

UNITY IN DIVERSITY?

Bridging Models of Multiculturalism and Immigrant Integration

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Abstract

This article considers how well the existing sociological literature on immigrant integration and assimilation responds to public fears over multiculturalism. The current backlash against multiculturalism rests on both its perceived negative effects for immigrants' socioeconomic integration and its failure to encourage civic and political cohesion. I offer a brief review of multiculturalism as political theory and public policy, demonstrating that multiculturalism addresses questions of citizenship and political incorporation, not socioeconomic integration. We have growing evidence that multiculturalism does not hurt immigrant citizenship or political integration, and might facilitate such processes. We know much less about the relationship between multiculturalism and socioeconomic outcomes. I discuss how sociologists have developed useful models of immigrants' socioeconomic assimilation but have paid scant attention to civic or political outcomes. They also have not adequately addressed the relationship between socioeconomic and political integration. We can, nonetheless, extrapolate from existing scholarship, and I outline two models of political integration that seem to emerge from the sociology of U.S. immigration: one of individual-level political assimilation, another of group-based political incorporation. I conclude by offering a number of hypotheses about the importance of "groupedness" for politics and the relationship between political action, multiculturalism, and socioeconomic integration.

Keywords: Immigration, Political Incorporation, Multiculturalism, Civic Citizenship, Assimilation

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen the retreat, if not demise, of multiculturalism in numerous Western liberal democracies. Among its flaws, critics have especially attacked multiculturalism's apparent failure to integrate immigrants into host societies. Certain concerns center on socioeconomic exclusions. Multiculturalism is believed to encourage immigrants' self-segregation and thus to impede their integration into

mainstream social and economic structures (e.g., Koopmans et al., 2005). A second, equally loud complaint focuses on civic and political integration. Some critics of multiculturalism view immigrants' cultures, values, and insular behaviors as antithetical to the liberal democratic creed that unites citizens in Western countries, while certain liberal theorists attack multiculturalism for its emphasis on collective rights and culture over individual rights and universalism (e.g., Barry 2001). Scholars have consequently noted a shift away from public endorsement of multiculturalism and toward stronger policies and language favoring cultural and civic assimilation (Brubaker 2001; Entzinger 2003; Joppke 2004).

The backlash against multiculturalism can be seen in many immigrant-receiving countries. The United Kingdom's Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act of 2002 introduced a citizenship ceremony to mark the importance of and foster pride in British citizenship. Politicians in the Netherlands have dropped the rhetoric of multiculturalism, instead passing the 2003 Law on Dutch Citizenship, which requires immigrants to demonstrate oral and written knowledge of the Dutch language, as well as Dutch politics and society. Some Dutch politicians have even suggested an outright ban on wearing the full-length *burka* in public, a debate echoed in France's 2004 legislation forbidding Muslim head scarves (or any "ostentatious" religious symbol) in public schools. In Canada, the province of Quebec established a special "Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences" in 2007, which heard repeated claims that immigrants in Quebec remain too far apart from the French-speaking majority and demand too many cultural and religious accommodations. Even in the United States, where arguably the dominant axes of debate over immigration focus on economic and security concerns, sociocultural worries still capture public and scholarly attention, as seen in the controversy over Samuel Huntington's fear that Hispanic migration will dilute American "core values" (Huntington 2004b) and claims that multiculturalism is a key culprit in the "disuniting" of the United States (Schlesinger 1998). Such complaints are heard across the Western, industrialized world.

These debates illuminate a hole in social scientists' theories of (variously) assimilation, integration, or incorporation. What are the processes by which immigrants become part of the civic and political structures of a new country? What are the relationships among economic, social, cultural, civic, and political integration? How does the political theory of multiculturalism complement or undermine processes of integration?

In this article, I consider how prominent sociological models of assimilation make sense of political and civic integration, or fail to do so. I examine this literature in the context of political theory about multiculturalism, which I outline in the first section of the article. I suggest that assertions of multiculturalism's failure regarding socioeconomic inclusion misread the goals or claims of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is, above all, a theory of political inclusion and citizenship. As such, there is good evidence for its success in various countries. In particular, I draw on a comparative study of immigrants' political integration in the United States and Canada to support my case.

Yet multiculturalists deal poorly with socioeconomic integration, an area better theorized by sociologists of immigration. Sociologists have long focused on socioeconomic integration (e.g., education, income, employment), residential dispersion, acculturation (including self-identities), language shift, and intermarriage to measure assimilation. They have been remarkably silent on political and civic integration. Indeed, sociologists' assimilation models offer limited purchase on questions of civic and political integration, especially how these processes intersect with other

forms of integration. Is socioeconomic integration a necessary precursor to political integration, or is political mobilization a pathway to better social and economic outcomes? Are political and socioeconomic integration complementary, do they work independently but in parallel, or is there a trade-off between the two?

In the second half of the article, I take on some of these questions. Sociology appears to offer two contradictory models of political integration: one focuses on individual-based political assimilation, the other on group-centered political incorporation. Throughout the article, I develop an argument about the fundamental importance of “groupedness” in politics, a source of power and a resource that sometimes appears at odds with other types of integration. On balance, there is reason to believe that multiculturalism facilitates political integration, and that this, in turn, facilitates socioeconomic integration. Nevertheless, as I suggest in the conclusion, these relationships should be viewed as hypotheses that need further testing. If the line of reasoning outlined here holds up to further empirical scrutiny, it suggests that the European turn away from multiculturalism is too hasty, and that the United States should move away from an exclusive focus on border control to also address integration policies.

