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The Covenant: A Theory of Discrimination in the Welfare State

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CHAPTER 4: THE COVENANT¹

From the eighteenth century on, European commentators and intellectuals have flagged racism as an American failing woven into the woof and warp of the American experience. They have similarly flagged the absence of a social safety net as evidence that the American state is a halfway station, affirming the political principles of a democratic politics but evading its social obligations.

The censure of European public intellectuals – and their American cousins – can be justified. Their complacency cannot. Anyone who can draw breath can see that Western Europe, too, is struggling with inclusion of immigrants, above all, Muslim immigrants. And so far from a commitment to the welfare state being a prophylactic, it may more nearly be a provocation. The benefits of the welfare state are a magnet, attracting immigrant minorities. But the costs of providing these benefits to immigrant minorities are in the largest measure borne by native citizens. The result is a negative dialectic. The welfare state won and held the loyalty of voters, as Wolfe and Klausen among others argue, so long as “people believed they were paying the social welfare part of their taxes to people who were like themselves.”² As increasing numbers of immigrants become the beneficiaries, an increasing number of citizens ask themselves: Why should “we” make sacrifices so “they” benefit?

¹ This essay is part of a larger work, *Cross Winds: Liberal Democracy Under Pressure*.

² Wolfe and Klausen, 1997

Over a longer run, concern about the sapping of the popular foundations of the welfare state may be justified. Here and now, it overrates resentment and underrates pride. For a Dane, the welfare state is an ideal of society. It may not be a uniquely Danish ideal. But it is a quintessentially Danish ideal. Yes, many Danes believe that immigrants are taking advantage of the welfare state.³ But that is a reason to think less of “them.” It is not a reason to think less of “us;” still less, a reason to turn against policies that benefit “us.” The result is just what common sense would expect: consensus to a high degree on the canonical components of the welfare state; cleavage to a moderate degree over benefits targeted to immigrants.⁴

The problem that we want to focus on is different. Our concern is not whether Danes support programs that benefit them; it is not even whether they support programs to benefit immigrants. It goes deeper, we believe. It is whether Danes are willing to give immigrant minorities the same rights as they have to the protection and support of the welfare state.

There is, we believe, a paradox. The moral premises of the welfare state provide a foundation for equal treatment of immigrants. But they also provide a platform for discrimination against immigrant minorities. This contradictory

³ In our study, 49 percent agree that “Many immigrants have come to Denmark to exploit our social system,” as against 37 percent who disagree.

⁴ Appendix A presents results from our study in support of this claim. There is, to be sure, differences of opinion on the need to run the welfare state more efficiently, and supposing there is, what should and what should not be done to promote efficiency. However, as Table A:1 shows, there is societal consensus on support for canonical welfare state programs -- e.g. health care, home care for the elderly; disability pensions for persons who are physically worn out; education maintenance grants for students; retraining of the unemployed; and housing benefits for low income households -- remains virtually universal across the ideological spectrum. Table A:2, in contrast, shows that there is a cleavage over programs specifically targeted at immigrants.

outcome we have labeled the Covenant Paradox. It is the objective of this paper to set out a theory of this paradox.

We shall ask two questions. First, under what conditions and why do the moral premises of the welfare state favor equal treatment of immigrants? Second, under what conditions and why do they open the door to discriminatory treatment of immigrants. Our answer to both questions turns on the temporal logic of evaluative judgments. Under the social covenant underpinning the welfare state, prospective judgments of benefits and obligations favor equal treatment. In contrast, retrospective judgments, again of benefits and of obligations, open the door to discriminatory treatment.

Testing this distinction between prospective and retrospective judgments is the empirical objective of this paper. We also believe that our findings make plain that intolerance is not merely a matter of ill will to minorities – but of action: treating them differently and worse. We also are persuaded that our findings bring out a key distinction between toleration and tolerance in a democratic politics. Toleration, as we conceive it, goes beyond either a lack of ill will toward a minority group or a readiness to support the rights of groups that one dislikes or disagrees with. Tolerance, as opposed to toleration, has at its center a positive readiness to be as supportive and protective of immigrants.

II. The Covenant Paradox

A social covenant underpins the welfare state. This covenant has two interlocking parts. All members of the national community have a claim to the

support of the welfare state, because they are members of the national community. And because all have a claim to support, all have a duty to support the welfare state.

What could be more straightforward, you may ask? For immigrants, the covenant is anything but straightforward, we shall show. The moral premises of the welfare state, simultaneously, promote equal treatment and provide a platform for discrimination. This contradictory outcome we have christened the Covenant Paradox.

The Covenant Paradox is grounded in the linkage of rights to duties.⁵ Society has an obligation to its members. But its members have an obligation to society. One aspect of this obligation to society is self-reliance. They must do their best to take care of their own needs. As a Center-Right Minister of Employment put it, “Some people categorically refuse to take a job or to get some help finding a job. Of course they shall not be able to just lean back and passively receive welfare benefits on the expense of tax payers without any consequences what so ever.” The social covenant that underpins the welfare state has a larger compass, though. It requires, in addition, personal sacrifices for the welfare of others. Americans with a high school degree take owning a car for granted. A punishing level of taxation makes a new car a highly expensive luxury item for many Danes with a Ph.D.⁶ A willingness to pay a punishing level of taxes, it should be underlined, is not an expression of philanthropic generosity. It is carrying out a duty. And the rights are tied to the

⁵ Not all claims to benefits are linked to duties, it is worth emphasizing. Members of the national community do not forfeit medical attention and assistance, for example, even if they have not lived exemplary lives; indeed, even if their lives have fallen very short of exemplary.

⁶ New cars are taxed by 105 % of car value up until 79,000 Danish Kroners (roughly 15,000 USD) and then by 180 % of the value above that limit. On top of this goes the regular Danish value added tax of 25 %.

duties and the other way round. In the old Socialdemocratic formulation, “No rights without duties, no duties without rights.”

