

POLITICAL TRUST AS MODEST EXPECTATIONS

Exploring Immigrants' Falling Confidence in Swedish Political Institutions

Abstract

Political trust among immigrants in Western Europe seems to be surprisingly high, especially among immigrants from non-democratic countries with institutions plagued by corruption. Over time, however, trust tends to diminish among these individuals. In this paper we argue that this may neither be explained by acculturation nor by experiences of discrimination. Analysing Swedish survey data we instead conclude, although tentatively, that falling expectations regarding the performance of host country institutions is a fruitful explanation. Such expectations presumably become more modest the longer one has been living in Sweden, causing a time-related drop in the overall confidence in Swedish political institutions.

Keywords

Political trust • expectations • migration • corruption • discrimination

Received 20 December 2013; Accepted 15 February 2015

Introduction

Is trust in the political institutions of a democracy a matter of to what extent expectations are fulfilled? Recent studies report comparatively high levels of political trust – the overall confidence in political institutions and politicians – among immigrants in Western Europe (Maxwell 2010; Strömblad & Adman 2010; Röder & Mühlau 2012a). Notably, such confidence tends to be particularly pronounced among those who have migrated from countries without democratic institutions and/or having poor records in terms of corruption level. Such findings may to some extent decrease pessimism concerning political integration, given that a number of studies have suggested that immigrants in Western Europe tend to be less active in politics and to believe that they have less political influence than native citizens (Adman & Strömblad 2000; Fennema & Tillie 2001; González-Ferrer 2011). Even though such political involvement is weak, this does not seem to go hand in hand with a general lack of political trust.

It may very well be that high expectations of political institutions in the new country have been fulfilled for large groups of immigrants. Importantly, however, the observed high confidence levels do not tend to persist. Political trust seems to decline with length of residence among immigrants in the host country (Maxwell 2010; Strömblad & Adman 2010; Röder & Mühlau 2011, 2012a). Taking explicit account of the important dynamic aspects of political trust, this paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge of immigrants' evaluations of institutional performance. Arguing that previous studies do not present a thorough answer to the crucial question of why a decline in political trust among immigrants is observed, we

Per Adman^{1*}, Per Strömblad²

¹Department of Government, Uppsala University, Sweden

²Department of Political Science, Linnaeus University, Sweden

make an effort to further assess explanations suggested earlier. To this end, we utilise survey data, which, although restricted to one country (Sweden), arguably permit more exhaustive measures than in earlier studies.

Previous research provides three plausible explanations of why political trust among immigrants may decline over time (Maxwell 2010; Strömblad & Adman 2010; Röder & Mühlau 2011, 2012a). According to the first one, the reason may be 'acculturation'; that is, with increasing number of years in the new country, immigrants gradually develop attitudes and behavioural patterns more similar to the ones of the native majority. Another suggested explanation concerns 'experiences of discrimination' and their presumably negative effect on political attitudes such as trust. Finally, it has also been suggested that 'altering expectations' may explain a decline in political trust. The idea is then that hopes initially are high (or even 'naïve'), when it comes to the performance of political institutions in the new country. However, with increasing experiences of how these institutions actually work, immigrants tend to become more critical and therefore less politically trusting.

On closer look, the proposed explanations suggest quite different implications for the evaluation of actual conditions for political integration. While both acculturation and an (essentially 'healthy') altering of expectations provide room for optimism in this respect, the opposite is true if it is rather discrimination that explains why immigrants are becoming less politically trustful over time. Interestingly, previous studies have primarily provided empirical

* E-mail: Per.Adman@statsvet.uu.se, per.stromblad@lnu.se

support for the expectations explanation (Maxwell 2010; Röder & Mühlau 2012a). We argue, however, that the hitherto accumulation of evidence is far from sufficient.

First, tests have solely been conducted on a general European level. It is fully possible that contextual differences between countries, particularly when it comes to integration policies and ambition in terms of political inclusion, are important and thus may affect the relative value of explanations in different parts of Europe. The present study is focused on Sweden, which may be regarded as a particularly interesting case in the light of the discrimination explanation, given this country's quite unique combination of, on the one hand, ambitious multicultural policies and favourable *opportunities* for immigrants to participate in society (Migration Policy Group 2011; cf. Borevi 2010) and, on the other hand, comparatively poor *outcomes* for immigrants in terms of unemployment and segregation (OECD 2012; cf. Koopmans 2010).

Second, as we discuss extensively below, the measures both of acculturation and of discrimination utilised in previous studies may fail to cover all the important aspects. Hence, scholars may tend to underestimate the potential fruitfulness of these explanations, in favour of the one focusing on altering expectations.