CIVIC CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM

Over the past two decades, the “civic” notion of nationalism has arguably become the dominant understanding of citizenship in many Western countries of immigration (Joppke 2004). Through the 1980s and into the mid-1990s, scholars and policymakers usually made distinctions between “ethnic” and “civic” citizenship across immigrant-receiving countries (Brubaker 1989, 1992), contrasting countries where ethnic conceptions of citizenship stem from bonds of common descent (e.g., Germany before 2000; Japan), to countries where civic citizenship stems primarily from political attachments rather than ethnic or cultural ones (e.g., France; the United States). The distinction was judged relevant since ethnic citizenship presumably excludes immigrants from mainstream civic and political life, while civic citizenship is more open to integrating immigrants (Brubaker 1992; Koopmans et al., 2005). However, research by Ruud Koopmans and colleagues shows that, from 1990 to 2002, countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands all made significant policy changes toward more civic, territorial notions of citizenship (Koopmans et al., 2005, p. 73).

Models of Civic Citizenship

Within this “civic” model of citizenship, we nonetheless find striking distinctions among countries. Some, such as France, adopt a republican *universalist* approach to civic citizenship. Others, such as the United States, are more *laissez-faire*. A third group, including Canada, tries to actively promote group rights and identities through *multicultural* citizenship.

The French model adheres most closely to classical notions of Western liberalism, upon which contemporary civic citizenship is founded. In rejecting the hierarchies of birth endemic to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, classical liberalism rests on a fundamental respect for universalism and individual equality. Government must remain blind to differences of ethnicity, religion, or national origin in public institutions. U.S. separation of church and state, French *laïcité*, and

France's historic refusal to use ethnic or racial categorizations in government statistics are examples of this stance.

Under the banner of ignoring differences based on ethnicity, immigration, and religion, republican universalist citizenship edges into an assimilatory view of immigrant integration. The aggressive refusal to allow certain cultural and religious markers in public institutions, as in the French Law 2004-228 of March 15, 2004, clearly has a homogenizing impulse behind it—one that could even, in some contexts, be called a coercive liberal *monoculturalism* (Duyvendak et al., 2009).

The U.S. model of civic citizenship is better categorized as *laissez-faire*, with some attention to ethnoracial diversity. Ethnicity, race, religion, and national origin are legitimate terms of debate in public fora, policymaking, legal circles, and statistical research to a degree unimaginable in France. Yet the government is not supposed to be in the business of using taxpayer dollars to support specific cultural groups or to promote their survival. Immigrants are expected to use their own resources to create civic associations, if they wish, and to mobilize for political ends within a system of political pluralism. Absent those resources or desires, immigrants can instead integrate into “mainstream” civic and political life.

Because blind universalism fails to recognize discrimination and prejudice based on ascriptive characteristics, the *laissez-faire* system supports a broad array of civil rights laws to provide a level playing field for minorities, including immigrants. Political theorists such as Brian Barry (2001) hold up the U.S. model as the preferable way to deal with immigrant-generated diversity. This model—one of individual choice within a system of civil rights—also undergirds the “new assimilation” accounts of sociologists who argue that immigrants and their children are successfully integrating into U.S. society and the economy (Alba and Nee, 2003).

The multicultural approach to civic citizenship requires immigrant-receiving countries to actively recognize cultural diversity and make accommodations for the needs of cultural minorities (Kymlicka 1995; Parekh 2006; Taylor 1994).¹ Since democracy is based on government by the majority, minorities face inherent disadvantages in the public sphere. The traditional liberal response is to erect a system of rights, such as freedom of speech and religion, but critics claim that cultural inequality remains pervasive. Further, since humans are inherently social beings—not atomized individuals, as is assumed under classic liberalism—their identities, desires, and political preferences are closely linked to the communities in which they are born and live (Raz 1994; Taylor 1994). Recognition is not just empty symbolism; it provides dignity and legitimacy within the country of reception, thereby helping immigrant communities to become a part of civic and political life. Accommodations are not unfair special privileges or rules, but a way of promoting equality, preventing domination by the majority, and dismantling barriers to full participation. Facilitating the survival and vitality of cultural communities is a matter of fairness, justice, and equality, according to multicultural theorists.

In concrete policy terms, immigrant multiculturalism takes a variety of forms. Banting et al. (2006, pp. 56–57) enumerate eight types of policy: formal affirmation of multiculturalism; multicultural school curricula; insertion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in public media or licensing; exemption codes for ethnoreligious minorities (of dress, Sunday store closing, etc.); dual citizenship; state funding for minority cultural activities; funding of bilingual or mother-tongue language instruction; and affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups. By these measures, Canada and Australia rank as the only two “strong” multicultural states; the United States ranks as a “moderate” multicultural state, along with countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom; while France sits among “weak” multicultural states,

alongside Germany, Japan, Norway, and a number of others. An alternative measure by Koopmans et al. (2005, pp. 51–71) examines five indicators: cultural requirements for naturalization; religious rights outside of public institutions, especially for Islam; cultural rights within institutions; institutions for political representation; and affirmative action. Of the five European countries they consider, the Netherlands ranks as the most multicultural; Great Britain, and possibly post-2000 Germany, rank in the middle; and France and Switzerland are the least multicultural.

Critiques of Multiculturalism: Immigrant Integration Failures

In 2001, one of the preeminent multicultural thinkers announced that “the debate is over, and the defenders of minority rights have won the day” (Kymlicka 2001, p. 35). While this might be the case among certain political philosophers, public discussion of multiculturalism and immigration has been decidedly different.

