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11 Who Belongs? Assimilation, Integration, and Multiculturalism in the United States

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The myth and truth of the United States is that it is a land welcoming of immigrants.¹ In 2000, 11 percent of the population was foreign born, up from 8 percent in 1990. The numbers fluctuate over time, as does the salience of immigration in the news, depending on economic and social factors. In 2006 and 2007, immigration was often front-page news, especially because of the visible immigrant marches and boycotts organized in response to legislation proposed in Congress that ultimately failed. During 2008, however, immigration slid under the radar screen, as pundits, politicians, and the public focused on the presidential election. Throughout a period of intense public debate and even after immigration ceded center-stage to other issues, there were two strands of concern: do immigrants have a positive or negative impact on the country, and are immigrants members of the national community? These questions persist because their answers affect how the United States views its responsibilities to its immigrants—present and future—and what it expects in return. More generally, how immigrant-receiving countries address these questions affect how they manage (and embrace) the growing diversity of their populations.

Membership of a society can be defined in many different ways, and in this chapter I present five definitions that pertain to immigrants in the U.S. The most straightforward and simple definition equates membership with citizenship: the rules that govern citizenship and naturalization make clear the important features of membership in the eyes of the state. However, not even the US government treats membership and

citizenship as synonymous; therefore, one can also think of membership as defined by those who have what are considered the rights and responsibilities of membership. A third way to define membership is to be guided by public opinion. The American people have a unique view of who is ‘truly American,’ and their view does not necessarily coincide with governmental definitions or practice. A fourth mode of defining membership is to be guided by the views of immigrants themselves; do they consider that they are members of the US national community, and does this include or exclude their membership of other national communities? Finally, one can look at the behaviors of immigrants as indicators of membership: do they behave in ways that are largely indistinguishable from the behaviors of native-born Americans?

Why do these different definitions matter? Understanding the variety of views about who belongs in the national community is more than an academic exercise; beliefs about who is part of Us (and not Them) have a big impact on how the United States tries to unify its incredibly heterogeneous population into a cohesive nation via a range of public policies. Depending on how one conceptualizes membership, very different policies can come to mind as possible avenues for bringing together a wide range of peoples. While I focus on the U.S., my analysis can be applied to any number of countries around the world that are dealing with growing demographic heterogeneity, largely due to immigration. In other words, questions of membership matter not only for traditional immigrant-receiving countries like Australia and Canada, but also for countries like the Netherlands and France, where concerns about integration and social cohesion are much more recent, and where riots have sparked debates about how to balance multiculturalism and assimilation.

In these early years of the 21st century, the U.S. is steadily becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicity and race. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about one of every five persons living in the U.S. today is either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant. Racial and ethnic minorities make up about a third of the population and, collectively, are projected to become a majority in 2042. By 2050, the Hispanic population is expected to double, from 15 percent to 30 percent, and Blacks and Asians are estimated to compose 15 and 9 percent of the population, respectively. By 2032, less than half of all children will be non-Hispanic whites, and around that time almost 20 percent of US residents will be 65 and older. Race and age will interact so that a majority of the working age population that will provide benefits to senior citizens will not be of the same race or ethnicity as the majority of the beneficiaries. Sheer demographics portend multiculturalism in fact, if not in policies. Which multicultural or assimilation policies are implemented to cope with this diversity rests, to a certain extent, on views of who belongs in the national community.

Citizenship as membership

United States citizenship is normally granted at birth or via naturalization. Both *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* are guiding principles of American citizenship, which means that individuals born on American soil or of parents who are American citizens are considered citizens.² In general, legal immigrants are allowed to naturalize after residing in the U.S. for a required period of time and after passing a naturalization examination that requires knowledge of English and of American history, values, and government. The residency and examination requirements can vary, depending on whether an applicant is a spouse of

an American citizen, is serving in the US military, or is a child or an elderly immigrant. What is required of all applicants, however, is that they exhibit all of the following: a good moral character, attachment to the principles of the Constitution, and a favorable disposition to the U.S. For the bulk of applicants, if one has not committed criminal acts and swears the Citizenship Oath, these requirements are met. Whether or not native-born Americans feel that immigrants sufficiently meet the criteria is a separate issue.