The interdependence of rights to benefits and the fulfilment of duties is a key to the Covenant Paradox, we claim. The contradictory outcomes for immigrants – sometimes equal treatment and sometimes discriminatory treatments, follow from the temporal logic of judgments about the fulfilment of duties. It is our claim that prospective judgments favor equal treatment for immigrants; retrospective judgments discriminatory treatment.

We begin with the normative logic of prospective judgments. The moral premises – the interlocking of benefits and obligations – that underpin the welfare state remain strong. This is, and must be, a universalistic presumption. To argue that immigrants, merely by virtue of being immigrants, fall outside the covenant would be to advocate an apartheid state. If one wants to limit their benefits, there must be some presumption that they have failed to meet their end of the social bargain. But one can only make such an argument – or more exactly, take advantage of background assumptions that favor it – if immigrants have had an opportunity to meet their end of the social bargain and failed to do so. But this is difficult indeed to do when the judgment is truly prospective – that is, when the question is what people early in their lives will do over the course of their lives. If cheating on the covenant is defined as taking the rights without paying the duties, people need to have had the opportunity to pay in order to be tagged a cheater.⁷ And just so far as

⁷ In the vocabulary of game theory, one could argue that Danes play the strategy of tit-for-tat (Axelrod, 1984): Cooperate first and only defect if the other defects. The temporal logic here is clear: One can only defect based on the retrospective judgment that the other has defected.

this is so, the logic of prospective judgments favors evenhanded treatment of immigrants and native Danes.

(i) Prospective Judgments and Equal Treatment

To test our claim about a connection between prospective judgments and equal treatment, we have focused on the responsibility of the state to provide its members with resources to improve the quality of their lives. In designing an experimental test, we have been guided by two criteria. On the one hand, our concern is the fairness of application of welfare state programs to immigrants. So the benefit or duty must be universalistically formulated. On the other hand, it is important to formulate a claim that has an aspect capable of activating a negative stereotype of immigrant minorities.

The “Young Mother” experiment meets both criteria. Respondents are told of a young mother. She needs *special* help with childcare, they are told, so that she can begin an education program.⁸ She is also, respondents are told, “currently on welfare.” The experimental treatment consists of telling a randomly selected half of the respondents that this woman has “an immigrant background.”

Do native Danes treat an immigrant minority as well as they treat a fellow native Dane? Table 4.1 displays the (mean) levels of support for extra help, first for the baseline condition, then for the treatment condition. In addition, to speak to the question of whether a societal consensus is indeed societal wide, the responses of

⁸ Italics added

supporters of each of the major party blocs are presented. The result is clear-cut, in truth even more so than we had anticipated.

Insert Table 4.1 Here

Consider first responses to the young woman who is (presumptively) a native Dane. She receives virtually unanimous support: the mean score is .92 out of a maximum possible score of 1. And she receives this level of support across the ideological spectrum. None of this is surprising; all of it is consistent with the continuing strength of the public commitment to the welfare state. What may be surprising – certainly, what should be surprising to those who insist on the power of Islamophobia – is responses to the young woman who is explicitly identified as an immigrant. The level of support for the woman with an immigrant background is nearly as strong (.88) as it is for the native Dane.

“Nearly” is a word that should set off alarm bells. So we shall present the results in more detail. For supporters of Left-Wing parties, levels of support for the young woman are visually identical to those for the young woman with an immigrant background (.95 and .93, respectively). For supporters of the other mainstream parties, Social Liberals, Social Democrats and Center-Right, the levels of support are, statistically, interchangeable. For adherents of the Danish People’s Party, the level of support for the two young women are visually but not statistically different (.90 vs. .79, respectively). As a cautionary note, though, we would add that this failure to clear the ordinary hurdle of statistical significance can reasonably be chalked up to the small numbers in the two cells.⁹ Yet cautionary note or not, the absolute level of

⁹ The N in the young mother condition is 42; in the young mother with an immigrant background, 35.

support for a person with an immigrant background is high even in an avowedly anti-immigrant party.

The “Young Mother” experiment thus yields two intertwined findings. First, the societal consensus in support of the welfare state remains strong. Second, support for welfare state assistance is as forthcoming for immigrants as for native citizens. In light of the concern of Islamophobia, it is no small matter to see that Danes give equal treatment to appeals for welfare assistance to immigrants as to their fellow Danes.

Getting a helping hand from the state is one side of the social covenant. Giving the state a helping hand is the other. In a time of strain, it is surely not unreasonable to believe that Danes will impose stricter requirements to find a job on immigrant minorities than on fellow Danes. But, on the interpretation of the welfare state that we are urging, Danes see the welfare state as a collective achievement, in which everybody without legitimate needs should take part and take pride in taking part. If our interpretation of the Social Covenant is correct, they should ask as much of themselves in this regard as they do of immigrant minorities. That is, while prospective judgments favor giving people in need the benefit of the doubt, this does indeed require the existence of a need. Without such a need, neither Danes nor immigrants should be allowed to live off welfare. To test this, we devised the “Tougher Requirements” experiment.

In the 1990’s, a policy was introduced to condition welfare and unemployment benefits on the duties of citizens to the welfare state to complement the welfare

state's duties to citizens.¹⁰ This policy, commonly referred to as the Activation Policy, includes the obligation to meet certain requirements such as taking temporary jobs and to fulfil courses and "job training" to facilitate finding a regular job. These temporary jobs are typically dull, and often meaningless. So, too, are some of the job training courses that they are required to take. The requirements are more demanding for people under the age of 30; indeed, individuals under the age of 25 can be forced to begin an education if they want to retain their financial support from the government. The Activation policy aims to benefit people, not punish them. Still, it opens up an obvious opportunity for Danes to be punitive in its application to immigrant minorities.

The "Tougher Requirements experiment" focuses on young men on welfare and, in particular, young men with no apparent needs. Specifically, respondents are asked, "To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Activation requirements [for a young man] should be made stricter?"¹¹ One half of the time recipient was described as "a young man currently on welfare." The other half of the time, he was described as "a young man with an immigrant background currently on welfare."