The attack on immigrant multiculturalism takes at least three forms. The first involves a set of concerns that arise from a fear of political fragmentation: if we all celebrate the distinctions that make us different from each other, won't we weaken the bonds that hold the country together? Thus Samuel Huntington calls for a return to the roots of the American creed that are based on

the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English conceptions of the rule of law . . . and dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic and the belief that humans have the ability and duty to try to create a heaven on earth (Huntington 2004a, pp. 31–32).

Without a clear message that tells immigrants about a country's core values, immigrants coalesce in their own communities and enclaves, emboldened by multiculturalism to live a life apart. The response is a call for a strong assimilatory citizenship.

A second group of critics bemoans the putative loss of shared community not so much for itself, but for undermining public support for redistribution. In this argument, specific collective endeavors such as the establishment of the welfare state rely on sentiments of shared fate with fellow citizens. When multiculturalism valorizes particularistic memberships, support for universal social policies may wither. Given economic inequalities, which seem to be growing in countries like the United States, some suggest that multiculturalism creates false boundaries between similarly situated socioeconomic groups, siphoning political energies away from economic redistribution (Barry 2001; Gitlin 1995; Gwyn 1995; Hollinger 2000).

A final critique suggests that multiculturalism creates or reifies invidious distinctions that can relegate some to “second class” citizenship despite their individual desires to integrate (Barry 2001; Bissoondath 1993; Gwyn 1995; Hollinger 2000). Multiculturalism's emphasis on identity and recognition increases the salience of immigrant background and ethnicity, thereby reifying the very categories that served as the basis for unequal rights in the past and forcing hyphens or labels on people who might not want them. The genius of old-fashion liberalism, in this formulation, is its refusal to consider individual particularities, and instead to treat people as equals irrespective of background or ethnicity.

Multiculturalism as a Pathway to Immigrant Integration

Does multicultural citizenship hinder the integration of diverse peoples into a common citizenry? The available evidence, often lost in the heat of political rhetoric,

suggests that multicultural policies have not brought cultural chaos, and they might very well facilitate immigrant integration. In contrast to fears of fragmentation, naturalization rates—calculated as the annual number of naturalizations over the noncitizen foreign “stock”—are higher in countries that embrace multiculturalism than in those more ambivalent or antagonistic toward pluralism. Weak multicultural states such as Germany, Italy, and Switzerland recorded an annual naturalization rate of less than 1% in the early 1990s (Clarke et al., 1998; Koopmans et al., 2005). This was much less than in stronger multicultural states: the naturalization rate was about 6.5% in the Netherlands and Sweden in 1994, and 10% in Canada for the same period. The United States, with its more *laissez-faire* civic citizenship, had an intermediate naturalization rate of about 3% (Bloemraad 2006b). Citizenship statistics consequently suggest that multiculturalism policies, to the extent that they facilitate immigrants’ legal and participatory citizenship, encourage common bonds of community rather than undermining them.

There is also no empirical evidence that adopting multicultural policies undermines government provision of public benefits. The academic research in this area is limited, but a recent study by Banting and colleagues finds that “countries with strong [multiculturalism policies] saw the largest rise in social spending and the greatest strengthening of their redistributive effort” (Banting et al., 2006, p. 66). Their research suggests that significant changes in the proportion of immigrants in a country—rather than the absolute number—might slow down growth in social spending, but multiculturalism policies could potentially attenuate, rather than exacerbate, such spending slowdowns, since “it is possible that [multiculturalism policies] can acknowledge diversity in a way that makes it less threatening to members of the dominant group” (Banting et al., 2006, p. 84).

Immigrants’ Political and Civic Integration: The Importance of Groups

The question of whether multiculturalism reifies differences in a negative way is one of the most difficult in immigrant integration. Members of the majority group criticize ethnic differentiation as a sign of immigrants’ rejection of mainstream society, while immigrants and their children charge that ethnic labels provide those in the majority with a convenient way to marginalize, stigmatize, and exclude them. Any analysis of reification requires a nuanced accounting of the costs and benefits of publicly acknowledging ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural differences. In particular, it requires a consideration of the alternatives. If difference is not recognized and acknowledged, how do we manage immigrant-generated diversity?

Many of those who oppose state recognition of difference advocate a republican universalist citizenship *à la française*. Citizens have equality before the state and enjoy direct relations to government as individuals rather than as members of any particular group. Indeed, in its bid to be neutral, government bypasses intermediate collectives based on religion, ethnicity, or culture. Proponents of this position are found on both the political left and right in Europe and in North America. For example, in 2003, Californians debated Proposition 54, which would have amended the state constitution to prohibit state and local governments from using race, ethnicity, color, or national origin to classify individuals in public education, contracting, or employment.

Making ethnicity an illegitimate basis for identification and political action carries significant dangers, however. It runs the risk of making inequality invisible and leaving minorities out of the political process altogether. State-sanctioned categories of ethnicity (or race, religion, or national origin) clearly reinforce the salience

of those categories for the individuals who check off the boxes and who analyze the statistics, but, absent such information, it is impossible to know whether discrimination or institutional barriers generate inequality between groups because of their differences.

Ignoring ethnicity may also hurt immigrants' political integration, by increasing rather than decreasing civic and political divides between the mainstream and immigrant groups. Although the theory of liberal democracy focuses on the individual—as a voter and possessor of rights—politics demands action by groups of like-minded people. In the French republican model, the individual citizen is the primary political actor. In the reality of French politics, groups of people—assembled in political parties, unions, or some other collective—work together to influence outcomes. The foundations of “groupedness” are not equally compelling. While immigrants might have various affiliations—to other home buyers, to other parents, to other soccer enthusiasts—ties based on ethnicity are surely among the strongest and most deeply felt. Some immigrants might choose not to privilege such ties, but, for many people, shared origins, similar migration experiences, common language, and shared cultural habits all create a sense of common identity, despite intraethnic differences based on accent, class, region, or even religion.