By satisfying these requirements, about a third of the foreign-born population in the United States has naturalized. In 2007, 660,477 immigrants became new US citizens, most of them from Mexico, India, the Philippines, China and Vietnam (Rytina and Caldera 2008). The more time immigrants spend in the U.S., the more likely they are to become citizens: 82 percent who entered prior to 1970 have been naturalized, while only 13 percent of those who entered in 1990 or later have been naturalized. While the legal residence requirement is generally 5 years, most immigrants do not naturalize in that time period, whether for personal or bureaucratic reasons.³

The country's rules guiding citizenship are assimilationist in nature, emphasizing the ability of all immigrants to transform fully into American citizens with time. These rules both structure and follow one of the distinctive characteristics of the American national community, which is that membership is defined normatively (at least in theory, if not always in practice): Americans are united not by bloodlines but by shared beliefs about 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' (Gleason 1980). In the government's eyes at least, anyone can *become* an American, given enough time for socialization.

If one conceives of membership as being the same as citizenship, then a certain set of policies suggest themselves as solutions to problems of social cohesion. For example,

one can readily think of ways to ease naturalization requirements so that more noncitizens become citizens. By enabling more nonmembers to become members, they would presumably have a greater attachment to and investment in the national community. Or, one could propose that requirements for citizenship be made more stringent because naturalization is currently too easy. By making citizenship more exclusive, citizens would presumably constitute a more homogeneous group, at least with respect to whatever qualifications are needed for citizenship. However, it is hard to see how this second policy option would be appropriate for an increasingly diverse country because it would seem to imply a large body of permanent and disgruntled second-class citizens. During the last decade, Germany moved away from precisely this policy when it decided to ease naturalization requirements so that, for example, third generation Turks born in Berlin can feel a greater sense of attachment to their country of residence via German citizenship.

Other policy options are implied by other definitions of membership, and the fact that particular conceptions encourage us to ignore certain solutions to problems of social cohesion at the expense of others will be more evident as these other definitions are elaborated. I hope to make it clear that no healthy immigrant-receiving polity can afford to focus excessively on any single definition of membership.

Membership defined by rights and responsibilities

Citizenship status, however important, does not mean that everyone without this legal designation is outside the national community. The US Constitution extends many rights and responsibilities to ‘persons’ rather than ‘citizens,’ and all residents are counted in the

Census, regardless of citizenship status (Aleinikoff 2002). Because the Census enumeration is used to determine Congressional districts, all residents therefore ostensibly enjoy political representation. Non-citizens are entitled to a number of other rights from the national state, including public education for undocumented immigrant children. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (known popularly as ‘welfare reform’) terminated a range of social welfare benefits to legal residents, although some were later reinstated either by the federal government or local governments. When it comes to political participation, aside from voting, serving on juries, and making campaign contributions, the doors are relatively open. Until the 1920s, noncitizens were even allowed to vote in many local and statewide elections across the U.S. (Hayduk 2006).

The concept of ‘post-national citizenship’ has been developed in some European countries to account for extending a range of social welfare benefits and rights to non-citizens (Soysal 1995) because, it is argued, the meaning of citizenship has been eroded by separating welfare benefits and rights from citizenship. While the argument has not been made that American citizenship is losing its meaning, rights distinct from citizenship are certainly present in the U.S.

Responsibilities are also not limited to citizens. All young men—regardless of their status as citizens, legal permanent residents, or undocumented immigrants—are required to register for selective service in the military. While there is little to no likelihood of military conscription being reintroduced, Selective Service is a ‘backup system to provide manpower to the U.S. Armed Forces’ (sss.gov). The burden of defending the national community—symbolically or not—does not therefore fall only to citizens. All non-

citizens also have to pay a range of taxes and in this way they help pay for social services and public institutions in their communities.