Aiming to improve accuracy, the analyses reported in this paper rely on data from the large-scale Swedish Citizen Survey 2003. This survey, based on a large over-sample of immigrants in Sweden, was designed to capture numerous aspects of social and political involvement. Aside from providing comprehensive relevant information on immigrants' life circumstances, the survey data also include measures on acculturation and discrimination that are better suited, compared to data used in previous research, for a simultaneous evaluation of the different explanations of decreasing political trust.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the following sections, we further discuss previous research and elaborate hypotheses. Then, we present the data in more detail along with the measures utilised in our own analyses, followed by a section presenting our empirical findings. In the final section, we conclude the study and discuss some implications for further research.

Empirical findings in previous research

Reviewing previous research in the field, one notices a set of consistent findings. Maxwell (2010) shows that the levels of trust in parliament and satisfaction with national government are generally higher among immigrants than among native-origin individuals in Europe. Furthermore, immigrants from less democratic countries tend to express higher levels of political trust in their new countries of residence. According to Röder and Mühlau (2011), natives and immigrants in Europe seem to have about the same level of confidence in public institutions, in spite of some evidence of that the discrimination of members of the latter group has a negative impact on their trust. Both these studies also conclude that political trust among 'second generation' migrants (i.e., native born descendants of immigrants) is lower than among those who themselves have immigrated. In a subsequent study, Röder & Mühlau (2012a) find highly similar patterns and furthermore argue that differences in the 'quality of governance' between the host country and the country of origin explain the generally higher trust levels among the 'first generation' migrants.

Focusing on Scandinavia, Strömblad and Adman (2010) find that the levels of political trust are generally higher among immigrants

than among native-born citizens in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In harmony with the findings of Röder and Mühlau (2012a), they note that immigrants from countries more plagued by corruption tend to express higher levels of political trust than other immigrants. Moreover, also in this case, trust within the first mentioned category decreases gradually with the number of years in the new country (where they tend to end up at about the same level as native-born citizens).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the generality of these findings seems to extend outside of Europe. Similar results are reported in studies concerning Latin American immigrants; in this particular category, those who had migrated to the USA tend to report higher political trust than members of the white majority population (Michelson 2003; Weaver 2003; Wenzel 2006).

What remains to be explained, however, is why initially high levels of political trust among immigrants tend to decline over time, in particular among immigrants from non-democratic countries where corruption is widespread.

Acculturation and discrimination as explanations

Expanding upon prior scholarly work (Maxwell 2010; Strömblad & Adman 2010; Röder & Mühlau 2011, 2012a), we seek to re-examine the three previously mentioned plausible hypotheses that may explain the decline in political trust. The first one is the *acculturation* hypothesis, referring to a cultural learning process, which is assumed to take place as an immigrant gradually experiences a new culture. Such a process may change her or his attitudes and patterns of behaviour (Gordon 1964); this could include learning a new language and adopting manners and social rituals. This development may reasonably be expected to start – albeit, of course, at a various pace for different persons – as soon as an immigrant arrives in a new country. Although highly intangible processes of adaptation often may occur unintentionally, rather than as a consequence of rational calculation, individuals may also intentionally choose to gain knowledge of the lifestyle of a group she or he wishes to reach the same status as (Gans 2007; cf. Hyman 1960). The question of potential influences of 'cultural differences' in this respect is old (e.g. Gordon 1964), yet hard to resolve in any meaningful way (cf. Waldinger & Feliciano 2004). Several scholars have pointed out that the cultures of immigrants may also affect the majority culture of the new country; therefore, it is argued, acculturation is more properly defined as a process through which cultural differences become less pronounced (Alba & Nee 1997, 2003). Indeed, it seems likely that the majority culture in Sweden is continuously affected by the cultures of immigrants (cf. Dijkstra, Geuijen & de Ruijter 2001). At the same time, it is fair to say that a 'majority culture' does exist on some minimum level, considering not least the totally dominating role of the Swedish language in social and political life in Sweden. Moreover, when learning the language, and picking up – or deliberately choosing to adapt to – cultural practices and widespread attitudes in the general population, it may be that opinions concerning political trust become a part of this acculturation. Hence, the acculturation hypothesis predicts that immigrants, over time, will develop a level of political trust that is more similar to the general opinion of the native population in this regard, and the most commonly used indicator of acculturation in this respect is language use and proficiency (e.g. Michelson 2003).

