

## **Becoming a Citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured Mobilization and Immigrant Political Incorporation**

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*This article uses the puzzle of diverging trajectories of immigrant citizenship in the United States and Canada to build a new approach to the study of citizenship and political incorporation. I consider three existing models of citizenship: an approach that considers citizenship adoption as the product of cost/benefit calculations; an approach that understands individuals and groups to be differentially endowed with the skills, resources and interests necessary to acquire citizenship; and an approach that believes countries adopt citizenship regimes which either include or shut out immigrants. I then offer an alternative model of structured mobilization which views political incorporation as a social process of mobilization by friends, family, community organizations and local leaders that is embedded in an institutional context shaped by government policies of diversity and newcomer settlement. The material and symbolic resources provided by government shape the ability and interest of "social helpers" to assist with and mobilize around citizenship. The article concludes by considering the implications of structured mobilization for various debates in immigration and political sociology.*

In the mid-1900s, almost four of every five foreign-born U.S. and Canadian residents held citizenship in their adopted lands. Fifty years later, citizenship levels had changed little in Canada: about three quarters of the foreign-born had Canadian passports in 2001. In contrast, U.S. citizenship hovered at its lowest level in a century. Only two of every five foreign-born had naturalized in 2000. Why have the levels of citizenship in the United States declined so precipitously, and why are they so much lower than in Canada, a country with a similar immigrant tradition?

I use the puzzle of diverging North American citizenship trajectories to build a new theoretical approach to the study of immigrant citizenship and political incorporation. I consider three existing approaches to citizenship acquisition.

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Each provides some understanding of U.S.-Canada citizenship differences, but fails to bridge the micro-macro divide in citizenship accounts. The assumption of independent, autonomous would-be citizens inherent in many existing models of naturalization fails to adequately reflect the *social* nature of immigrant political incorporation. I offer instead a model of structured mobilization that draws on analytical tools used by social movement scholars and researchers working in the tradition of "new" institutionalism. Immigrant citizenship and political incorporation is a process akin to social movement mobilization, involving friends, family, co-ethnic organizations and local community leaders. Especially for immigrants who face language barriers, unfamiliarity with mainstream institutions and weaker ties to native-born citizens, fellow immigrants and local organizations critically shape how they think about citizenship.

At the same time, the ability of these people and organizations to promote citizenship is influenced by government policies around immigrant integration and diversity. Localized mobilization is nested in, and affected by, a much larger institutional structure. Government policies provide instrumental and material assistance to immigrant communities and organizations, and such policies shape immigrants' understanding of citizenship as a political and emotional bond to the adopted country. Immigrants thus make decisions about naturalization as people embedded in communities and nationally defined rules and understandings of citizenship. Communities and institutional structures do not merely offer contexts in which costs and benefits are weighed, but fundamentally shape perceptions of costs and benefits, as well as newcomers' interest in and ability to acquire citizenship.