Defining membership by rights and responsibilities focuses attention on certain questions about remedies for a ‘Balkanization’ of the U.S. Would adding or withdrawing rights or responsibilities from non-citizens affect social cohesion in the nation? If rights were added, one could imagine approaching Soysal’s (1995) post-national citizenship, by which migrants enjoy a range of social, economic, and even political benefits regardless of citizenship. While this might make non-citizens happier and foster a sense of gratitude, past literature on welfare in the U.S. does not suggest that rights and benefits alone will necessarily lead to greater social cohesion. It is also difficult to imagine how adding responsibilities to or taking away rights and responsibilities from non-citizens would increase attachment to the U.S. as a whole.

Membership defined by American public opinion

The examples provided above of extending rights and responsibilities to non-citizens are legal measures taken by the government. However, ordinary Americans’ views of the boundaries of their national community may diverge from the boundaries drawn by government laws and policies. In fact, the official boundaries may not be the most important politically. Notions of assimilation and incorporation—of becoming American, above and beyond what is required by the naturalization examination—are intertwined with popular definitions of what it means to belong to the American community.

While the idea of a melting pot has been present in Americans’ minds since the 18th century, what sits at the bottom of this ‘pot’ has never been altogether clear (Glazer

1997). Who is considered a quintessential member of the national community today? To answer this question, I examine public opinion about the importance of traits that make someone a ‘true American’ (Citrin et al. 1990).⁴ The 1996 and 2004 General Social Surveys (GSS) are face-to-face national surveys conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago that asked respondents the following questions:

Some people say the following things are important for being truly American. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is...

- 1) To have been born in America
- 2) To have lived in America for most of one's life
- 3) To be a Christian
- 4) To be able to speak English
- 5) To have American citizenship
- 6) To feel American
- 7) To respect America's political institutions and laws
- 8) To have American ancestry (asked only in 2004)

The response options were very important, fairly important, not very important, and not important at all.

About one in five Americans surveyed thought that all of these characteristics are ‘very important’ in making someone ‘truly American,’ and less than 1 percent said that none of them is important. Furthermore, the fact that a quarter of the 1996 respondents (and over a third of those in 2004) believe that native-born Christians who have lived in the country all their lives are the prototypical true American belies the myth of the melting pot. No level of assimilation by immigrants could transform them into true Americans in the minds of this sizeable proportion of the population.

Native-born, non-Hispanic whites were not the only persons with this conception of true Americans. For example, over 40 percent of the Hispanic respondents in the 2004 GSS said that being born in the U.S. is necessary for being a true American. A majority

of whites, blacks and Hispanics agreed that being Christian, living most of one's life in the US, speaking English, feeling American, and having citizenship are all traits necessary for being a true American.⁵ These quite specific conceptions of a 'true American' do not preclude immigrants from being considered patriotic Americans, however. As part of a national survey about immigration conducted by National Public Radio/ Kaiser Family Foundation/ Harvard University in 2004 (Immigration Survey), when native-born Americans were asked if they think most immigrants love America more or less than most other Americans, 60 percent said there was no difference or immigrants loved America even more.

Obviously, how one defines a '*true*' member may not determine the limits of who is considered an *average* or *typical* member, and a new member may be considered as just as loyal to the community as an old one. But, visions of the true American nevertheless influence attitudes about what immigrants need to do in order to become better, if not ideal, members of the national community.

If membership is defined by public attitudes, how is the weaving together of disparate strands in the American community affected? Views of membership determined by images of a true American have a strong influence on popular support for assimilation, rather than multicultural, policies. At the same time, the non-immigrant public needs to be persuaded to develop a more inclusive sense of what it means to be American, so that newcomers feel welcome to become members. A definition of membership guided by public opinion suggests then a campaign to change 'hearts and minds' is more necessary for social cohesion than a campaign to alter the legal distinction between nonmembers and citizens. Of course, the United States has long experience with

inter-group conflict and it has learned the importance of institutions that regulate civil rights, above and beyond pleas for brotherly feelings. Simple media campaigns would not have helped de-segregate schools, voting booths, or workplaces, without the force of the federal government and its laws. Thus, although ‘hearts and minds’ cannot be ignored, they cannot be the sole basis of cohesion.