Immigrants, even those with strong desires to assimilate and blend into their new home, face numerous obstacles to learning about the new society and negotiating their participation within it. Language is an especially strong barrier, but so too is the fact that immigrants' prior civic and political socialization occurred in a different society. Individuals and groups within the mainstream majority are not necessarily welcoming or open to bringing immigrants into the fold. Given these realities, ethnic organizing is understandable, and might feel natural.

Other vehicles for collective voice exist. Civic associations, political parties, and unions can integrate, and have integrated, immigrants into the civic and political life of the receiving country, but these organized collectives also carry with them some practical problems. Civic associations, identified as a key vehicle for civic engagement and political mobilization in the United States, appear to make limited overtures to immigrant residents, and local organizing appears stratified such that immigrant groups command relatively little visibility or weight among government decision makers (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008; Ramakrishnan and Viramontes, 2006). Political parties in the United States engage in limited outreach to immigrants (DeSipio 2001; Jones-Correa 1998; Wong 2006), and there is not much evidence that European parties are substantially different, with the possible exception of the British Labour Party. Aside from northern Europe, union membership is in relatively sharp decline in most Western industrialized countries (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 1999).

On a practical level, then, ethnicity or national origin is a particularly effective way to organize for group ends. It is easier to ask for help with citizenship or for information about politics from fellow immigrants who speak the same language and come from a similar background. Field research shows that immigrants' political integration is grounded in informal ethnic networks, local immigrant community organizations, and the mobilization of coethnic leaders (Alvarez 1987; Bloemraad 2006b; Jones-Correa 1998; Kasinitz 1992; Wong 2006). To ignore the ethnic community blinds us to a key mechanism facilitating immigrants' incorporation into the political system. Critics who worry that multiculturalism ghettoizes immigrants overlook the fact that the alternative to coethnic communities and mobilization might be no participation at all.

Multiculturalism and Immigrant Integration: An Empirical Example

The potential mechanisms linking multiculturalism and integration policies to immigrants' political integration are elaborated in a recent study comparing the United States and Canada (Bloemraad 2006a, 2006b). While patterns of immigrant citizenship and immigrants' election to national office in the two countries were largely similar for most of the twentieth century, since the 1970s one finds a rapid and striking divergence. In 1970, 64% of the foreign-born in the United States held a U.S. passport, while in Canada the figure was 60% (Gibson and Lennon, 1999; Leacy 1983). By the dawn of the twenty-first century, only 40% of the foreign-born living in the United States were citizens, while in Canada 72% were (Statistics Canada 2004; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002). Taking into account the much larger unauthorized or temporary immigrant population in the United States—a group legally barred from citizenship—the gap attenuates somewhat, with 49% naturalized in the United States as compared to 75% in Canada (Fix et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the difference remains striking and historically unprecedented. It persists even when controlling for immigrants' place of birth and length of residence (Bloemraad 2006b). Most surprisingly, it runs counter to a simple cost-benefit calculation of the relative advantages of citizenship in the two countries: the benefits of citizenship, especially for family reunification and access to certain social programs, are more substantial in the United States than in Canada.

In part because of much higher citizenship levels in Canada, but also reflecting immigrants' greater penetration into Canadian politics, we find substantial differences in the numbers and proportion of foreign-born in the national legislature. In 2000, 11% of the U.S. population was foreign-born, but fewer than 2% of the members of the 107th U.S. Congress were born outside the United States. In Canada, 15% of the members in Canada's House of Commons were foreign-born in 2002, a proportion not far from the 19% of the population that was foreign-born (Bloemraad 2006b). First-generation immigrants have made substantially further inroads into Canadian politics than have those in the United States.

While the reasons for these differences are varied and complex, government policies of multiculturalism and greater programmatic support for immigrant settlement clearly play a role. Immigrants' political integration can be conceived of as a nested process of structured mobilization, whereby many immigrants, especially those with fewer individual resources, use informal networks and institutions within the immigrant community to learn about, access, and participate in civic and political life. These networks and community institutions are in turn influenced in important ways by government policies directed toward immigrants and minorities. Governments provide material resources through grant or contract funding, programmatic access to bureaucrats and policymakers, and technical support in such activities as leadership training and filing for nonprofit status. These programs also provide symbolic resources and influence immigrants' understanding of their place and legitimacy in the civic and political sphere. With official recognition through multiculturalism, ordinary immigrants and ethnic leaders feel more empowered to participate and make claims within the system. Such policies create what Suzanne Mettler (2002) calls *interpretative effects*, which facilitate political integration.

Attention to multiculturalism and settlement policies helps to explain the timing of the divergence in U.S. and Canadian political integration. Canada's policy of official multiculturalism was first announced in the House of Commons in 1971; language urging judges to consider the multicultural heritage of Canada was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982; and Parliament passed the

Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988. Settlement programs, especially for language training but also for labor force insertion, experienced growth throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. This was precisely the period when the U.S.-Canada divergence began.

This process of political incorporation relies heavily on the activities and vitality of community-based and advocacy organizations. Much of the expanding Canadian funding for multiculturalism and settlement devolved to community-based organizations run by or serving immigrant clienteles. In terms of fiscal outlays, during the 1966–1967 fiscal year, the Citizenship branch of the Department of the Secretary of State gave \$88,150 to twelve groups concerned with immigrant settlement and participatory citizenship. But by 1974–1975, the branch gave \$2.65 million in grants to 648 groups, an amount that grew to over \$20 million in 1987–1988, and to almost \$60 million in 1996–1997 (Heritage Canada 1997; Pal 1993). In the mid-1990s, monies for immigrant settlement totaled about \$166 million, an amount that remained relatively steady for about a decade (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1995). This funding by the federal Canadian government was supplemented in various provinces and cities by provincial and municipal programs of multiculturalism and immigrant integration.