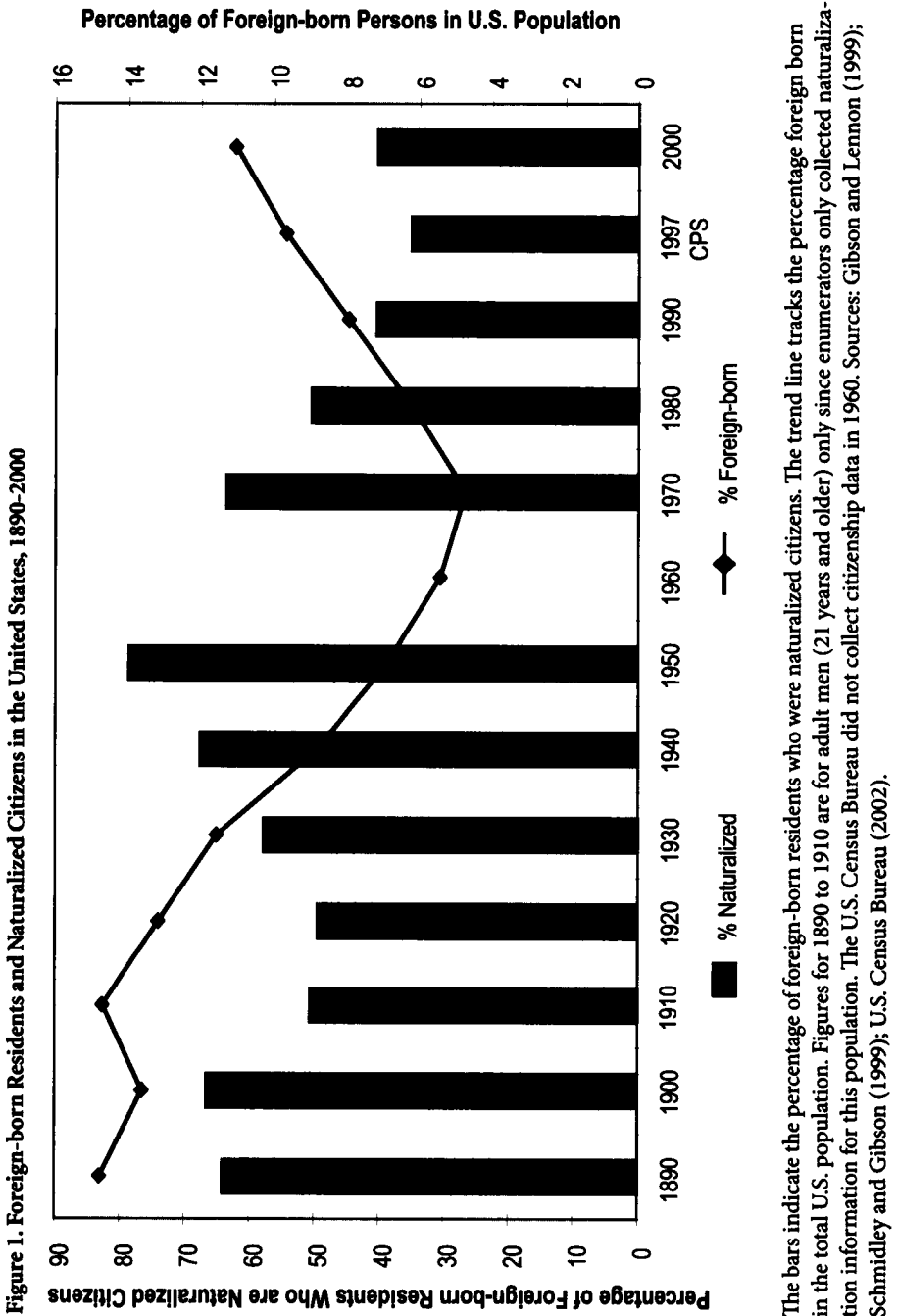
The central thrust of this article is an analytical elaboration of the structured mobilization framework. It is informed by existing empirical research on immigrant citizenship and a comparative study of naturalization and political engagement among Portuguese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees in metropolitan Boston and Toronto.<sup>1</sup> It is motivated by the belief that citizenship matters to immigrants, because without it they have diminished political voice, and to native-born citizens, because newcomers' failure to become citizens undermines the meaning of democracy.

### **Diverging Citizenship in North America: Comparing the United States and Canada**

Data from the 2004 U.S. Current Population Survey indicate that out of a foreign-born population of more than 34.2 million, slightly more than 13.1 million or 38 percent, held U.S. citizenship. Figure 1, which tracks the level of citizenship among foreign-born residents in the United States from 1890 to 2000, shows that this level of citizenship is lower than at any point in the 20th century.<sup>2</sup>