Table 4.2 displays levels of support for making requirements to receive welfare payments tougher for young men. The first point that we would like to make is that the results mimic the actual political debate over the introduction of the Activation policy. The policy was introduced by the Social Democrats with broad support across much of the ideological spectrum, albeit in the face of some opposition from

¹⁰ For further discussion, see Cox, 2001, and Loftager, 2004: 93-95.

¹¹ The actual response alternatives, following our standard practice are: Agree completely; Agree somewhat; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree somewhat; Disagree completely.

the Left-wing -- especially the Red-Green Alliance -- which views tougher regulations for receiving benefits as a betrayal of the welfare state. So we see, in the first column that reports responses in the control condition, that the one exception to consensual support for a tougher Activation policy – and it is only a partial exception, appears on the Left-wing. Paralleling the ideological debate over the need to make the welfare state more efficient, we also see that support for tougher requirements to qualify for welfare payments increases as one moves from left to right on the ideological spectrum.

Both these aspects of the results speak to the validity of the “Tougher Requirements” experiment. The question that the experiment was designed to answer was whether there is a double standard. Are Danes more likely to favor tougher requirements when the beneficiary is an immigrant than when he is a fellow Dane? The results in Table 4.2 speak directly to this question.

Insert Table 4.2

Compare the levels of support when the young man is not described as an immigrant (the control condition, Column 1) and when he is described as an immigrant (the treatment condition, Column 2). For Social Democrats, support for tougher requirements in the control condition is .76; in the treatment condition, .75. For the Left-wing, the numbers are .68 and .69, respectively, again evenhanded treatment of immigrant minorities and fellow citizens. And, offering another example of what is obvious *ex post* is not obvious *ex ante*, supporters of the Danish People’s Party come down hard on stricter requirements immigrants to receive welfare payments, but they come down just as hard on their fellow Danes. The

numbers in the native Dane and immigrant minority conditions are .88 and .84, respectively.

Moreover, the quantitative results display a degree of wobbliness that -- for experienced data analysts -- is reassuring. For both Social Liberals and for Center-Right supporters, support for tougher requirement is higher for fellow Danes than for immigrants. On its face, it is bizarre to observe Danes applying a tougher standard to fellow Danes than immigrant minorities. Happily, closer inspection of the results makes plain that this anomalous results is an arithmetic illusion. The apparent differences are not statistically significant. As the standard errors demonstrate, Social Liberals and Center-Right supporters treat fellow Danes and immigrant minorities alike.

The “Young Mother” and the “Tougher Requirements” experiments show Danes treating fellow Danes and immigrants with an even hand. Prospectively, Danes give everybody the benefit of the doubt – if they have legitimate need, that is. If they don’t, everybody irrespective of immigrant status is judged as undeserving. It would be splendid if this were the end of the story. But if it were the end, this would not be a story. It would be a fable.

(ii) Retrospective Judgments and Discriminatory Treatment

The Covenant Paradox is grounded in the linkage of rights to duties. Not all claims to benefits are linked to duties. Citizens do not forfeit medical attention and assistance even if they have not lived exemplary live; indeed, even if their lives have fall very short of exemplary. What sustains the welfare state as a full provider of

services, however, is a social covenant. Society has an obligation to its members. But its members have an obligation to society. One strand of this obligation to society is self-reliance. They must do their best to take care of their own needs. As a Center-Right Minister of Employment put it, ““Some people categorically refuse to take a job or to get some help finding a job. Of course they shall not be able to just lean back and passively receive welfare benefits on the expense of tax payers without any consequences what so ever.”

It would mock the meaning of citizens’ obligations in a welfare society, though, to reduce them to reduce them to a duty of self-reliance. The covenant that underpins the welfare state has a larger compass. All have a duty to contribute to provide for the welfare of all. To be sure, because of differences in talent and opportunity, it is fact of life that some contribute more than others and some benefit more than others. But neither the state nor citizens are capable of being moral mathematicians, distributing benefits in proportion to calculus of contributions. But citizens and politicians can and will take advantage of folk knowledge to judge whether others are indeed making an effort. Making an effort is a modest standard, and in this sense an accommodating one. But its modesty also makes for vagueness. And its vagueness makes it all too easy for a person so inclined to judge that immigrants have failed to live up to the mark.

At just this point the difference between prospective judgments, predictions about what people will do, and retrospective judgments, evaluations of what they have done, cuts deepest. Who can credibly declare that young people will fall short of the mark? For older people, it is a different matter. It is a matter of fact that

many immigrant women choose to stay out of the labor force, opting to stay at home to have children. There are good reasons for an immigrant woman to follow this course, but they are good reasons from a traditional culture perspective. They are not good reasons from a contemporary Danish perspective. Just so far as immigrant women meet the expectations immigrants coming from traditionalist cultures have of women, they fail to meet the expectations that Danes have of women, immigrant or not.

To this point, we have focused on prospective judgments. The “Tougher Requirement” experiment, however, also assess retrospective judgments. A set of randomly selected respondents were asked whether the “Activation” requirement should be made stricter for a woman in her 50s, who is currently on welfare, and who has “an immigrant background”. A separate set of respondents was assigned to a question in which they were asked exactly the same question except no mention was made of having an immigrant background. Table 4.3 displays the reactions, by party, of respondents to the older woman in the immigrant and non-immigrant conditions. Two findings stand out. First, there manifestly is more support for applying tougher requirements to the immigrant woman. Second, this double standard is evident right across the political spectrum.

Insert Table 4.3 Here

What should we make of the full results of the Tougher Requirements experiment? We have advanced a temporal theory of evaluative judgments. It distinguishes between reactions to people at the outset of their careers and to those who are, or should be, well-along in them. Judgments about young men, one

immigrant, one native, show evenhandedness; judgments about older women show a double-standard. This is a down payment on evidence in support of our theory of retrospective vs. prospective judgments.

