R. Johnston, K. Banting, W. Kymlicka, S. and Soroka, “National Identity and Support for the Welfare State,” *CJPS* 43:2 (June 2010)

**Overview**

Paper examines the role of national identity in sustaining public support for the welfare state. Liberal nationalist theorists argue that social justice programs/redistribution will be easier to achieve in states with strong national identities. Authors conclude that national identity does increase support for the welfare state among the affluent majority of Cdns, and it helps to protect the welfare state from the toxic effects of cultural suspicion. Authors find that the mechanisms by which this relationship plays out may be different than many theorist believe, and suggest an alternative theory – that the relationship between national identity and the welfare state is highly contingent, reflecting distinctive features of the hx and national narrative of each country. National identity may not have any general tendency to strengthen support for redistribution, but it may do so for those aspects of the welfare state seen as having played a particularly important role in building the nation or in enabling it to overcome particular challenges/crises.

**Background**

* Paper asks 2 questions:
  + Does national identity mitigate opposition to the welfare state and redistribution among high-income Cdns?
  + Does national identity mitigate any corrosive effects that ethnic diversity
* Nationalism/Nationhood facilitates “redistribution within the polity” both by generating a sense of ‘fellow-feeling’ and ‘sympathetic attachment to the interests’ of co-nationals, and by creating a sense of tryst in the willingness of others to reciprocate benefits when the need arises
  + Versions of this argument have become a core strand of the school of thought known as “liberal nationalism”
* Some commentators suggest that immigration and growing ethnic diversity add to factors eroding the redistributive state – in this interpretation, immigration acts to unsettle historic conceptions of community
* Miller sees national identity as playing a role in overcoming the corrosive effects of diversity on the welfare state
* Canada unique case study – nationhood in Canada a complex issue
* Results suggest that national identity has considerable significance for the welfare state in Canada – and at the most general level, the results provide support for the arguments advanced by liberal nationalists. Results:
  + National identity does increase general support for the welfare state among affluent respondents, however, the effect is most marked for healthcare (a universal program), but barely noticeable for pensions (another universal program), and redistribution to worst off
  + While national ID has an impact on both interpersonal trust and trust in govt, most important in strengthening pro-welfare state sentiments is the link with trust in govt
  + Interestingly, national identity itself promotes pro-immigrant sentiment – those with the strongest sense of national identity embrace immigration and immigrants more warmly then their less nationalist neighbours

**Conclusions**

The findings of the paper suggest that the liberal nationalist goal of building national identities that are simultaneously multicultural and solidaristic is not an impossibility, and that such national identities can help sustain the welfare state in multiethnic states. Hwr, the findings also suggest that this possibility is rooted in more complex and contingent processes than existing theories of liberal nationalism allow.