Part of this decline reflects the increase in unauthorized immigrants in the United States over the past 20 years. Because unauthorized migrants are legally barred from citizenship, their presence drives down aggregate citizenship levels.<sup>3</sup> Using demographic techniques that attempt to distinguish between legal and unauthorized migrants, Fix, Passel and Sucher (2003) calculate that while citizenship levels plummeted from 64 percent of legal immigrants in 1970 to 39 percent in 1996, naturalization levels among legal residents rose in 2002 to 49 percent.<sup>4</sup>

Aggregate citizenship levels can also be deceptive because they vary greatly with migration flows and length of residence. During periods of substantial immigration, new arrivals increase the number of foreign-born living in the United States (the denominator for calculations), but because they cannot become



citizens immediately, their presence drives down aggregate citizenship levels. Renewed large-scale migration in the last three decades of the 20th century consequently accounts for some of the recent decline in U.S. citizenship levels.<sup>5</sup> A trend line on Figure 1 shows the percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born in a given census year. Not surprisingly, citizenship levels fell during the two great waves of U.S. migration, from 1880 to 1924, and from 1965 to the present. Conversely, during periods of restricted immigration when the average length of residence increases, as from 1924 to 1965, citizenship levels rise.<sup>6</sup> According to Schmidley and Gibson (1999), about a third of the decline in U.S. naturalization from 1970 to 1996 stems from the rapid increase in immigration since the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments.

Still, more recent immigrants acquire citizenship more slowly and at a lower level than those who came before them. In 1970, 57 percent of immigrants with 11 to 15 years of residence held U.S. citizenship. Ten years later, only 44 percent of those with 11 to 15 years of residence reported citizenship; in 1990, 41 percent; and in 2000, only 37 percent.<sup>7</sup> New large-scale immigration depresses aggregate citizenship levels, but more recent migrants are also less likely to naturalize.

Recent cohorts' slower U.S. naturalization contrasts with the trend in Canada. Of those with 11 to 15 years of residence, 59 percent held Canadian citizenship in 1971, 68 percent in 1981, 78 percent in 1991, and 83 percent in 1996.<sup>8</sup> More rapid naturalization of recent migrants translates into higher aggregate citizenship levels, as shown in Figure 2. For most of the 20th century citizenship in the United States and Canada looked remarkably similar, but in the 1970s – as both countries began welcoming large numbers of immigrants from the Caribbean, Asia and Latin America – citizenship trajectories diverged. Canada, like the United States, experienced an increase in its foreign-born population – from 15 percent in 1971 to 19 percent in 2001 – yet the greater number of new arrivals did not decrease overall citizenship. Instead, naturalization in 2001 is slightly higher than in 1971, and significantly greater than in the United States.

