perspectives on political trust may be more carefully scrutinized.

Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
CPI	0.42	0.28	0.07	0.90
Years in Sweden	23.79	14.54	2.23	60.08
CPI × Years in Sweden	7.72	6.10	0.44	40.11
Discrimination	0.20	0.40	0.00	1.00
Internal efficacy	0.47	0.18	0.00	1.00
Satisfaction with democracy	0.69	0.22	0.00	1.00
External efficacy	0.48	0.20	0.00	1.00
Female	0.54	0.50	0	1
Age	50.36	14.05	21	81
Education	11.66	3.78	0	25

Note: The sample is weighted to be representative of foreign born people living in Sweden. The figures refer only to those who were 15 years or older upon immigrating to Sweden.

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