Commentators have argued that these public investments are modest compared to other government programs, suggesting that Canadian governments adhere mostly to symbolic multiculturalism (Roberts and Clifton, 1990; Stasiulis 1988). Activists point out that, in the late 1990s, multiculturalism funding was cut in half, and settlement support decreased as a proportion of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's budget from 1995 to 2004. Yet the budgets of local nonprofits in immigrant cities such as Toronto show that many stay afloat on small grants from various levels of government, allowing such organizations not only to provide a range of services but also to act as vehicles for political learning and engagement (Bloemraad 2005, 2006b). Nonprofit organizations and civic associations play a similar role in the United States (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; de Graauw 2008; Marwell 2004). However, with much less public funding, especially directed to immigrant programs such as naturalization or language training, migrant communities in the United States face more barriers in building strong organizational infrastructures. In 2004, the Canadian federal government spent about \$1500 per new immigrant (House of Commons 2003, p. 2), a figure that is impossible to compare cross-nationally since the U.S. federal government does not have similar programs for nonrefugee migrants.

Indeed, the case of refugee resettlement in the United States provides additional support for the hypothesis that active state intervention can facilitate civic and political integration. Refugees, especially “allied aliens” who are fleeing Communist regimes (Hein 1993), face a more receptive government environment than do other migrants (Pedraza-Bailey 1985; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). The U.S. government provides social benefits to individuals and families, as well as community grants to mutual assistance associations. Over the past twenty years, the annual budget of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement has fluctuated between about \$350 and \$450 million, while the number of official refugees admitted annually runs between 65,000 to 80,000. This represents, at a minimum, an investment of about \$4375 for each refugee.

Such public outlays produce material and interpretative effects. For example, government funding has had a clear effect on the ability of Vietnamese communities to build a robust organizational infrastructure (Bloemraad 2006b; Hein 1997). Despite fears of welfare stigma, government-funded health care benefits appear to make medical professionals and administrators treat Cubans as more deserving and eligible

to make claims than Mexicans, regardless of legal status (Horton 2004). Although refugees have clear political reasons to naturalize and participate in U.S. politics, the public support given to them probably plays an important role in explaining Cuban Americans' substantial political incorporation (Moreno 1996) and refugees' greater propensity to naturalize, as compared to eligible immigrants who are not refugees but who have similar socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (Fix et al., 2003).

ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION, INCORPORATION

I have argued that multiculturalism likely promotes immigrants' civic and political integration. It provides immigrant groups with recognition that legitimizes their place in the adopted country and with resources that facilitate participation. The discussion so far has not, however, addressed a key critique of multiculturalism, namely, that multicultural policies impede socioeconomic mobility, creating silos of underclass minorities. For example, in the Netherlands, perceived failures of social and economic integration are central to attacks against multiculturalism (Entzinger 2003; Koopmans et al., 2005).

If real, the danger of socioeconomic segregation is a genuine threat to national cohesion and political stability. Immigrants who cannot break into the economic mainstream might take their frustrations into the streets or channel their energies to violent ends, while majority taxpayers—who come to associate ethnic minorities with welfare use and marginality—might draw increasingly rigid distinctions between an “us” of many generations and a “them” of immigrant origins.

This section considers the relationship between political and civic integration and other forms of integration. Such an exercise is critical because the political theory behind multiculturalism has little to say about socioeconomic incorporation. Implicitly, multiculturalism suggests that, with recognition and accommodation, immigrants gain psychological resources and a more even playing field on which to achieve socioeconomic mobility. However, key theorists in this tradition explicitly underscore that the cultural concerns of multiculturalism are intellectually distinct from concerns over class inequalities and social mobility (Kymlicka 1995, pp. 179–181; Parekh 2006, pp. 365–367). Because there is no multicultural theory of socioeconomic integration, we must instead turn to more general theories of immigrant integration.

The Chicken and the Egg: Political and Economic Integration

Most theories of immigrants' social, cultural, and economic integration stem from the U.S. experience with immigration over the course of the twentieth century. From the early 1900s and into the 1960s, classical models of assimilation viewed immigrant adaptation as a linear process, with various types of integration thought to progressively follow one another (Gordon 1964; Park 1930; Park and Burgess, 1921 [1969]; Warner and Srole, 1945). Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present, models of resurgent or reactive ethnicity and segmented assimilation have challenged the idea of a single sequential path to assimilation (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Zhou 1999). Most recently, Richard Alba and Victor Nee (1997, 2003) have offered a “new” assimilation model, one that aims to avoid the ethnocentrism and determinism of old linear models while retaining the key notion that, over generations, immigrants' children and grandchild-

dren integrate into the U.S. cultural, social, and economic mainstream. Most of these accounts treat civic and political integration as a secondary concern. Cultural assimilation, social integration, and economic mobility receive primary attention.

We can nonetheless identify two models of immigrants' political integration embedded within this scholarship. The first model, *political assimilation*, describes individual integration into an established political and civic system such that individual immigrants (or their descendants) are indistinguishable from native-born Americans of many generations. In this model, political assimilation either follows or occurs simultaneously with other forms of assimilation. A second model, *political incorporation*, focuses on immigrant communities as potential or actual political groups with a collective influence on politics, somewhat akin to an advocacy or interest group. In this model, ethnicity and immigrant origins play an important part in defining common interests and/or providing collective identity. In some versions of the political incorporation model, socioeconomic mobility helps group-based political mobilization; in others, discrimination and blocked mobility provide an important motivation for group-based organizing.