### **Explaining Immigrant Citizenship: Current Theorizing**

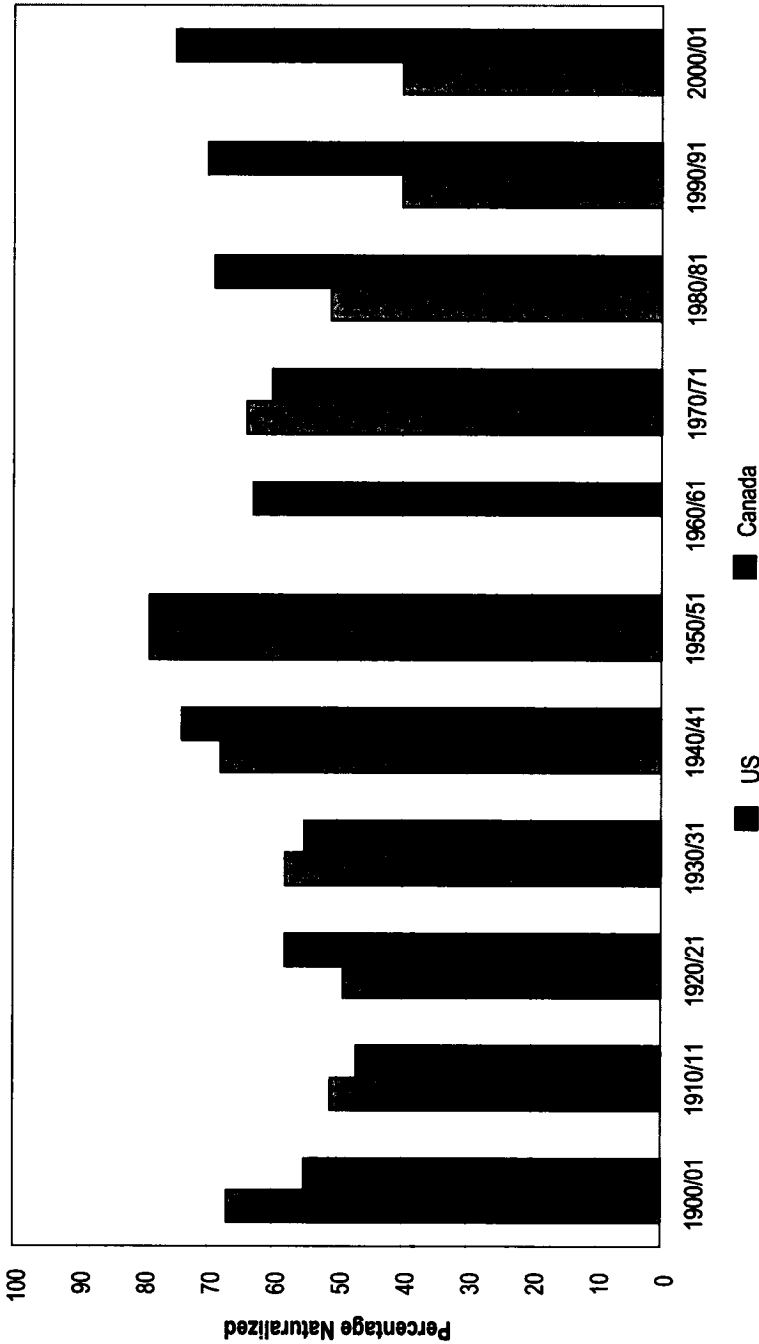
Various commentators worry about U.S. declines. Some identify what they see as deterioration in the quality of today's immigrants (Borjas 1999; Camarota 2001). Newcomers' lower human capital relative to the native-born allegedly hinders incorporation into the labor market, retards social integration such as language learning and, by extension, undermines immigrants' naturalization. Others claim that contemporary immigrants' cultural values clash with America's Anglo-Protestant civic culture, or that the prevalence of easy, low-cost communication and transportation technologies keep immigrants with feet in two worlds, limiting their attachment to the adopted country (Huntington 2004). Limited attachment is believed to be compounded by the decline in value of citizenship.

### ***Cost-benefit Arguments and the Declining Significance of Citizenship***

Between a third to half of the contemporary decline in U.S. naturalization levels stems from increases in the number of immigrants and in the relative proportion

of unauthorized migrants, but what accounts for the rest of the drop? At first blush, cost/benefit arguments match the recent U.S. citizenship trend. Some social scientists and legal scholars argue that citizenship matters less today because Western countries make fewer distinctions between citizens and non-

Figure 2. Percentages of Foreign-born Residents Naturalized in the United States and Canada, 1900-2001



The U.S. figures for 1900 and 1910 are only for adult men (21 years and older) since enumerators only collected naturalization information for this population. The Canadian figures for 1901 to 1941 do not include British immigrants, who were automatically Canadian by virtue of their British nationality. The U.S. Census Bureau did not collect citizenship data in 1960. Sources: Gibson and Lennon (1999); Leacy (1983); Schmidley and Gibson (1999); U.S. Census Bureau (2002); Statistics Canada (1995, 2004).

citizens in the allocation of jobs, benefits and rights (Hollifield 1992; Plascencia, Freeman and Setzler 2003; Schuck 1998; Soysal 1994). Thus, in an actor-centered model, naturalization becomes less likely after individuals calculate the declining utility of naturalization compared to the time, money and costs associated with citizenship (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1986, 1990; Jones-Correa 1998; Yang 1994). These accounts adopt an implicit or explicit model of human behavior as rationally motivated and chosen. In a structural approach, the importance of citizenship is declining in a world increasingly allocating rights based on personhood rather than state membership, and one in which supranational actors and non-governmental organizations provide alternative venues for extending and fighting for rights (Bauböck 1994; Jacobson 1996; Soysal 1994). Either as a micro-level choice or a change in the macro-level boundaries of citizenship, both accounts suggest that declines in naturalization stem from changes in the instrumental and material benefits of citizenship.