The second hypothesis concerns *discrimination*. According to this line of thought, a declining political trust is mainly due to factors that prevent immigrants' actual aspirations being realised to their full potential, particularly the presence of ethnic discrimination. Results from a number of studies suggest that discrimination indeed occurs in various interactions between immigrants and political and societal institutions; furthermore, being well educated does not preclude unfair treatment on the labour market (cf. Portes, Fernández-Kelly & Haller 2005; Gans 2007; FRA 2009; Karlsson and Tahvilzadeh 2010). Such experiences may be generalised by victims of discriminatory behaviour and bring about negative spill-over effects when it comes to confidence in political institutions. A feeling of being neglected in the public debate of elected representatives, as well as by their political proposals, may quite obviously have detrimental consequences for political trust. However, even if rather the opposite should be true – as a result of, for instance, extensive integration policies in a country such as Sweden (e.g. Borevi 2010) – it is hardly a far-fetched idea that negative experiences from contacts with civil servants, or public sector workers, may negatively affect also a more general outlook of the fairness, or lack of fairness, when it comes to institutional performance in society (cf. Kumlin & Rothstein 2005; Kumlin 2004; Greenberg, Grunberg & Daniel 1996). Hence, political trust may decrease as a consequence not only of discrimination in contacts with strictly political institutions, but also due to perceptions of unfair treatment, for instance, as a consumer of health care or as a parent with children in a public school.

Their reasonableness notwithstanding, we contend that the two hypotheses remain to be satisfactorily tested. First, one may suspect that highly restricted measures of discrimination have been used. Maxwell (2010) as well as Röder and Mühlau (2011, 2012a) base their respective analyses on the European Social Survey (ESS), which includes a question on whether the respondent considers herself or himself as a member of a *group* that is discriminated against in the country, more precisely, on grounds of colour or race, nationality, religion, language, ethnic group membership, age, gender, sexuality, disability or other grounds (Röder & Mühlau 2011:543). Clearly, this measure may fail to capture *personal* experiences of discrimination, which reasonably should be important for individuals' system evaluations.

A somewhat analogous problem may also be detected in the previous test of the acculturation hypothesis. In this case, language skills have been measured by a survey question concerning whether one primarily speaks the new country's language at home, or a different language. Specifically, the item concerns whether the migrant mainly speaks a language at home, which is not an official language of the new country of residence. This measure is potentially flawed as well; obviously, an immigrant may be very skilful in the majority language of the new country and yet prefer to speak another language at home. As described in more detail in the following section, the present study makes use of survey data that, we argue, provide more satisfactory measures of both language skills and individual experiences of discrimination.

The expectations hypothesis

The third hypothesis takes its point of departure in changing *expectations*, the essential idea being that institutions in the new country are more critically evaluated over time, particularly by immigrants who initially had high expectations, due to experiences from poorly performing institutions in their countries of origin (cf. Reese

2001; Menjivar & Bejarano 2004). The underlying mechanism in this regard is assumed to be a 'dual frame of reference' (Suarez-Orozco 1987; see also Röder & Mühlau 2011, 2012a). As long as institutional experiences in the new country appear favourable, in comparison with corresponding experiences in the country of origin, an immigrant will end up with more positive evaluations than individuals having only a single (one-country) frame of reference. The larger the contrast in perceived institutional performance, the more pronounced differences in political trust might be expected. All else being equal, immigrants in established democracies are assumed to express higher political trust the more corrupt and undemocratic institutions they have experienced before migrating. Still, with increasing length of residence in the new home country, the original frame of reference becomes less salient, and evaluations of institutional performance will gradually become more critical. Consequently, political trust is thus expected to decrease over time, particularly among immigrants who initially had the highest expectations. Importantly, however, the more critical outlook is in this case not due to personal experiences of discrimination, rather, the quality of political institutions are judged by the perceived situation for people in general thus also being influenced by reports in mass media and the like. At the same time, altering expectations in this respect should also be conceptually distinguished from acculturation. For instance, it may be assumed that a 'less acculturated' immigrant can still pick up information on the performance and quality of Swedish institutions, from his or her own experiences as well as more indirectly from relatives and acquaintances.

Still, our analyses will inevitably generate an indirect assessment, rather than a genuine test, of the expectations hypothesis. The rich database we utilise notwithstanding contains no adequate measures of how multiple frames of reference (e.g. thus distinguishing personal experiences from perceptions of other people's experiences) potentially affect the evaluation of political institutions. Nevertheless, we argue that a more comprehensive examination of the other hypotheses than hitherto has been possible, will permit also a more informed judgement of the usefulness of the expectations hypothesis.

Moreover, we contend that the focus on a single country – as Sweden in the present study – is fully compatible with this ambition. Sweden has undoubtedly a reputation of being an immigration friendly welfare state and also a well-functioning democracy or, in the words of Eger (2010: 204): 'Sweden stands out as arguably *the* most egalitarian, humanitarian, and democratic country in the world' (emphasis in original).