We have more evidence to offer, though. Equality for women is a value to be valued. But equality carries obligations along with benefits. Women in Denmark are now expected to spend at least some time in the labor force. Doing so is easier for Danish than for many immigrant women. They traditionally face arguments that their duty is to have and raise children, to live within the close circle of family and friends, to avoid living an independent life in the larger society. Immigrant men and women are not of one mind on the conception of a woman's role, to be sure. But the overall balance of opinion favors – and is known to favor – a more closely circumscribed role for women. From a traditional immigrants' perspective, women are fulfilling their obligations by staying within the family. From a Danish perspective, by doing so, they are giving short shrift to their duties of citizens of Denmark.

On our theory, retrospective judgments open the door to judgments that immigrants have not lived up to their end of the Social Covenant. Accordingly, we focus here on judgments about the level of benefits to which families with many children are entitled. All respondents in the “Many Children” experiment¹² are asked to imagine a family “where both the mother and father are on welfare”. Then they are asked to what extent they agree or disagree that “their welfare should be reduced in order to press them to find a job.” One randomly selected set is told that

¹² The sample as a whole was partitioned. One half (randomly selected) participated in the “Young Mother” experiment; the other in the “Large Family” experiment.

this is “an immigrant family with many children;” the other only that it is “a family with many children.”

It is our claim that retrospective judgments provide more room for unfavorable evaluations. Older immigrants have had an opportunity to take part in the collective undertaking. This opens the door to judgments that they failed to live up to their end of the social bargain. Characterizing one of the women as immigrant directly calls up a picture in the mind of many of immigrant women who are opting out of their duties. Just as encountering a Danish woman in her fifties receiving welfare benefits would give the impression that she lost her job, encountering an immigrant woman in the same situation raises suspicions that she never had a job. Those so inclined will be disposed to infer that an immigrant mother in the “Many Children” experiment has not made an effort to contribute to the larger society but has instead chosen to stay at home and collect social benefits.

Table 4.4 presents reactions to immigrant and non-immigrant families with many children. Again, we see a clear double standard. When the family is identified as having an immigrant background, approximately one half agree that their welfare benefits should be reduced. In contrast, when the family is not identified as having an immigrant background, only about one third favor reduction in benefits. In short, the Many Children experiment, like the Tougher Requirement experiment (for older people), provide evidence of a discriminatory double standard.

Table 4.4 Here

(iii) Two Critical Assumptions

These findings carry us some distance but not quite across the goal line. Two critical assumptions demand examination. The first is that we have presumed that not expressly designating people as immigrants is equivalent to affirming that they are Danes. Perhaps true; perhaps only partly true; or possibly not true at all. The experiments have dealt with people on welfare. Immigrant minorities are – and are widely known to be -- over-represented on welfare rolls. In Eastern Denmark, for example, immigrants from non-western countries make up thirty-one percent of all recipients of social welfare, even though they constitute only eight per-cent of the population.¹³ Is it not possible – indeed, more than just possible – that our respondents think ‘immigrant’ when they hear ‘on welfare?’ And just so far as they do, our assumption that the experiments are providing a window on the difference in reactions to immigrant minorities and fellow Danes falls to the ground. The second critical assumption is subtler. Grant the findings of previous experiments that Danes respond more favourably to fellow Danes than to immigrant minorities. The question is why? Does it have something to do with the moral compact that underpins the Welfare State? Or is it for some other reason entirely, for example, a sense of a shared identity?

To pry out answers to these questions, we turn to another policy debate. Capping and, when possible, reducing welfare benefits, the argument runs, increases economic incentives to get off the welfare rolls. The smaller the difference between social welfare benefits and the minimum wage, the weaker motivation to get off welfare; the larger the difference, the stronger the motivation. The (then) Minister

¹³ Beskæftigelsesregion Hovedstaden og Sjælland, 2009

of Employment, Mr. Claus Hjort Frederiksen (later minister of finance) was prominent in the debate over the initiation of a Welfare Ceiling policy, and later, in its defense: “We have to arrange our social system in a way that always provides an incentive to take a job. We do welfare recipients a disservice if we don’t try to find them a job... [With the ceiling] we offer an incentive so that even a little extra effort will give a pay off.”¹⁴ Implemented in 2004, the policy imposed a “ceiling” on how much a person could receive in overall benefits from the welfare state (including social welfare benefits, housing benefits, and some additional benefits like help to families with children). This ceiling takes effect once a recipient has been on welfare for six months or more. In addition, if both husband and wife are on welfare, a still lower ceiling is imposed on the welfare benefits.

In the early phases of the debate over the ceiling policy, explicit references to immigrants on welfare were rare, though in recent years a linkage has become more explicit.¹⁵ The Ceiling policy is only one of a bundle of policies reducing welfare benefits with the objective of increasing the number of immigrants participating in the labor force. For example, the “450 Hours Rule,” originally the 300 Hours Rule, requires that that for married couple to receive welfare benefits, *both* husband and wife need to have had paid work of at least 450 hours over the last two years in

¹⁴ “De svage hårdt presset af reform” [The Vulnerable Under Pressure by Reform] (Politiken, June 16, 2003); “Lavere kontanthjælp skal få folk i job” [Lower Welfare Benefits To Push People into Jobs] (Urban, January 27, 2004).