Membership defined by attitudes of immigrants

Immigrants themselves may define membership in terms of their attitudes about the country and how they perceive themselves to be situated in it. I noted earlier that a majority of native-born Americans thought immigrants love the country as much as, if not more than, other Americans (the 2004 Immigration Survey). When immigrants were asked the same question, 72 percent said there was no difference or that immigrants loved America *more* than those who were native-born. Similarly, if one compares immigrants and native-born Americans in that same survey, there is little difference in patriotism: 87 percent of native-born citizens and 84 percent of the immigrant citizens are extremely or very proud to be Americans.

Patriotism is not a zero-sum commodity, and some pundits and scholars are concerned that today’s trans-nationalism is having a negative effect on immigrants’ ability or desire to develop ties and loyalty to the U.S. (Renshon 2001; Huntington 2004). However, evidence from the Immigration Survey indicates that these concerns are baseless: when dual citizens and non-citizens were asked how they identify, 36 percent responded that they thought of themselves mostly as an American, and 48 percent identified with their two countries (the U.S. and their home country) equally. So, even

among those with official (i.e., citizenship) ties to another country, only a small proportion considered their non-American identity paramount. Perceptions and realities do not quite match when it comes to the ties immigrants keep with their home countries. Sixty percent of native-born Americans in the Immigration Survey thought that recent immigrants send most of the money they earn in the U.S. back to their home country; however, 61 percent of immigrants reported that they do not regularly send *any* money back. So, in terms of attitudes about and attachment to the U.S., immigrants are largely indistinguishable from native-born Americans.

Concerns about *immigrants'* attachment to the U.S. often shifts more or less imperceptibly to a discussion of whether different *racial and ethnic minorities* consider themselves members of the national community. For example, in his 2004 book, *Who Are We?* Samuel P. Huntington expresses much concern that Latinos in the U.S.—immigrant or not—are not adopting the nation's creedal Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and are thereby threatening the social fabric while perhaps even harboring hopes that he southwestern U.S. will someday again be part of Mexico. Responding to Huntington thesis, Citrin et al. (2007) tested a number of its claims. In the 1995, 1999 and 2000 Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS), respondents were asked: 'When it comes to political and social matters, how do you primarily think of yourself: just as an American, both as an American and (ethnicity), or only as (ethnicity)?' Ninety-five percent of whites said 'just American' or 'both', as did 83 percent of blacks, 68 percent of Hispanics, and 77 percent of Asians. Furthermore, among Hispanics born in the U.S. the proportion answering 'both' rose to 90 percent, and for those who had naturalized the percentage was 84 percent. Citrin et al. also provide evidence that the majority of whites, blacks, and

Hispanics love America, feel pride in the American flag, and are proud to be American, confirming the findings by Rodolfo de la Garza et al (1996) that Mexican Americans' patriotism is equal to that of Anglos'. Therefore, whether one thinks in terms of immigrants' *or* racial minorities' membership in and love of the U.S., it appears that both population segments share many of the same attitudes as native-born Americans.

Attitudes about the American dream—or an idealized hope about what can be attained through membership—are also remarkably similar across groups. According to the 2004-2005 National Politics Study, which involved a telephone survey of whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians, and black Caribbeans conducted by the University of Michigan, the vast majority of all groups express pride in being American and support the proposition that America is a land of opportunity. In fact, Asians, Hispanics, and Caribbeans are *more* likely than whites to believe in the American Dream.

Overall, then, *all* Americans typically express pride in membership of the national community, even to the point of chauvinism. When asked about their citizenship preference, 95 percent of whites in the 2004 GSS agreed with the statement, 'I would rather be a citizen of America than of any other country in the world,' 88 percent of blacks also agreed, as did 84 percent of Hispanics. The percentages were very similar in the 1996 GSS, when 83 percent of whites, 74 percent of blacks, and 73 percent of Hispanics agreed that 'America is a better country than most other countries'.

Perhaps because of public opinion as well as their own attitudes about what it means to be American, immigrants may feel the need to prove themselves ideal members of their new community by speaking only English at home, serving in the military, or waving American flags. Given the strong patriotism they express towards their new

country, perhaps one should not be surprised that since it was established many decades ago, more than 20 percent of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients have been immigrants. This Medal is the highest decoration granted by the United States, and its recipient has risked his or her life in actions considered to be well beyond the call of military duty. Immigrant recipients of the Medal are disproportionately more numerous than native-born Americans.