With a tradition of ambitious multicultural policies, Sweden also ranked first among 31 developed countries in a comparison of integration policies and migrants' opportunities to participate in society using the 'Migrant Integration Policy Index' (Migration Policy Group 2011; cf. Borevi 2010). Hence, immigrants to Sweden may quite reasonably develop high expectations of the political institutions in the new country of residence.

At the same time, however, the distance between favourable opportunities in theory and actual possibilities in practice may be large. In spite of allegedly auspicious conditions, immigrants in several ways seem to be disadvantaged in the Swedish society, for instance, in terms of their position in the labour and housing markets (SCB 2013; OECD 2012; cf. Koopmans 2010). In the light of this arguably unique combination of favourable opportunities and poor outcomes for immigrants, we argue that Sweden constitutes an interesting critical case for further examination of the declining levels of political trust. In particular, the empirical setting permits us

to examine if a gradual development of more modest expectations of political institutions is explained by unanticipated obstacles among immigrants in society. As Sweden seems to be a country for which immigrants may get their hopes up very high, the harsh reality in this society may lead to a particularly strong dissonance between expectation and experiences, thus resulting in falling levels of political trust.

Data and measures

For our empirical analyses, we rely on the large-scale Swedish Citizen Survey 2003 (see Myrberg 2007, for details). 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 originally have immigrated to Sweden. 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. The empirical analysis is based only on respondents who had reached the age of 15 years when they migrated to Sweden, assuming that they have had chances to form at least some experience-based views of their (former) political system. The chosen cut point becomes in practice slightly arbitrary. However, we have also made use of 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 here.

As already indicated, the Swedish Citizen Survey 2003 is particularly useful for the purpose of our study, while aside from including questions on confidence in different political institutions in Sweden it also contains numerous questions on immigration-specific experiences and life circumstances.

Our dependent variable, political trust, is quite comprehensively measured 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*, the *civil service* and the *national government*. The 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'. All subjective assessments were made using a scale from 0 to 10, where higher values represent more trust. We summarised respondent answers in an additive index variable of overall political trust, which finally was rescaled 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). The construction of the political trust index is supported by a principal component analysis, by which only one factor survives the Kaiser criterion (Eigenvalue > 1.0). The single retained factor explains 61 per cent of the variance in the eight variables. Furthermore, we have replicated all analyses treating each of the eight measures of political trust as separate dependent variable. The results (not shown) generally tend to be very similar to those shown in table 1, although coefficients are not statistically significant in each single case.

To detect differences in expectations, due to experiences of institutional performance, we utilise the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), developed by Transparency International (2008). Published annually since 1995, the CPI is widely regarded as the most ambitious and reliable source of information on worldwide differences in corruption (Anderson & Tverdova 2003; cf. Rothstein & Uslaner 2005).¹

We take advantage of this measure by matching CPI data for all countries of origin reported by immigrated participants in the Swedish Citizen Survey 2003. Thus, for each of these respondents, the registered information is completed with a measure on the corruption level of the country in question. We used the 2008 CPI scores, 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 worldwide 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. To facilitate interpretation in our analyses, we reversed the original 0–10 CPI scale, thus letting the index range from 'good to bad', that is, from lowest perceived corruption level ('absolutely clean from corruption') to highest perceived corruption level ('highly corrupt'). Additionally, we recode the reversed 0–10 index to a (still continuous) 0–1 variable, analogous to the scale of our political trust variable.

Turning to the operationalisation of hypotheses that may explain falling levels of political trust, our measure of acculturation is, in line with previous research, focused on majority language use and proficiency. Here, however, the survey data allow us to construct an additive index variable, based on the following four questions answered by the *interviewer* after having conducted the interview with a respondent (thus aiming to document skills more objectively, compared to an optional 'self-evaluation' by each respondent): 'How would you assess the respondent's Swedish pronunciation?'; 'Apart from the question of accent, how would you assess the respondent's ability to express himself/herself orally in Swedish?'; 'How would you assess the respondent's ability to understand spoken Swedish?'; and finally, 'How would you assess the respondent's ability to understand written Swedish?'. All assessments were made using a scale ranging from 0 to 10, where higher values represent better Swedish language skills. The construction of a one-dimensional index is supported by a principal component analysis (details are available from the authors upon request). It should be mentioned that the survey interview involved showing each respondent many cards with written information (with the purpose to efficiently convey response options); hence, by the end of the interview, it is therefore likely that the interviewer had a good grip of the respondent's ability to understand also written Swedish.