Yet the relative importance of citizenship in the United States has not changed very much and, since 1996, it is arguably greater than in the 1970s and 1980s. Citizenship guarantees the right to be in the United States. Without it, non-citizens can be subject to mandatory detention and automatic deportation for relatively minor crimes, a practice that government has increasingly used since the mid-1990s. Citizenship also provides civil, social, economic and political rights. It determines eligibility for some public benefits since the 1996 U.S. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Except for a few localities, citizenship is required for voting or running for office. Citizenship also influences employment in the public sector or defense industry. For immigrants wishing to sponsor family to the United States, citizenship provides quicker and easier family reunification.

The costs of American citizenship are comparatively small. Lack of citizenship does not offer protection from the draft, as many immigrant men found out during the Vietnam conflict, and non-citizens must pay taxes like everyone else. The naturalization oath that all would-be adult citizens must swear requires a renunciation of past allegiances, but in practice U.S. citizens can hold multiple passports (Ansgar Kelly 1991-92; Bloemraad forthcoming; Duckett 2000; Spiro 1997). Thus, naturalization does not mean losing one's former citizenship.<sup>9</sup>

Arguments about cost-benefit calculations and the declining significance of citizenship become even more problematic with a comparative lens, as they cannot explain the Canadian trend or the difference between U.S. and Canadian patterns. Many of the benefits of U.S. and Canadian citizenship – political rights, access to certain jobs, protection against deportation – are the same. If anything, citizenship has more instrumental value in the United States. All non-citizen permanent residents in Canada have access to social welfare benefits, and citizenship provides no advantage in sponsoring family members. In both countries naturalization requires a number of years of legal residence before applying (three in Canada, generally five in the United States); basic language ability (English in the United States, English or French in Canada); some knowledge of the country, its history and government; a fee (\$200 in Canada, \$320 in the United States),

and evidence of “good moral character.”<sup>10</sup> In both countries, criminal convictions are grounds to refuse citizenship.<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Qualities of a Citizen: Individual and Group Characteristics***

A second approach argues that variations in immigrant citizenship stem from differences in the skills, resources, interests and aptitudes of immigrants. This framework is predominant in research on North America. Foreign-born residents are more likely to seek citizenship if they have higher levels of education, are middle aged, live above the poverty line and are proficient in English as a second language (Bueker 2005; Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Yang 1994). Researchers also speculate that immigrants from the same country of origin share characteristics that affect naturalization. Migrants from countries proximate to U.S. borders might see their move as “reversible” and be less likely to take up citizenship (Bueker 2005; Portes and Mozo 1985; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Those from democratic countries might be more socialized into civic values that favor citizenship, or conversely, prior experiences with undemocratic regimes might render U.S. or Canadian citizenship more attractive (Black 1987; Bueker 2005; Yang 1994). Less frequently, scholars suggest that nationals from certain countries hold cultural values antithetical to democratic engagement (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Huntington 2004).

While researchers debate why individual or group differences matter, statistical analyses clearly show that personal traits influence naturalization, and that net of individual-level variation, country of origin remains a significant predictor of citizenship. These findings are consequential because the mix of immigrants in Canada differs from those in the United States.

Hispanic migration – from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean – dominates flows to the United States. About half of all legal immigrants arriving in the United States in the 1990s came from the Americas and Caribbean, while those from Asia, Europe or Africa represented only 31, 15 and 4 percent of the total, respectively (INS 2002:16, 21). Those born in Mexico comprised nearly 30 percent of all foreign-born U.S. residents in the 2000 U.S. Census.