Clearly, one may use membership as self-defined by immigrants to craft policies that enhance social cohesion. One policy would be a public campaign to convince immigrants that they need to develop a greater sense of attachment to the U.S. in order to achieve greater success, whether it is defined politically, economically, or socially. Simultaneously, one could make the general public more aware of the similar amounts of patriotism and national attachment that immigrants and native-born Americans display. Of course, given that definitions of membership vary a great deal in the minds of non-citizens, naturalized citizens, second-generation immigrants, and other native-born Americans, such campaigns of persuasion would be difficult to devise and execute. Social cohesion, according to some, demands assimilation by immigrants; for others, cohesion does not require homogeneity and a greater embrace of multiculturalism by the U.S. is the only proper course. As one considers the different, more psychological bases of membership and the policies implied by different conceptions of it, merits of the more abstract and universal definitions implied by institutional requirements for formal citizenship acquire added weight.

Membership defined by similarity to other members

Waters and Jimenez (2005) describe the ongoing, steady progress of immigrant assimilation in the United States in this way:

The last comprehensive review of sociological research on immigration and assimilation [Massey 1981]... pointed to significant evidence in sociological research that, on balance, [Latin American and Asian] immigrants were well on their way to becoming fully integrated into American society. Although there was variation between groups, research on spatial concentration, intermarriage, and socioeconomic advancement from one generation to the next all suggested that these immigrant groups were becoming Americans in much the same way that European immigrant groups did before them. Twenty-four years after this last review, we find continued support for this position (105-106).

Still more recent research on the intergenerational nature of assimilation is consistent with what Waters and Jimenez found. For example, a comprehensive study of second generation youth in New York City reveals great variation in educational and occupational attainment, depending on the ethnicity or nationality of the individual, but also economic mobility at the aggregate level (Kasinitz et al. 2008). On measures of socioeconomic status, 40 percent of second generation youth have already exceeded their immigrant parents' statuses. Contrary to the predictions of segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993), studies of second generation immigrants show that few experience downward mobility resulting from overly rapid Americanization; but few experience upward mobility if they remain in an ethnic enclave (Telles and Ortiz 2008).

Of course, economic mobility does not guarantee cultural or political inclusion or parity. There is clear evidence, however, that immigrants are assimilating culturally. Intermarriage is one of Waters and Jimenez's measures of cultural assimilation.⁶ The rates of exogamy have increased for all immigrant groups, particularly for Latinos and Asians. Almost 8 percent of all marriages in 2006 were interracial or interethnic as

defined by the Census (i.e. Hispanic and non-Hispanic), up from 3 percent in 1980 (Current Population Survey). As Farley observes,

We no longer think of the Anglos and the Saxons; we think of English. We no longer speak of Ligurians, the Piedmontese, and Sicilians; we speak of the Italians. Are we not witnessing a process of assimilation as a result of increasing rates of racial exogamy in the marriage market? (1999, 124).

In addition to intermarriage rates, language is also important, both as a major aspect of acculturation and an important precursor of naturalization and political engagement. According to the 2002 American Community Survey, 83 percent of the foreign-born speak a language other than English at home, with 45 percent of them speaking Spanish (Deardorff 2003). However, by the second generation, over 80 percent of all Latinos (not living with their parents) speak only English or speak English very well (Citrin et al 2007). According to the Census Bureau, fewer than 9 percent of the foreign-born classify themselves as limited English speakers. It is clear that, given time, immigrants resemble native-born Americans culturally as well as economically.

While politics is not a typical realm in the study of assimilation, having a voice in the government is an important factor in the incorporation of immigrants into American society. Political engagement indicates that an individual considers herself enough of a member to have a stake in what is going on and a right to be involved in politics. Both citizenship and nativity have an effect on political action, even for types of participation that do not require citizenship or native birth. For example, in a study of Asian Americans, Wong et al. (2008) find that native-born Asians are two to three times more active politically than non-citizens, with naturalized Asians falling in between.