Moving to our measure of discrimination, we include a variable coded 1 for respondents who reported that they ('during the past 12 months') themselves had been badly treated because of their foreign background and 0 for those who did not report any such experiences of discrimination. Although the survey response options were somewhat more nuanced [providing a 5-point scale of experiences of bad treatment 'because of (your) foreign background' during the last 12 months, from 'no' to 'yes, all the time'], we chose to code the

discrimination variable as a dummy because it is heavily skewed; few individuals report several experiences of discrimination. Still, analyses with a corresponding continuous variable reveal very similar results. Further, to make sure that possible discrimination effects do not differ, depending on whether the context is political in a more strict sense, all analyses have also been undertaken with a discrimination index based on items only referring to perceived discrimination in relation to government institutions (i.e., disregarding other non-political public or economic contexts). Even then, the results tend to be very similar to those reported. The question was further specified by explicit reference to a large number of contexts and situations, namely: when looking for a dwelling (or in other housing-related contacts); when looking for work (or in other work-related contacts); in contacts regarding 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.

Discrimination may be considered as a part of a wider conceptualisation of 'barriers to integration', referring to a set of factors that may prevent social and political inclusion in society, for example, weak labour market attachment (cf. Maxwell 2010). Here, we have chosen to focus primarily on experiences of discrimination, as we find that this is a reasonable core factor when considering potential barriers to integration. Further, as demonstrated in the tables below, the inclusion of education and income, as control variables in the models estimated, does not change the effects of the variables of main interest. Hence, to the extent that the socioeconomic factors also may function as proxies for 'other barriers' to integration, they should not confound the results of our analysis. It should also be mentioned that we have studied a range of other socioeconomically related outcome variables from a 'barriers to integration' perspective. Still, the results from these follow-up analyses suggest very similar effects of the variables of main interest in this study.

As already indicated, the expectations hypothesis has to be more indirectly operationalised. The following analyses take into account the potential interaction between experiences of country of origin institutional performance (i.e., as reflected in the CPI measure) and length of residence in Sweden. A statistically significant *negative* interaction effect would in this case suggest that initially high levels of political trust (that is, among fairly recently arrived immigrants from countries more plagued by corruption) attenuate over time. If such an effect remains after accounting (as rigorously as possible) for acculturation and discrimination, this result may be interpreted as an indirect support of the expectations hypothesis. Holding constant the development of competences such as majority language proficiency as well as possible experiences of discrimination, a gradual decline in political trust may reasonably be due to that dual frames of references influence expectations, and thus also evaluations of political institutions in Sweden (for a similar approach, see Röder & Mühlau 2012a).

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; *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 wanted to obtain controls for pre-immigration experiences). We have replicated all analyses using an alternative measure on education capturing the total number of years

of schooling, regardless of where (in Sweden or in another country) it is done. The results (not shown) are very similar to those reported in the tables. *Income*, finally, is measured by including registry data information on each respondent's disposable household income.

Empirical tests and results

In a series of regression analyses, we carry out systematic tests of the proposed hypotheses. Studying the results displayed in Table 1, we first consider the pure additive effects of different experiences of institutional performance, as indicated by the country of origin corruption level, taking into account only the set of control variables (i.e., Model 1 in the table). Perfectly in line with previous findings, the statistically significant and positive regression coefficient of the

Table 1. Predicting political trust by corruption experience and length of residence in Sweden, controlling for other explanatory factors.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
CPI	0.120** (0.049)	0.072 (0.051)	0.202*** (0.075)
Years in Sweden		-0.004** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
CPI × Years in Sweden			-0.006*** (0.002)
Female	-0.006 (0.015)	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.010 (0.015)
Age	0.006 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.010** (0.004)
Age squared	-0.00007 (0.00004)	-0.00005 (0.00004)	-0.00008** (0.00004)
Education	-0.00002 (0.00251)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Income (log)	0.012 (0.010)	0.016* (0.009)	0.015* (0.009)
Constant	0.312*** (0.107)	0.324*** (0.109)	0.201* (0.111)
R ²	0.06	0.08	0.09
N	538	538	538

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

Note: Entries are ordinary least-squares estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for cluster correlation within 89 countries of origin), and based on a sample weighted to be representative of foreign-born people living in Sweden. The analyses include only respondents 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, indicating corruption experiences in the country of origin among (adult) immigrants in Sweden; the measure is rescaled to run from 0 (very low levels of corruption) to 1 (very high levels of corruption). See Table A1 in appendix for descriptive statistics.