¹⁵ From the very beginning of debate about these policy measures, however, The Danish People’s Party have been very aware of the implications for immigrants on welfare. While being reluctant to support the welfare reform in the first place, that doubt vanished once it became clear in statistics from the Ministry of Employment that nearly three out of four families hit by the ceiling on welfare would be immigrant families: “When we saw these figures,” leading MP Kristian Thulesen Dahl said, “we no longer had any doubt. They show that it is immigrants in particular who suck welfare money. To an extent bordering on abuse. Therefore, it is important to ensure they have an incentive to work.” (“Loft over kontanthjælpen” [Ceiling on Welfare Benefits], Politiken, October 7, 2002).

order for any of them to be able receive welfare benefits. The argument for the 450 Hours Rule is partly the familiar one that “... now it actually pays for them to find a job,” as Minister of Employment, Ms. Inger Støjberg, declared. But it is now combined with an argument less common in this context, namely, equality for women. As Minister Støjberg, went on to say: “In particular many women have been able to use this rule to persuade their husband that they should be allowed to take a job; otherwise the family would lose its income”.¹⁶

We focused on the Ceiling policy as one among this larger bundle of restrictive policies. In one of the conditions of the Ceiling Experiment, we asked a randomized set of respondents:

“There has been debate about a ceiling on social welfare benefits, which reduces the benefits for couples where both depend on social welfare benefits. As you might know, some people are against this ceiling on social welfare benefits. What do you think? Should the ceiling on social benefits be maintained or should it be rescinded?”

This is of course our standard baseline condition. Just as in previous experiments, we asked another set of respondents exactly the same question apart from one difference. The interviewer presented an argument against the policy based on the needs of immigrants. Specifically, the second sentence of the question read:

¹⁶ “Flere indvandrere i arbejde” [More Immigrants in Job] (Jyllands-Posten, April 1, 2010)

“As you might know, some people are against this ceiling on social welfare benefits, *because it hits immigrants in particular, thereby hurting integration.*”¹⁷

Table 4.5 displays the reactions of respondents depending on whether they were presented with the “immigrant hurt” argument (on the right) or not (on the left).¹⁸ When the argument against the policy is that it will hurt immigrants, the mean is .65; when no argument at all is made, the mean is .55. This is patently a double standard: more support when it is made explicit immigrants will pay the price of the policy, less when it is not. To be sure, among the Left-Wing and Social Liberal parties, the responses in the baseline condition and the treatment condition are the same. Across the rest of the political spectrum, however, there is more support for imposing a ceiling on benefits when the argument *against* doing so is that it will hurt immigrants than when no argument at all is presented. We take these results, all in all, to add confidence to our claim of a discriminatory double-standard against immigrants.

Insert Table 4.5 Here

So far, tests of discrimination have followed the same design – mention of immigrant status or no mention of immigrant status. The Ceiling experiment included a third condition, however. In this third condition, the question included an appeal to the values of the Social Covenant. Specifically, the second sentence read:

¹⁷ Italics added.

¹⁸ Since there was no significant difference between the “No Reason” and “Appeal to the Covenant” (cf. below) conditions, we have combined them to increase statistical power.

“As you might know, some people are against this ceiling on social welfare benefits, *because it would hit the weakest members of society and create disparity.*”¹⁹

The pivotal comparison now is between those in the No Reason Given condition and those in the Appeal to the Covenant condition. The more similar the reactions in these two conditions, the more unnecessary it is to call people’s attention to the principles of the Covenant to induce them to act on them.

Table 4.6 compares the responses of those in No Reason Given condition and those in Appeal to the Covenant condition. The difference between support for a ceiling in welfare benefits is minimal. When the argument is made that the policy will hurt the weakest among us, the mean level of support is .52; when no argument at all is made, the mean level of support is .55. That difference is neither substantively nor statistically significant. It is not necessary, this result suggests, to appeal explicitly to the values of the Social Covenant in order for Danish citizens to respond on the basis of these values. They have learned the moral premises of the welfare state. Indeed, they have taken them in so deeply that it is unnecessary to refer to them.

III. The Passions or the Interests²⁰

Immigrant minorities are disproportionately dependent on government welfare programs through-out Western Europe. In response, governments in Western Europe, including Denmark, have made eligibility for benefits stricter,

¹⁹ Italics our emphasis.

²⁰ For a fascinating and deep discussion of how interests civilize passions, see Hirschman, 1970.

smaller, and available for a shorter period shorter. Sometimes, this tougher policy line is presented in universalistic terms; sometimes, it is tied to immigrants. But either way, it is – and is understood to be --aimed at cutting both the number of immigrants on welfare and the length of time they are on it.

This tougher policy regime has been christened “welfare chauvinism.” The policy push for welfare chauvinism, all assume, comes from the wider electorate – a surely correct assumption provided only that one acknowledges that many political leaders are only too happy to lend a helping hand. But a claim that the electorate is the source of pressure for “welfare chauvinism,” though it has the happy advantage of being true, also suffers the disabling disadvantage of being vague. Everyone in the electorate is not a welfare chauvinist. Indeed, as the Tougher Requirement, Many Children, and Ceiling Experiments have shown, even in circumstances when a double standard is applied, the largest number of citizens do not discriminate. The question then is, why are some citizens welfare chauvinists and others not?

In the broadest terms, two explanatory perspectives have been brought to bear on the problem of welfare chauvinism. One has to do with interests; the other with passions. Beginning with the first, international political economists have been able to put on the table an explicit – and sometimes formal – model isolating a specific sector of society with the strongest incentives to oppose immigration by extension policies that assist immigrants. Styled the “the labor market theory of competition,” this model argues that low-skilled, low-income workers are most likely to be welfare chauvinists, because they are competing with immigrant

minorities who tend to be low-skilled in the labor market, thus decreasing the number of job opportunities and the depressing the wages they pay.²¹

If interests count for little, passions count for a good deal more. By the passions, we mean people's emotions and their most deeply-charged convictions. In this context, we have two of their passions particularly in mind. One centers on affective sentiments about immigrants,²² the other an ideological strain that taps a punitive tough-mindedness.

The contrast between the passions and the interests offers a framework for understanding more deeply the Covenant Paradox. How can the moral premises of the welfare state simultaneously provide a basis for equal treatment and discrimination? Is the paradox immanent in the Covenant itself or in the uses it can be put to? And if the latter, are these uses made of it governed by the interests or the passions?