Americans' propensities to register and vote in elections are affected by factors like political awareness, socioeconomic status, and social network resources. For

immigrants, however, a number of additional factors affect whether they register and then vote, and these include generational status, duration of stay in the U.S., and political mobilizations aimed at preventing anti-immigrant legislation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). While there is evidence that language ability affects immigrant voting (Cho 1999), there is also research that raises doubts about the efficacy of multilingual ballots and native-language campaign ads in raising immigrants' turnout for elections (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2008). Residential context matters, although the factors that most affect turnout are the overall degree of poverty and proportion of non-citizens in areas where immigrants live, rather than high concentrations of Latinos or co-ethnic mobilization (DeSipio 1996; de la Garza et al. 2008).

What motivates this research is a clear difference that is observed in levels of registration and turnout between immigrants and the native-born population. In the November 1996 presidential and congressional elections, 71 percent of the native-born citizen population were registered and 59 percent voted; among the naturalized citizen population, 63 percent were registered and 53 percent voted (Bass and Casper 1999). These gaps have not narrowed over the past decade. In 2006, naturalized citizens were 52 percent less likely to register and 42 percent less likely to vote compared to native-born citizens. Looking from 1996 to 2006, Crissey and File (1998) find that political participation by naturalized citizens did not increase over time, and there is even some evidence that it is decreasing compared to native-born citizens.⁷

Even if these objective indicators point to the economic, social and political assimilation of immigrants across generations, there is a question whether a distinct

immigrant vote exists at any given time. Do their political preferences differ from native-born Americans? It should be noted that few pundits or scholars actually discuss whether there is a distinct *immigrant* vote; the assumption is that ethnicity trumps immigration status when it comes to voting. Part of the explanation for this lies in the availability of data. Below I look at immigrants' beliefs in particular, but also whether there is a distinctive 'ethnic' vote.

If there are marked differences of political opinion between immigrants and non-immigrants, one would imagine that immigration policy would be most salient topic. According to the Immigration Survey, however, 52 percent of native-born Americans and 50 percent of immigrants think there are too many immigrants in the U.S. today. Fifty percent of immigrants and 54 percent of non-immigrants also think that most recent immigrants to the United States are here illegally. If one looks at broader political beliefs and predispositions like partisanship, immigrants and non-immigrants are also similar in their levels of identification with Democrats and Independents. In the Immigration Survey, immigrants were found slightly less likely to identify as Republican than non-immigrants, and were more likely to give a "Don't Know" response. There was a similar pattern for ideology: immigrants and non-immigrants were similar in identifications as liberal or moderate, though immigrants were less likely to identify as conservative than native-born Americans.

If one looks at voting, the pattern mimics to a large extent party identification, at least in recent elections. Data from the General Social Surveys show that, on average, a majority of both immigrants and non-immigrants recalled voting for the same presidential candidate between 1972 and 1996; in the 2000 and 2004 elections, however, a majority

of immigrants said that they voted for the losing Democratic candidates. One caveat in interpreting these data is that the number of immigrants in each national survey sample is relatively small, fluctuating from a low of 40 to a high of 246; another caveat is that voting recall can be problematic, especially when a respondent is asked months, if not years, after an election about who they voted for. Nevertheless, it appears that immigrants have voted largely like their non-immigrant compatriots, with a slight turn toward the Democratic Party since 2000.

There are greater intergroup differences if one looks at votes for presidential candidates, disaggregated according to the race and ethnicity of voters, recorded in election exit polls compiled by the *New York Times*. The exit polls between 1984 and 2008 show that a plurality of whites consistently voted for the Republican presidential candidate, while the majority of blacks and Hispanics voted for Democratic candidates. For elections at which data on Asians were collected, it appears that their vote preferences shifted: in 1992 and 1996, a plurality of Asians' votes went to Republican candidates, while in 2000, 2004, and 2008, a majority voted for Democrats. While these data tell us that whites, blacks, and Hispanics have been pretty consistent in their presidential choices, they also tell us that no single racial or ethnic group has backed the winners consistently over the last quarter century. Despite close and heated election contests, subsequent power transitions have been unmarked by violence or major protest demonstrations on the part of those who supported losing candidates.