CPI variable suggests that immigrants from more corruption plagued countries tend to score higher on the political trust index in Sweden. That is, they generally tend to have more confidence in Swedish political institutions compared to immigrants from countries with less corruption, taking into account demographic and educational differences (in further tests, we also controlled for potential differences due to reasons for migration, notably distinguishing refugees from labour market migrants). In substantial terms, the analysis suggests that the effect translates into a maximum difference of about 12 percentage points higher political trust (since both the dependent and the independent variable are coded on a scale from a minimum 0 to a maximum 1). Thus, all else being equal, an immigrant from a country of high corruption is expected to trust the political institutions significantly more than an immigrant with a background in a country on par with Sweden in terms of corruption levels. Although age seems to make a slight difference, the coefficients for this factor being in the vicinity of statistical significance, the control factors overall proved to be virtually unimportant (in fact excluding them all, the CPI coefficient increases only marginally).

Next, we introduce the important time factor, which in the analyses is referred to by the variable *Years in Sweden* (i.e., measuring a respondent's length of residence in the country since she or he immigrated for the first time). Specifically, the length of residence is actually measured in detail by the number of years and months the respondent has been living in Sweden (also taking into account temporary periods abroad). For the sake of transparency, the effect of this variable is scrutinised in two separate steps, corresponding to the remaining columns in Table 1. In Model 2, the regression equation is expanded with the measure on the length of residence in Sweden, but without considering possible interaction effects. Studying this result, the number of years since immigration seems to be associated with decreasing political trust, as we find a statistically significant negative effect. Moreover, including the time factor apparently reduces the impact of previous corruption experiences, as the CPI coefficient drops considerably in magnitude (no longer being statistically significant). In actual fact, this result suggests that immigrants from countries of high corruption tend to have spent a shorter period of time in Sweden. This is also confirmed by an analysis in which *Years in Sweden* is entered as the dependent variable (not shown). Controlling for gender, age, education and income, we find a statistically significant negative effect of the CPI-variable on the length of residence in Sweden.

Yet, although the average length of residence in Sweden certainly varies among immigrants from different parts of the world, the estimation of Model 3 elicits a more complete picture. In this case, we also consider the interaction between different experiences of institutional performance and the length of residence since immigration (by including the multiplicative term '*CPI x Years in Sweden*'). As the table clearly displays, such an expansion of the model turns out to be consequential. We find a statistically significant negative interaction effect, suggesting that experiences from countries of high corruption primarily translate into high political trust among recently arrived immigrants. At the same time, one should note that the pure additive time effect becomes insignificant once the interaction is accounted for. Hence, length of residence does not seem to be consequential for political trust among immigrants from countries with very low levels of corruption. Hence, in line with previous research this result also tells us that such a positive effect tends to decrease with the number of years an immigrant has spent in Sweden.²

Moving further, the results presented in Table 2 provide tests of the two hypotheses in previous research stating that political trust

decreases over time either as a consequence of acculturation or because of experiences of discrimination. Expanding upon previous estimations, Model 1 in this table includes the variable *Swedish language skills* – representing our measure of acculturation. Interestingly, however, this variable does not seem to have any impact at all on immigrants' political trust. All else being equal, developing a fluency in the language of the majority population is apparently not associated with a decrease in confidence in political

Table 2. Investigating if the interaction effect of corruption experience and length of residence in Sweden on political trust is explained by variations in Swedish language skills and discrimination.

	Model 1	Model 2
CPI	0.194*** (0.073)	0.223*** (0.066)
Years in Sweden	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
CPI × Years in Sweden	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)
Swedish language skills	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)
Discrimination		-0.087*** (0.022)
Female	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.016)
Age	0.010** (0.004)	0.009** (0.004)
Age squared	-0.00008** (0.00004)	-0.00008** (0.00004)
Education	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
Income (log)	0.016* (0.009)	0.016* (0.009)
Constant	0.219* (0.116)	0.246** (0.117)
R ²	0.09	0.12
N	538	538

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

Note: Entries are ordinary least-squares estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for cluster correlation within 89 countries of origin), and based on a sample weighted to be representative of foreign born people living in Sweden. The analyses include only respondents 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, indicating corruption experiences in the country of origin among (adult) immigrants in Sweden; the measure is rescaled to run from 0 (very low levels of corruption) to 1 (very high levels of corruption). See Table A1 in appendix for descriptive statistics.

institutions in Sweden. Most important here, however, we note that the interaction effect is not influenced by the inclusion of the variable measuring Swedish language skills (the size and the sign of the effect is identical with the corresponding figure in Model 3 of Table 1). Hence, the acculturation hypothesis does not receive any support in this analysis.

As it turns out, a similar story may be told after considering the results from estimating Model 2 in the table, thus including also the variable *Discrimination*. True, in contrast to the measure of acculturation, discrimination seems to have reasonably expected effects on the level of political trust. Immigrants who report experiences of discriminatory behaviour of some kind tend to be less politically trusting. Still, taking such experiences into account, the interaction effect remains intact. Thus, the extent to which one has been a victim of discrimination cannot explain why some groups of immigrants express significantly lower trust levels once they have been residing in Sweden for a number of years.