Individual political assimilation and group-based political incorporation are two different paths to *political integration*: in both models, immigrants and their children become part of the political system, albeit in different ways. A situation in which immigrants were completely absent from domestic politics—by choice or through exclusion—would indicate a lack of political integration. One can imagine such a situation when groups faced with prejudice or blocked mobility do not have access to the political system, or when migrants see themselves as temporary sojourners and keep their political attention and energies focused on the homeland.

Earlier Theories of Assimilation, Integration, and Incorporation: 1900–1980

On the face of it, linear assimilation models appear most closely related to political assimilation, although the mechanisms behind the process sometimes differ. In the work of Robert E. Park and colleagues, the endpoint of assimilation is cultural fusion, “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups” (Park and Burgess, 1921 [1969], p. 736). It is not entirely clear how this is achieved, but spatial mobility and social contact within majority “primary” groups implicitly drive the process. As immigrants have increasing, and increasingly personal, contact with the native-born, assimilation occurs, largely unconsciously. Recent revisionist scholarship suggests that Park neither envisioned nor required complete assimilation and homogeneity (Kivisto 2004), but the overall model implies that assimilated immigrants will be like the native-born in their civic and political behaviors.

This model received greater specification after World War II, in Milton Gordon's (1964) refinement of linear assimilation. According to Gordon, assimilation can be broken down into seven components. Unlike Park, Gordon argues that cultural assimilation, or acculturation, is the first step of the process, not its end point. He contends that most groups acculturate quite quickly, but acculturation does not necessarily lead to other assimilation. Instead, the lynchpin to full assimilation is structural assimilation, “large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of society” (Gordon 1964, p. 71). Once immigrants enter into primary groups within the “core society,” intermarriage will occur, a sense of common peoplehood will develop, prejudice and discrimination will die away, and “civic assimilation” will follow.

What Gordon terms *civic assimilation*, the “absence of value and power conflicts” (Gordon 1964, p. 71), can more accurately be called political assimilation, as seen through his examples. Economic mobility does not figure among Gordon’s assimilation stages. As with the theories of the Chicago-school writers, direct personal contact is critical, and political assimilation appears to occur after other forms of assimilation.

Significantly, this conventional rendering of traditional assimilation scholarship misses some important ambiguities and outright inconsistencies concerning political integration. Park’s race-relations cycle places strong emphasis on politics in furthering and resolving conflict. It is unclear what role group-based ethnic politics, such as that seen in Chicago or New York City in the early twentieth century, play in Park’s views of assimilation.

Furthermore, Gordon’s own empirical analysis directly contradicts his abstract account of assimilation stages. In a key table describing where various groups stand along the assimilatory continuum, Gordon notes—in line with his argument—that three out of the four groups exhibit substantial acculturation, but none demonstrates complete or even substantial assimilation across the other variables (Gordon 1964, p. 77). He remains curiously silent, however, about the fact that *all four* of his groups show partial, substantial, or even complete political (“civic”) integration, the *only* dimension of assimilation for which all groups can be considered significantly assimilated. Gordon’s own data consequently imply that political integration is *not* dependent on cultural, structural, or social assimilation with the “core group” of the receiving society. Instead, *structural difference*, in Gordon’s terms (which perhaps is akin to contemporary discussions of social capital and civic associationalism), might *promote* political integration through group-based incorporation.

Although “groupedness” is considered by traditional linear assimilation as a marker of failed social assimilation, it may be a prerequisite for political incorporation. Indeed, political incorporation may be central to socioeconomic assimilation if it means that immigrants and their children have a voice in the political system and can change institutional rules and arrangements that create obstacles to integration. Scholars of resurgent or reactive ethnicity writing in the 1960s and 1970s made this argument, which remains relevant today. Glazer and Moynihan (1963, 1975) suggest that ethnicity and immigrant origins are politically salient when individuals attempt to redress inequalities and discrimination through the political system.

Within political science, lively debates in the 1960s centered on whether ethnic politics born of working-class status and sociocultural differences would die away or persist. Unlike Gordon, Robert A. Dahl (1961) clearly identifies ethnic politics as an initial step in immigrants’ assimilation, but he argues that ethnic politics and voting stem primarily from low occupational status. As immigrants experience economic mobility over several generations, they become politically assimilated. Raymond Wolfinger (1965) accepts Dahl’s assumption regarding the economic bases of ethnic politics, but argues instead that ethnic politics can be sustained for generations once certain political parties are identified as friendly to a specific group, and parents pass down partisanship to their children. These two approaches have been challenged by Parenti (1967) who suggests that ethnic politics persists because of real interests and is facilitated by socioeconomic mobility. According to Parenti, economic mobility provides greater resources to sustain ethnic organizations, greater confidence in the group’s ability to organize, and concrete grievances when economically mobile individuals face continued prejudice because of their ethnicity.

Critically, and of relevance to the general discussion of integration and multiculturalism, none of these scholars considers immigrant or ethnic politics particularly

problematic, but rather a part of pluralist politics or normal interest representation. Put another way, using immigrant origins or ethnicity to organize facilitates integration into the U.S. political system. Politicians reach out to immigrant-based associations and communities because they are attractive ways to mobilize large numbers of voters quickly, thereby integrating immigrants into the political process. This group-based political incorporation might parallel socioeconomic assimilation, but it does not aggravate socioeconomic inequality and might instead ameliorate it.