Canada is home to fewer Hispanic immigrants. In 2000, only 7 percent of immigrants came from Central and South America, while the majority, 53 percent, hailed from Asia and the Pacific. Europeans made up 19 percent of immigrant admissions and about 18 percent came from Africa and the Middle East (CIC 2002:8).

Immigrant selection criteria also differ. Both Canada and the United States administer immigration systems that grant entry based on skills and resources, family ties or the need for asylum, but the relative proportion of immigrants in these three categories varies. In the late 1990s, two-thirds to three quarters of legal immigrants to the United States acquired their status through family ties (INS 2002:17). Employment-based permanent immigration accounts for about 20 percent of numerically limited visas, and a smaller percentage of all immigrant admissions (Usdansky and Espenshade 2001), while refugees comprised 6 to 16 percent of admission in the 1990s (INS 2002:17).<sup>12</sup>

Canadian immigration relies more heavily on skilled migration by people who have skills or resources (such as investment capital) needed in the Canadian economy. Under the "point system," potential migrants score points for job skills, education, language ability, and other personal characteristics. Immigration authorities can grant permanent residency if an applicant's total points surpasses the government-set threshold. In the second half of the 1990s, 50 to 60 percent of all immigrants arrived as independent migrants (a figure which includes the dependents of the principal applicant), 26 to 36 percent entered under family reunification and about 13 percent came as refugees or special admissions (CIC 2005).<sup>13</sup> Scholars such as George Borjas (1999) contend that a point system screens out individuals with low human capital, resulting in better outcomes for immigrants and the host society. To the extent that Canada's immigration policy selects individuals with better language skills and more years of schooling, we might expect these immigrants to be more likely to naturalize.<sup>14</sup>

Space constraints prevent a thorough analysis of the effects of immigration policy and immigrant origins, but we have strong evidence that these do not explain the U.S.-Canada naturalization differences (Bloemraad 2002, 2006). Citizenship levels are consistently higher in Canada across all immigrant groups, even after controlling for country of origin and individual attributes such as English ability, length of residence and education. Mexican migration is the most striking and salient difference: Mexicans, who are more numerous in the United States, are less likely to naturalize than most other groups and they constitute a larger proportion of the undocumented population. Re-calculating the U.S. naturalization level in 2000 by including only non-Mexican migrants who fulfill residency requirements, the proportion of citizens increases to 48 percent. Yet a similar adjustment to the Canadian figures, including only those who satisfy the length of residence requirement, raises aggregate naturalization even more, to 84 percent in 2001.

### ***The Context of Reception: National Ideologies, Government Institutions and State Policy***

Contrary to North American approaches, research on Western Europe examines how institutional configurations, policy philosophies and nationalism affect migrants' political incorporation (Brubaker 1992; Favell 2001; Ireland 1994). Put in the language of social movement research, a country's political opportunity structure determines access to the political system (Koopmans and Statham 1999).<sup>15</sup> Students of citizenship find that immigrants' attributes hold less relevance after considering the characteristics of their adopted home (Clarke, van Dam and Gooster 1998; de Rham 1990; Soysal 1994). The average naturalization rate in the core European Union and European Free Trade Area countries – calculated as the annual number of naturalizations over the non-citizen foreign population – varies widely. Countries such as Germany, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland recorded an annual naturalization rate of less than 1 percent in the early 1990s, whereas the rate was about 6.5 percent in the Netherlands and Sweden in 1994 (Clarke, van Dam and Gooster 1998). A similar calculation in North America produces a rate of about 3 percent in the United States and 10 percent in Canada.<sup>16</sup>



The puzzle consequently shifts from “Why do certain immigrants naturalize while other do not?” to “What causes large cross-national variation in political incorporation?” Researchers respond that differences in laws and bureaucratic procedures generate higher hurdles for would-be citizens in some countries (Brubaker 1989; de Rham 1990; Weil 2001), and that legal differences arise from divergent national ideals and policy philosophies (Brubaker 1992; Favell 2001; Ireland 1994).