The main result from our analyses is further illustrated in Figure 1. For this graph, we have utilised the regression estimates (from the most comprehensive model, i.e., Model 2 in Table 2) in a prediction equation, which in turn provides the combinations of hypothetical outcomes displayed by the downward sloping line. The line as such represents estimated marginal effects of the country of origin corruption level on political trust, as a function of length of residence in Sweden.

Illustrating the interaction effect, we note how previous experiences of corruption are expected to generate a distinct positive effect on political trust among fairly recently arrived immigrants. However, reading the graph from left to right we also note how such a positive trust effect tends to be reduced over time. Given the estimated statistical uncertainty (indicated by the dashed lines representing confidence intervals), the results suggest that among immigrants having resided about 22 years (the point at which the confidence intervals begin to enclose a zero effect) or more in Sweden, we would no longer expect any differences in political trust due to pre-migration corruption experiences. Opinions in this regard seem to converge among immigrants from different parts of the world, once they are no longer newcomers in Sweden. This we contend, in the light of previously formulated hypotheses, may reasonably be explained by a shift in expectations, rather than by an increase in competences through overall acculturation, or by possible experiences of discrimination.

In further support of this conclusion, we examined the impact of a large number of other potential indicators on social and political integration, that could have been influential in an analysis of time-related variations in political trust: socioeconomic status at the time of the interview, social trust, involvement in voluntary associations, political recruitment, civic skills, media consumption, citizenship (Swedish vs. non-Swedish), and reasons for immigration (refugee vs. other reasons). We moreover analysed the effects of various indicators on subjective feelings of belonging in the Swedish society, and community attachment (on several levels). Also, we have investigated many political attitudes, without finding any indications of them as intervening variables, specifically, political interest, political discussion, political knowledge, party identification, political preferences (left vs. right), civic virtues, tolerance and different attitudes concerning the arrangement of the welfare state. Noteworthy, however, none of these factors contribute to explain the interaction effect.

Moreover, further controls reveal that the overall conclusions are not changed if we take into account the region of origin of the respondents. To this end, we categorised immigrants into the three

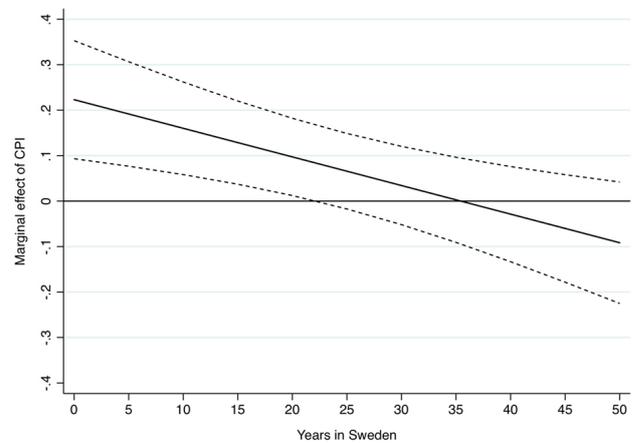


Figure 1. Marginal effects of corruption experience (as measured by the CPI value of the country of origin; see notes to Table 1 and Table 2 above) on political trust among (adult) immigrants in Sweden. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates. CPI: Corruptions Perceptions Index (rescaled)

groups 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). The trichotomy is admittedly crude, but following Myrberg (2007) it is nonetheless theoretically and empirically motivated.

As yet an additional analytic control, we also examined the results reported in Tables 1 and 2 by means of multilevel modelling techniques. Fitting a random intercept model, in which country of origin was specified as the level-2 variable (rendering 89 unique contexts, with an average representation of 6 respondents), essentially provides the same answers as the OLS ('ordinary least-squares') analysis with cluster corrected standard errors. On the whole, the extensive set of additional tests unambiguously suggests that the findings reported in this paper are robust.

Concluding discussion

Among immigrants in Sweden, trust in political institutions is highest among migrants from countries with corrupted and poorly functioning institutions. However, these high trust levels tend to decrease with length of residence in Sweden.

The aim of this paper has been to explain this decline. Previous research provided us with three plausible hypotheses, for which we proposed that Sweden constitutes an interesting context. Moreover, the uniquely well-suited survey data at our disposal permitted more fine-tuned tests than in earlier studies. Our results suggest that neither acculturation nor experiences of discrimination may explain the decline in political trust. Instead, the third hypothesis regarding altering expectations may be assumed to portray the mechanisms reasonably well. Having arrived in a new country, immigrants compare institutional encounters with their experiences of institutional performance in their country of origin, generating a more positive evaluation in so far as institutions appear to have a significantly higher quality in the new setting. Over time though, the past experiences become less salient, and thus evaluations of institutional performance in the new home country will be more critical.