For an initial response to these questions, we focus on a policy expressly targeted at immigrant minorities, namely, the Start Help Program. From a political economy perspective, people's position in the labor market is the basis for their response to policies to assist minorities. In addition, proceeding from our perspective, we take account of both affective responses to immigrants and people's location on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

Table 4.7 presents the results of an OLS regression of the importance of the government financing the Start Help program on a trio of predictors – occupational

²¹ For an impressively deep analysis of the labor market competition theory, and in addition, a competing model, the fiscal burden theory, see Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010.

²² The arch titling of the measure, Affective Sentiments Towards Immigrants, will become clear below.

status, libertarianism-authoritarianism, and affective responses to immigrants. Because part of the effect of occupational status potentially is mediated through the affective variables, we first regress opposition towards the Start Help Program on this variable alone (in Model 1) to assess its direct impact on opposition to the policy, before adding the two other factors (in model 2).²³ In a field like ours, the results of analyses often are muzzy. In Table 4.7, three things stand out quite clearly. First, occupational status has only a modest influence on the degree of importance respondents attach to the government financing of the Start Help Program. This lends some support in favor of the theory of labor market competition: The lower occupational status the greater opposition towards the program. However, occupational status has no effect on policy support independent of what is mediated through ideology and affective responses to immigrants. Moreover, the impact of passion is imperceptible as compared to the joint influence of passions (just compared the difference in variation the two models are able to account for) Second, ideology matters. The further to the right respondents are on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, the less support there is for government financing of Start Help. Third, affective responses to immigrants are far and away the most significant predictor of positions on the Start Help policy: the greater the hostility to immigrants, the greater the opposition towards the policy.

Insert Table 4.7 Here

This is an especially appropriate point in our analysis to spotlight a paradox in the design of our study. One of its strengths is also a source of one of its

²³ See Stubager, 2006.

weaknesses. By virtue of exploring some concerns in the first round of interviews, others in the second round, and still others in the third round, we enjoy a wider coverage of concerns than otherwise possible. But in the design of studies as in life, every benefit has a cost. So it is here. Measures of the variables we need to present and test a model of welfare chauvinism are scattered across the three rounds of interviews. The analysis in Table 4.7 is accordingly open to a challenge of omitted variable bias. So far from wishing to dismiss this issue, we want to call attention to it. It is quite possible that our analysis slights the role of interests. But the results of our analysis, in combination with those of others, most especially the analyses of Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) and Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008), persuade us that in the politics of immigration, the passions dominate the interests in the judgments of citizens at large. We therefore want to put on the table a re-conceptualization of the passions.

IV. The Passions Reconceived: Toleration, Tolerance and the Covenant

Our theoretical argument is that two moral premises underpin the welfare state: first, that the larger society has a duty to its members to see to their well-being and, second, that its members in turn have a duty to help support the larger society. We should like to push the analysis to a deeper level.

Retrospective judgments open the door wider than prospective ones on the question of whether people have made the contribution that they owe to the larger society, we have argued. Retrospective judgments permit a judgment that some people have not met the duty that they owe. But they do not require one; and the

differences in treatment between of immigrant minorities and native citizens, though significant politically and not merely statistically, are limited. A substantial number of people, but very far from all, are taking advantage of the opening in interpretation that retrospective judgments make possible. The question then is: Who takes advantage of the opportunity to infer that immigrants do not deserve benefits from the larger society because they have not met their obligations to it?

To ask the question is to answer it: the more intolerant of immigrants that people are, the more likely they are to infer that immigrants have failed to live up to their obligations to the state.

The facts of the matter are clear; their interpretation just as clear. Prejudice is a continuum. Some are more prejudiced, others less. The job of a measure of prejudice is accordingly to rank order people, correctly, from the most prejudiced to the least prejudiced. This view has a grounding in truth, which makes it a good example of how a truth can give birth to a fallacy. On the accepted view, the best that one can hope for is the absence of ill will. This view has been particularly dominant in the literature on political tolerance and the observation of the rights of minorities. In fact, it has been argued that true tolerance requires standing up against one's own ill will towards other groups and supporting their rights. In the context of supporting basic political rights such as freedom of expression, this view might be sensible. Yet, on the view that we are proposing, tolerance in the context of the welfare state involves something more – it involves feelings of good will. Conceptually – and politically, there is a profound difference between these two views on tolerance: the political and the social. On the first, the limit of change is

the elimination of ill-will toward minorities; on the second, it is the achievement of good-will towards them. But is this only words about words? Politically, does it make a difference whether we set the bar according to the first or the second view?

The welfare state has two goals: to protect the neediest and provide a decent standard of living for all. Whether native citizens will do for immigrant minorities what they will do for natives seems to us an appropriate standard of inclusion. True, our standard has nothing of the psychological flavor of equality – showing equal respect for the culture of another. Then again, in our view, how citizens treat immigrant minorities trumps how they feel about them. Still more importantly, whether they treat immigrants as well as they treat their fellow citizens brings out the positive, protective, inclusive force of tolerance as a value of democratic politics.

Consider the “Tougher Requirement” experiment again. Assume that, by and large and speaking broadly, most Danes have positive feelings toward their fellow citizens, not an unreasonable assumption in most circumstances and an altogether reasonable one here considering their willingness to sacrifice on behalf of a social covenant. If tolerance of immigrant minorities involves merely the absence of ill will, a tolerant person will treat immigrants more favorably than will an intolerant one, because he dislikes them less than an intolerant person. But – and this is the critical point – if tolerance means merely an absence of ill will, a tolerant person will treat immigrants less favorably than he treats his fellow citizens, because he feels positively toward them and is indifferent, feeling neither positively nor negatively toward immigrants. In contrast, just so far as tolerance involves positive feelings of

good will and not simply the absence of feelings of ill will, a tolerant person will treat immigrants as favorably as he treats his fellow citizens.

Table 4.8 provides a test of the competing predictions following from the two conceptions of intolerance and tolerance. It shows the mean level of support for tougher requirements as a function of both whether the requirements are to be imposed on non-immigrants or immigrants and the level of intolerance toward immigrants.