If membership is defined by the similarity of immigrants to native-born Americans—economically, culturally, and politically—then what policies might flow from this definition? Given that research has shown that immigrants are, on average,

coming to resemble native-born Americans across generations, one suggestion would be to adopt policies that speed up the process more or less forcibly. However, such a practice would resemble the much-scorned ‘Americanization program’ of yore. A more palatable and feasible suggestion would be to channel greater government monies to fund over-subscribed programs like English-As-A-Second-Language, which enable immigrants to adapt to the U.S. and perhaps naturalize more quickly. Alternatively, multicultural policies that do not force immigrants to make painful choices—between, for example, speaking only English or only one’s native language—may enable them to embrace the new along with the old more easily. One might also make better known to the public and political leaders what scholars have known for decades: that immigrants are similar to native-born Americans not only in attitudes, but in major aspects of their behavior as well.

Conclusions

As we ponder issues of social cohesion and whether immigrants are members of their new societies, questions about we define membership bulk large. When is someone a member? Each definition of membership implies a different set of policies to enhance social cohesion. Different definitions point to different balances of assimilation and multiculturalism.

Concerns about whether immigrants can become full members of American society date back to the country’s founding. Although the Founding Fathers did not make English the official language, Benjamin Franklin worried that the German immigrants in Pennsylvania and other immigrants did not and probably would not assimilate:

[The immigrants] who come [to America] are generally of the most ignorant stupid sort of their own nation, ... Not being used to liberty, they know not how to make a modest use of it ... now they come in droves ... Few of their children in the country learn English...(Bigelow 1887, 291)⁸

Franklin believed that for immigrants to become members they must resemble native-born Americans. His concerns were echoed at the start of the 20th century—by both the public and Congress—with the arrival of immigrants from Asia, who were barred outright from naturalization, and from Southern and Eastern Europe. The federal government pursued a program of ‘Americanization’ designed to force immigrants to become ‘proper’ Americans, whether they liked it or not (Tichenor 2002). At about the same time, however, Horace Kallen (___) made an argument in support of cultural pluralism—celebrating the diversity of cultures brought to the U.S. by immigrants—that resonated with those opposed to Americanization. In many ways, assimilation and multiculturalism have walked hand in hand throughout the country’s history, as have varying definitions of what it means to be a member of the national community.

A main difficulty in assessing how American elites and ordinary citizens are currently trying to realize the motto *E Pluribus Unum* is that both assimilation and multiculturalism can be defined in multiple ways (Alba and Nee 2003; Kymlicka 2001). Moreover, whereas assimilation is used specifically to discuss the integration of immigrants into society, multiculturalism’s focus includes immigrants, native-born racial and ethnic minorities, *and* the mainstream majority. Integration or segregation hinge on the success of both assimilation and multiculturalism.

Does assimilation entail the following? Teaching in using foreign languages officially (as advocated by the Official English movement) should not be permitted; cultural/ethnic organizations, festivals and cultural celebrations should be discouraged; a

whole-hearted embrace of American culture, economy, and politics should be demanded. The federal government mandates none of these actions or practices. Does multiculturalism entail the following? Bilingual education, ballots and other official documents should be provided in multiple languages; electoral districts should accord at least roughly with ethnic or racial concentrations; dual citizenship should be allowed without qualification; affirmative action programs should be extended to underprivileged immigrant communities. The federal government currently implements many of these measures, albeit in varying degree. Nevertheless, as DeSipio and De la Garza observe, ‘The U.S. has had few, if any, national public policies or programs that are designed to recognize, legitimize, and encourage the maintenance of diverse cultures and languages’ (___, 202). Instead, the government seeks to ‘celebrate, but not legally enshrine, diversity in the culture,’ and it tries to incorporate immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities as individuals, not groups. In short, the government adheres to an assimilation ideology even while recognizing groups’ attempts to remedy the discriminations and disadvantages that they experience (Glazer 1997).

Public opinion mirrors this institutional ambivalence to some extent. The American public clearly makes a distinction between public and private spheres, and what it thinks membership requires in the former is not necessarily what it regards as essential in the latter. As Citrin et al. (2001) explain:

The survey evidence...shows that a majority of the American public opposes the articulation of ethnic identities in a form that competes with, rather than complements, the older liberal ideal of a common civic identity...This preference for an inclusive nationalism coexists with the widespread acceptance of pluralism in cultural practices (266).