Reinserting Politics into Contemporary Models of Immigrant Integration

The two predominant contemporary U.S. models of immigrant integration, segmented and “new” assimilation, touch on the role of political integration, but more theorizing and empirical work needs to be done. Segmented assimilation argues that immigrants’ children follow one of three integration trajectories: straight-line assimilation into the White middle class, downward assimilation into an urban minority underclass, or upward socioeconomic assimilation through social capital and the retention of ethnic culture (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou 1999). The path followed depends on societal discrimination, especially based on race; immigrant parents’ human capital; and residential location in inner-city areas. The segmented assimilation approach thus makes a sharp break with prior theorizing, by presenting multiple trajectories for the descendants of post-1965 immigrants and placing strong emphasis on the structural constraints imposed by racial hierarchies and economic restructuring, which limit immigrants’ ability to succeed. Importantly, it suggests that the retention of ethnic culture and solidarity is helpful to integration rather than being a hindrance.

Somewhat surprisingly, there is relatively little consideration of politics, as either a source of integration problems or a solution to these problems. More limited economic mobility implicitly stems from global and local economic restructuring rather than from political decisions. The origins of racial discrimination and hierarchy are only loosely linked to politics, since racism is generally portrayed as a largely permanent part of U.S. society. Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest that the primary effects of residential concentration within cities is to bring the children of immigrants into contact with poor, native-born minorities, but there is a curious silence on the politics of the urban core. Portes and Zhou do not examine how governments have underfunded public services in these areas or the politics of public schools, although later research supporting segmented assimilation clearly documents the negative impact of poor inner-city schools on immigrant integration (Waters 1999). Within segmented assimilation models, ethnic community, solidarity, and culture are important for economic mobility, but not as resources for effecting political change. Rather, ethnic culture and social capital insulate immigrant children from the negative influence of native-born minority peers.

Other work by Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (2006) touches on the intersection between politics and other forms of assimilation, but these threads have been largely dropped by those working within this paradigm. In an extended discussion about politics, Portes and Rumbaut (2006, pp. 117–167) adopt the view that economic marginality and nativist attacks spur reactive ethnicity, but it is unclear how or whether politics play back into segmented assimilation. The general portrayal is one of immigrants’ “passive endurance,” as barriers to participation make voicing concerns difficult. Portes and colleagues note the role of government policy in providing a more receptive integration context to political refugees than to other immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Portes and Zhou, 1993), but the politics of

entry are less prominent in later accounts, such as in the educational success of Vietnamese immigrants (Zhou and Bankston, 1998).

The main difficulty with inserting politics into segmented assimilation is that “the typology is largely based on the different *class* resources that immigrants bring with them, while . . . ethnicity regularly trumps class as a motive for collective mobilization” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006, p. 162, emphasis in the original). More research is needed on the disjuncture between economic realities and political mobilization within the United States, and between the United States—the cornerstone of much sociological work on assimilation and incorporation—and other countries.

In response to segmented assimilation, Alba and Nee (2003) argue that standard assimilation is still the predominant pattern among immigrants in the United States. They define *assimilation* as the decline of ethnic distinction such that cultural and social differences (but *not* economic ones) have little or no effect in interethnic interactions or relations. Assimilation occurs when individual immigrants and families make purposive decisions to get ahead. Since opportunities are greater within mainstream institutions—and civil rights legislation as well as cultural changes make discrimination illegal or illegitimate—most immigrants will naturally and rationally choose to assimilate, by learning English and being part of the mainstream U.S. socioeconomic structure. Alba and Nee explicitly state that this sort of assimilation does not require or demand complete acculturation or cultural homogeneity.

The dynamics of political integration are ambiguous within this approach. Alba and Nee’s formulation rests squarely on a microeconomic view of new institutionalism, and they present no empirical data on political or civic integration. They do suggest that communities and groups organized around ethnicity and immigrant origins can continue to exist, perhaps indefinitely: “Assimilation can occur on a large scale to members of a group even as the group itself remains a highly visible point of reference on the social landscape, embodied in an ethnic culture, neighborhoods, and institutional infrastructures” (Alba and Nee, 2003, p. 11). It is not entirely clear how or why this occurs, beyond individuals’ tastes for continued ethnicity and the possibility that those unable to assimilate individually will need to rely on collective strategies.

State action is important in the new assimilation model, but the dynamics of politics are left largely outside it. Alba and Nee’s (guardedly) optimistic view that assimilation will occur, despite racial and economic hierarchies, hinges on the presence of civil rights laws that provide immigrants with a reasonable chance of fair treatment within the mainstream. In discussing the successful assimilation of the descendants of early European immigrants, the authors point out the importance of key social policies such as the G.I. Bill and federal mortgage efforts, which helped the children of European immigrants achieve high levels of schooling and become homeowners in less-segregated communities. They explicitly say, however, that understanding the evolution of those laws and policies is outside the scope of their project, as is a consideration of the organizational infrastructure mediating between the individual and macrolevel institutions. These very organizations—unions, religious institutions, political clubs, and the like—are, I would argue, central to understanding immigrants’ political integration.

In sum, while segmented assimilation and new assimilation models of immigrant integration offer two quite different understandings of the mechanisms and outcomes of integration, they share a certain silence as to how politics fit into the process. Such a silence is perhaps understandable, given the limited role of politics within most sociological models of assimilation and integration. At the same time, there are tantalizing hints of a more holistic model, one that includes politics and civic participation. Both approaches make reference to European immigrants’ use of

ethnic politics, implying that immigrant groups might have political and economic interests in “groupedness.” The underlying impression, never fully theorized, is that group-based political incorporation might be an important *precursor* or, at a minimum, a complementary process to socioeconomic advancement. The main causal thrust of both models is, however, the reverse: class and economic position fundamentally shape subsequent integration experiences.