Insert Table 4.8 Here

Just as one would expect, those who are most negative in their feelings about immigrants are far more likely to favor stricter requirements being imposed on the woman with the immigrant background. The double standard is stark. The mean level of support for tougher requirements among the most intolerant third for non-immigrant women is .47. Contrast this with a mean level of support of .69 for immigrant women. This amounts to a considerable change of views depending on whose head is on the block. On the one hand, only less than every second support tougher requirements for non-immigrant women. On the other hand, two in every three support them for immigrant women. No surprise here, except possibly for the sheer magnitude of the double standard.

Consider, now, the reactions of the third lowest scorers on the Hostility to Immigrants Index. Their responses to immigrant and non-immigrant women are dead even: .39 for the latter, .37 for the former. The balance of opinion is now strongly against stricter requirements, and equally so for immigrants as for native citizens. Tolerance, this result indicates, is not just the absence of ill-will. Those

who score low on a measure of intolerance show just as much good will toward them as toward their fellow-citizens.

To claim that tolerance is a positive force is to make a clear distinction between toleration and tolerance. Toleration is putting up with those you dislike or disagree with. Tolerance, we are claiming, goes farther. In the domain of the welfare state, "tolerance" of immigrants is not merely putting up with them even though you dislike them. Rather, tolerance of immigrants is a positive force, a desire to be protective and inclusive, a welcoming of their receiving a helping hand. To claim this is to make a strong claim. So we want to put the results of the Tougher Requirements experiment to a further test to determine if they can be replicated.²⁴

Recall that in the "Many Children" experiment respondents are asked whether welfare benefits should be reduced for a family. The family has many children and the father and the mother are on welfare. Half the time respondents are told that the family is an immigrant family, half the time not. Again our first question is, are those who score high on the Index of Affective Sentiments towards Immigrants merely expressing empty sentiments or are they ready to act on them? As Table 4.9 shows, the mean level of support for cutting benefits for a family on welfare with many children for those scoring high on the Index of Affect Toward Immigrants is .55. The mean level for doing the same when it is an immigrant family is strikingly different -- .74. The answer to our first question then is: yes, prejudice is not merely a matter of thinking ill of minorities; it induces people to treat them differently and worse.

²⁴ Only experiments conducted in the same round of studies in which the anti-immigrant items were asked can be used for purposes of replication.

Insert Table 4.9 Here

And what is the answer to our second question? Are those at the low end of Index of Hostility to Immigrants merely lacking in ill will to immigrants or do they actually have good will toward them? Looking Table 4.9, one can see that the largest number are protective of the non-immigrant family. Indeed, two thirds reject the alternative of a reduction welfare benefits. Still more strikingly, just as many reject a reduction in benefits for the immigrant family. The results of the Many Children experiment thus replicate those of the Tougher Requirements experiment. Those who score low on the Index of Hostility to Immigrants are not merely lacking in hostility toward them. Their response to them is as positive, inclusive, protective – indeed, as positive, inclusive, and protective as in their reactions to native Danes.

We take all of these findings as evidence for a re-conceptualization of measures of “prejudice” or “intolerance.” They rank order people not from the prejudiced to the least prejudiced. Instead they array them from those with the most negative attitudes and affect toward immigrants to those with the most positive attitudes and affect toward them. So far as this is indeed so far as this is so, a re-interpretation of research on the role of ‘prejudice’ in politics is in order.

Envoi

Our focal concern has been to understand how the social covenant underpinning the welfare state can generate opposing reactions to immigrants: sometimes equal treatment; sometimes discriminatory treatment. This is

paradoxical on its face. So we have christened this the Covenant Paradox. What then is our explanation of the paradox?

The moral premises of the Covenant are universalistic. All who are members of the national community are entitled to some specific benefits of the welfare state – e.g., medical care – whether or not they perform their part of the social bargain and discharge their duty to contribute to supporting the welfare state. But for many benefits, a person’s claim depends on meeting their responsibility to contribute to supporting the welfare state. In turn, there is no principled ground to support the right of a native Dane to these benefits and deny the right of an immigrant to them absent a reason to believe that they have failed to meet their responsibility to contribute to the collective effort.

Hence the gulf between retrospective and prospective judgments. An assertion that young immigrants will necessarily fail over the course of their life is a conversation-stopper example of prejudice; also, if educational opportunities and job assistance are withheld, a self-fulfilling prophecy. On the other hand, older immigrant minorities are disproportionately welfare beneficiaries for a variety of reasons, among them, a mismatch of jobs and labor skills, cultural values, and quite likely, given our own findings, raw prejudices. But whatever the reason, it is a fact that they tend not to have been active in the labor force, and it gives license to bigots to treat older immigrants as shirkers. Hence the Covenant Paradox: equal treatment for younger immigrants; discriminatory treatment of older ones.

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Table 4.1.

“Young Mother” Experiment: Support for Providing Extra Help with Child Care by Party

Party	Young Mother (N=536)	Young Immigrant Mother (N=515)
Left-Wing	.95 (.02)	.93 (.02)
Social Liberals	.92 (.03)	.88 (.03)
Social Democrats	.95 (.01)	.88 (.02)
Center-Right	.92 (.01)	.88 (.02)
Danish People’s Party	.90 (.04)	.79 (.06)
Overall Mean	.92 (.01)	.88 (.01)

Note: Entries are mean support for providing extra help with child care, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate greater support for providing extra help.

Table 4.2

“Tougher Requirements” Experiment: Support for Tougher Requirements for Receiving Welfare Payments by Party

Party	Young Man (N=329)	Young Immigrant Man (N=333)
Left-Wing	.68 (.07)	.69 (.06)
Social Liberals	.76 (.06)	.64 (.06)
Social Democrats	.76 (.04)	.75 (.04)
Center-Right	.84 (.03)	.78 (.03)
Danish People’s Party	.88 (.05)	.84 (.07)
Overall Mean	.79 (.02)	.75 (.02)

Note: Entries are mean support for tougher requirements for receiving welfare payments, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate greater support for tougher requirements.