So, for example, even though a majority of Americans support the idea of making English the official language and believe that ethnic organizations promote separatism, a majority also support bilingual ballots, bilingual education, oppose requiring that only English be used in public schools, and do not believe that ethnic histories receive too much attention in schools. Americans are pretty evenly split between those who would advocate that groups should blend into larger society, those who support the idea of racial and ethnic groups maintaining their distinctive cultures, and those somewhere between the two poles. However, even among those who support the maintenance of distinct cultures, very few believe that the government should help groups manifesting these cultures; instead, they believe that such matters should be left to the groups themselves, thus marking a line between public and private spheres.

Public opinion is also the main driving force behind historical and contemporary concerns about membership and social cohesion. Debates about who is a member of the American national community have never been focused primarily on whether immigrants are meeting or eliding naturalization requirements; or about whether non-citizens should be fighting in the armed forces; or about immigrants promoting treasonous ideas or trying to establish sovereign nations within US territory. Naturalization requirements, after all, have changed very little over time. ‘Who Are We?’ fears have long been driven by concerns about who is a true American, whether immigrants want to become Americans, and whether immigrants are assimilating. When thinking about immigrants and social cohesion problem it is important to bear in mind that the driving impetus for all such concerns are public attitudes, not laws and not demographic facts about the extent to which immigrants approximate native-born Americans. However, merely relying on

public opinion to manage the affairs of a society with strong commitments to equality and individual freedoms would risk tyrannies of the majority that have dictated racism and ethnocentrism in US immigration and immigrant policies (as well as many other domestic policies) in the past. Wise policy requires an understanding and acceptance of membership's multiple definitions and judicious policies that nurture a diverse *and* cohesive society.

Endnotes

¹ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

² Historically, there have been many violations of these principles (see, for example, King 2001). I argue elsewhere that *jus meritum* is also a guiding principle of American citizenship from the beginning of the country's history: in exchange for military service to the country, noncitizens are granted citizenship (Wong 2007; Wong and Cho 2006).

³ Context may also affect naturalization rates. For example, the number of Mexican immigrants who naturalized almost doubled between 2006 and 2007 (Watanabe 2008). There were a number of factors that contributed to this rise: a steep fee increase scheduled to take effect; a highly visible national debate over immigration; a large, coordinated campaign by Spanish-language media and immigrant advocacy groups to encourage immigrants to naturalize; and a push by the Bush administration in support of assimilation. (In 2008, the numbers applying for naturalization dropped.) The context of one's home country may also drive or delay naturalization. Jones-Correa (1998) notes that an immigrant's desire to return to his or her home country reflects, to a certain extent, the relative living conditions and status of the immigrant in both countries. For example, he finds that women from more rigidly patriarchal societies to be more interested in naturalization than their husbands, who often had lost status in their move to the U.S.

⁴ For a more in-depth look at how people define the boundaries of their national community and how these definitions affect their notions of duty and obligation, see Wong (forthcoming).

⁵ Schildkraut extends this research by exploring more civic participation aspects of American identity, but she also asks how important being white is to being a true American. Only a very small minority agrees to this explicit question (Schildkraut 2007). However, experimental work by Devos and Banaji (2005) using an implicit association test shows that for many Americans, “white” does equal “American.”

⁶ It should be noted that intermarriage and exogamy are defined as marriages between individuals of different races or ethnicities, *not* between immigrants and non-immigrants. In some ways, intermarriage is an odd measure of *immigrant* assimilation today.

⁷ Another type of political participation that requires citizenship is running for office. The requirements vary for local elections, but to run for the U.S. House of Representatives, an immigrant must be a citizen for seven years, and to run for Senator, he or she must be a citizen for nine years. So, when one thinks about the normative question of how many immigrants *should* be serving in Congress, one needs to consider this additional tenure requirement, on top of the residency requirement for naturalization. And, in order to run for President of the United States, the candidate must be a “natural born citizen” (i.e., not an immigrant).

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