MULTICULTURALISM AND INTEGRATION: THE LONG VIEW

This rapid overview of immigrant integration models suggests two hypotheses about the relationship between socioeconomic integration and multiculturalism. First, all other things being equal, immigrant communities with greater political incorporation and mobilization around national origins or ethnicity should, with time, experience more rapid socioeconomic integration. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that participation in democratic politics can and will create positive policy change that will help to remove barriers to social and economic integration, or that such participation allows groups to capture certain state resources. Within the United States, we would expect different socioeconomic outcomes between more and less politically organized groups. Comparing the United States to other countries, we might expect quicker socioeconomic integration for the children of immigrants in the United States, given its more open citizenship laws (for both the first and second, U.S.-born generations), as well as a greater openness to ethnic politics.

It is possible, however, that immigrants might face an integration trade-off, and thus that the reverse is true. Political mobilization might create an anti-immigrant or antiethnic backlash by those in the majority. Research on White political attitudes suggests a “group threat” model, whereby majority Whites react against the presence and mobilization of Blacks and American Indians (Bobo and Tuan, 2006; Quillian 1996). In this case, immigrants might face an uncomfortable trade-off of pursuing individual socioeconomic projects while remaining politically silenced, or engaging in democratic mobilization but stirring up animosity that hurts social integration and economic mobility.

If group threat is a possibility, multicultural theory suggests that official multiculturalism, encompassing both formal recognition of diverse cultures and active support for cultural groups, should mitigate rather than exacerbate political conflicts. It could do so by influencing majority members’ perception that minorities have legitimate standing in society, and by improving minorities’ ability to organize with dignity rather than as a form of protective and potentially explosive reactive ethnicity. A further hypothesis, then, suggests that multicultural policies will promote socioeconomic integration more rapidly than would the absence of such policies, because such policies facilitate a positive political dialogue and process of accommodation between immigrants and established majority residents.

These hypotheses likely appear controversial, and they certainly go against prevailing public opinion and conventional wisdom in many countries. Yet they are plausible, and even possible. The comparative work reported here on Canada and the United States suggests that multiculturalism policies have had a positive effect on Canadian immigrants’ propensity and ability to take up citizenship, as well as their interest and ability in exercising political citizenship rights. If immigrant-origin politicians take immigrant concerns and issues more to heart than others, it is possible that they will use public policies to ameliorate immigrants’ socioeconomic outcomes.

It is also worth noting that in one of the countries that recently turned against multiculturalism, the Netherlands, available empirical evidence hints that the prior adoption of multiculturalism facilitated political incorporation. Entzinger cites relatively high numbers of naturalizations as evidence for immigrants' integration within the Dutch political party system, and he reports that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, 11 out of 150 members of the Second Chamber of Parliament (7%) were Dutch citizens of immigrant origin (Entzinger 2003, p. 66). Given that about 9% of the population in the Netherlands is foreign-born, this is a remarkable degree of political integration, about three times better than in the United States. There is evidence of similar immigrant political success in Amsterdam (Vermeulen and Berger, 2008). Even Ruud Koopmans and colleagues, who offer a relatively pessimistic analysis of multiculturalism in the Netherlands, find that migrant claims-making in the Netherlands is among the least confrontational in Europe, largely devoid of the violence seen in some other countries (Koopmans et al., 2005, pp. 137–138).

Thinking on this score has been hobbled by an unrealistic understanding of what multiculturalism seeks to address, especially among policy makers and the general public. Multiculturalism is primarily a political theory about equality and inclusive citizenship centered on culture; it does not formally consider the implications of immigrants' socioeconomic integration. Conversely, those who have most clearly theorized immigrants' social and economic integration have often neglected political integration, especially as it intersects with other assimilation or incorporation processes.

Political integration, whether through assimilation or incorporation, is important because the dangers of failed integration are high. If reactive ethnicity is a useful way to understand some immigrant and ethnic mobilization, the failure to integrate immigrants into politics could lead to the type of riots seen in the Paris suburbs during the fall of 2005. Multiculturalism policies also need to be embedded in an understanding of immigrants as future members of society, rather than as temporary or guest workers. Applied to those who are not considered future citizens, multiculturalism has the potential to exacerbate segregation and exclusion. In these cases, multiculturalism becomes a thinly disguised attempt to keep foreign workers apart from mainstream society, as was arguably the case in Germany up through the 1990s, and also in the early days of Dutch multiculturalism policy.

We need theories that bring different forms and processes of immigrant integration together, from socioeconomic to civic and political integration. Immigrants' civic and political integration is central to contemporary nation-building efforts as Western nations try to recraft self-understandings in an era of global migration, international trade, and arguably reduced sovereignty. Civic conceptions of national unity are necessarily "thinner" than ethnic ones, because they do not involve strong, exclusive appeals to specific cultural or religious customs. The common bonds of civic citizenship must instead come from elsewhere. Much has been made lately about immigrants' (failed) adoption of common civic values. The discussion here is animated by the belief that participation and engagement are probably more fruitful ways to reinforce the ideals of civic citizenship than is the "teaching" of "values" in a unidirectional way, where those of the majority are presumed to have civic virtue while those of foreign birth are presumed to lack it. Through engagement in existing civic and political structures, all parties in a society can enter into dialogue and debate over citizenship and integration.

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NOTE

1. Multiculturalism theory also considers—and applies better to—wholly incorporated nations such as indigenous peoples, the Québécois, the Catalans, and the Scots. As Joppke (2004) notes, it has paradoxically gained most purchase in dealing with immigration.

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