Table 4.3

“Tougher Requirements” Experiment: Support for Tougher Requirements for Receiving Welfare Payments by Party

Party	Woman in Her 50's (N=340)	Immigrant Woman in Her 50's (N=331)
Left-Wing	.37 (.07)	.56 (.06)
Social Liberals	.46 (.07)	.54 (.07)
Social Democrats	.35 (.04)	.56 (.05)
Center-Right	.51 (.04)	.61 (.04)
Danish People's Party	.38 (.07)	.67 (.07)
Overall Mean	.45 (.02)	.57 (.02)

Note: Entries are mean support for tougher requirements for receiving welfare payments, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate greater support for tougher requirements.

Table 4.4

Many Children Experiment: Support for Cutting Welfare Benefits

Party	Family with Many Children (N=490)	Immigrant Family with Many Children (N=462)
Left-Wing	.19 (.04)	.25 (.05)
Social Liberals	.30 (.05)	.27 (.05)
Social Democrats	.33 (.04)	.46 (.04)
Center-Right	.53 (.03)	.72 (.06)
Danish People's Party	.53 (.06)	.72 (.06)
Overall Mean	.41 (.02)	.52 (.02)

Note: Entries are mean support for cutting welfare payments, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate cutting welfare payments.

Table 4.5**Ceiling Experiment: Hurt Immigrants**

Party	No Reason Given (N=277)	Hurt Immigrants (N=243)
Left-Wing	.31 (.06)	.35 (.08)
Social Liberals	.47 (.06)	.45 (.09)
Social Democrats	.44 (.05)	.56 (.06)
Center-Right	.68 (.04)	.76 (.04)
Danish People's Party	.74 (.07)	.86 (.05)
Overall Mean	.55 (.02)	.65 (.03)

Note: Entries are mean support for a ceiling on welfare benefits, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate imposing a ceiling. Higher values indicate greater support for tougher requirements.

Table 4.6

Ceiling Experiment: Hurt The Weakest

Party	No Reason Given (N=277)	Hurt The Weakest (N=283)
Left-Wing	.31 (.06)	.22 (.05)
Social Liberals	.47 (.06)	.28 (.07)
Social Democrats	.44 (.05)	.41 (.05)
Center-Right	.68 (.04)	.67 (.03)
Danish People's Party	.74 (.07)	.59 (.08)
Overall Mean	.55 (.02)	.52 (.03)

Note: Entries are mean support for a ceiling on welfare benefits, measured on a 0-1 scale, with standard errors in parentheses. Higher values indicate imposing a ceiling.

Table 4.7

Predicting Opposition to Start Help Program for Immigrants

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	.40 (.01)	.11 (.02)
Occupational Status	-.10** (.02)	-.03 (.02)
Libertarian Authoritarian		.07** (.03)
Affective Responses to Immigrants		.43** (.02)
Adjusted R ²	1.7%	24.7%
N	1753	1752

Note: Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable: Opposition to state financing Start Help with higher values indicating greater opposition. All variables are scored 0-1.

** p < .01

Table 4.8

**Support for Tougher Standards for Older Women by Immigrant Status
and Affective Sentiments toward Immigrants**

Affect Toward Immigrants	Mean Level of Support	
	Woman in Her 50's	Immigrant Woman in Her 50's
Lowest Third	.37 (.04)	.39 (.05)
Middle Third	.47 (.04)	.55 (.04)
Highest Third	.47 (.04)	.69 (.03)

Table 4.9

**Support for Cutting Benefits for Families on Welfare with Many Children by Immigrant Status
and Affective Sentiments toward Immigrants**

Affect Toward Immigrants	Mean Level of Support	
	Family with Many Children	Immigrant Family with Many Children
Lowest Third	.24 (.03)	.21 (.03)
Middle Third	.36 (.34)	.48 (.03)
Highest Third	.55 (.03)	.74 (.03)

Appendix A.1. Importance of Welfare Services by Party

How important is it that the government finance...	All		Left-Wing		Social Liberals		Social Democrats		Center-Right		Danish People's Party	
	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode
The health care sector	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Homecare for the elderly	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10
Disability pensions for persons who are physically worn out	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10
Education maintenance grants for students	8	10	10	10	8	10	9	10	8	8	8	10
Rehabilitation of drug addicts	8	10	9	10	8	10	8	10	8	8	8	10
Retraining for unemployed persons	8	10	8	10	8	8	8	10	7	8	8	10
Housing benefits for low income households			8	10	8	8	8	10	7	8	8	10

Note: Support is measured on a scale from 0 through 10: Higher values indicate greater support. Question wording: "I would now like to hear what you think about whether the state should be financing the following areas. Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates that it is not an area that the state should attend to, and 10 indicates that it is an area that is very important for the state to attend to. Should the state finance...?"

Appendix A.2. Importance of Financing Targeted Welfare Services by Party

How important is it that the government finance...	All		Left-Wing		Social Liberals		Social Democrats		Center-Right		Danish People's Party	
	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode	Media n	Mode
"Start Help" for refugees	7	10	8	10	8	10	7	10	6	5	5	5
Social welfare benefits for persons outside the labor market ¹	7	10	8	10	8	8	7	10	6	5	6	5
Family allowance benefits for families with many children?	7	8	8	10	7	8	8	10	7	5	5	5
Urban renewal projects in rundown residential areas	6	5	8	8	6	5	7	8	6	5	6	5

Note: Support is measured on a scale from 0 through 10: Higher values indicate greater support. Question wording: "I would now like to hear what you think about whether the state should be financing the following areas. Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates that it is not an area that the state should attend to, and 10 indicates that it is an area that is very important for the state to attend to. Should the state finance...?"

¹Danish wording of item: "Kontanthjælp til personer uden tilknytning til arbejdsmarkedet"