True, measuring experiences of discrimination 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 some individuals, but not by others. Still, we contend that our measure is fairly comprehensive, given the rich set of specified contexts in which discrimination may occur. Respondents should in this case be able to picture more clearly a potentially discriminatory situation, supporting the trustworthiness of the results in this study. Hence, we believe that the lack of support for the discrimination hypothesis is not due to a methodological flaw.

Admittedly, even though we believe we tested the hypotheses in a more accurate way than earlier studies, the support for the expectations hypotheses is necessarily indirect. The underlying mechanism, with earlier experiences as the frame of reference, is difficult to capture with survey methods, and alternative data collection as for instance through in-depth interviews should be considered in future research. Yet, there is evidence, indicating that migrants compare experiences and situations in the new country with the country of origin, affecting evaluations of the present situation. For instance, scholars have noted that immigrants tend to judge moral behaviour and treatment by authorities, as well as the trustworthiness of criminal justice institutions relative to standards of their old country (Reese 2001; Menjivar & Bejarano 2004; Röder & Mühlau 2012b). Such findings, we contend, make the support for the expectations hypothesis as for political institutions even more reasonable.

Yet, knowing more about these processes is obviously important from a political integration point of view. If further convincing evidence for the expectations hypothesis should be accumulated, a more positive view may be called for. In Sweden, as well as in other Western European countries, immigrants tend to be less involved in political life and to believe that they have less political influence than native citizens. Such findings are without doubt problematic from a political integration perspective. However, if gradually more modest levels of political trust are essentially explained by decreasing expectations, the conclusion of this study is not equally worrisome.

Given our focus on Sweden in the present study, this country's reputation of being an immigration friendly welfare state, a well-functioning democracy and a very 'clean' country in terms of corruption, is arguably significant for the interpretation of the results. Indeed, such a reputation may very well trigger high expectations among large groups of newly arrived immigrants. Still, to increase our knowledge on the significance of expectations, we highly encourage further research based on other combinations of migration profiles, integration related outcomes and country-specific records and reputations in terms of institutional quality.

Per Adman is an associate professor of political science at Uppsala University, Sweden. He has published articles in scientific journals such as *Acta Political*, *Political Behavior* and *Political Research Quarterly*. His research concerns political behaviour and political attitudes in relation to migration, segregation, gender, unemployment and discrimination, using citizen surveys and quantitative methods (including panel data analysis). Adman has also worked with qualitative methods, when investigating Swedish secondary education reforms. His ongoing research concerns on the one hand political intolerance and on the other the Stockholm riots in 2013.

Per Strömblad is an associate professor of political science at Linnaeus University, Sweden. His main research interest lies in relationships between structural conditions and political involvement, with a particular focus on segregation generated neighbourhood

effects in multicultural democracies. From 2001 to 2004, while completing his PhD at Uppsala University, he served as secretary in a government commission of inquiry on the political integration of immigrants in Sweden. He has published articles in journals such as *Political Research Quarterly* and *Urban Studies*, and he has also co-edited a volume on diversity, inclusion and citizenship in Scandinavia.

Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
Political trust	0.57	0.19	0.00	1.00
CPI	0.43	0.28	0.07	0.90
Years in Sweden	24.21	14.90	2.23	60.08
CPI × Years in Sweden	7.83	6.00	0.96	36.57
Swedish language skills	5.19	1.85	0.00	10.00
Discrimination	0.20	0.40	0.00	1.00
Female	0.55	0.50	0	1
Age	50.69	14.44	21	81
Education	11.44	3.87	0	25
Income (SEK × 1000)	266.77	151.31	0.00	1433.70

Note: Entries are based on a sample weighted to be representative of foreign-born people living in Sweden, and refer to respondents who were 15 years or older upon immigrating to Sweden.

CPI: Corruptions Perceptions Index (rescaled)

Notes

1. In the 2008 evaluation, Sweden received, along with Denmark, the highest observed CPI score of 9.3, on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 (where 10 indicates a state of affairs totally free from corruption). Various measures have been used in previous research regarding the institutions in the country of origin: the level of democracy, the quality of government and the

level of corruption. The results seem to be very similar for all these measures, which is not surprising considering the, quite sensible, strong mutual correlations (see e.g. Lipset & Lenz 2000; Pellegrini & Gerlagh 2006).

2. Given the expanded model, one may also note a positive and significant effect of the income variable, suggesting that a vulnerable socioeconomic position is associated with lower levels of political trust. The economically more successful immigrants in Sweden tend to express higher confidence in Swedish political institutions.

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