Such an account should not apply to Canada and the United States. Both countries fall into the category of “liberal” welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990) and are considered “classic countries of immigration.” (Brubaker 1989; Joppke 1999) Citizenship is promoted through easy naturalization policies, and the new citizen is legally indistinguishable from the native-born.<sup>17</sup> According to Laczko (1994), the two countries are among the few in the world that successfully combine heterogeneous populations and a high standard of living. Canada also shares with the United States a more negative migrant history: past policies of Asian exclusion, internment of citizens of Japanese background, and up until the mid-1960s, immigration systems that favored white Europeans.

### **A Model of Structured Mobilization**

To understand immigrant citizenship, we need to conceptualize immigrants’ naturalization as embedded within a larger institutional and policy environment. Immigrants’ individual and group attributes clearly affect their interest in and ability to acquire citizenship. But political incorporation is also fundamentally influenced by the receiving society. Synthesizing insights from North American and European scholarship produces a model of *structured mobilization*, where the host country’s political institutions, administrative bureaucracies and integration policies facilitate or hinder immigrant citizenship.

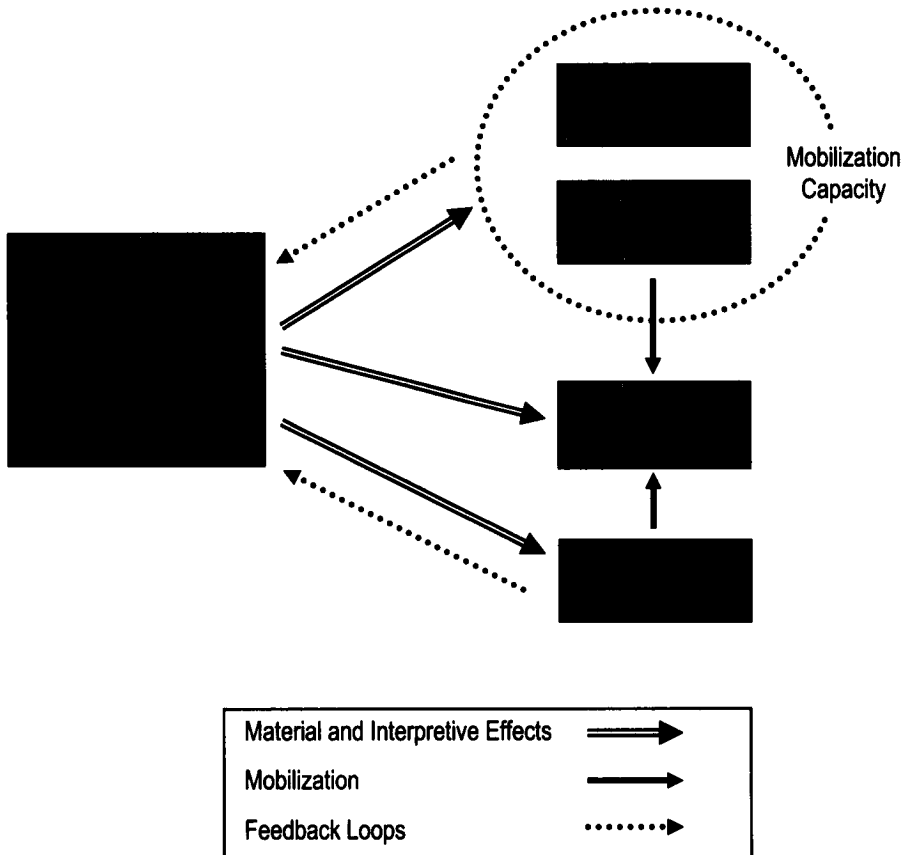
Theoretically, structured mobilization draws on institutionally-minded comparative-historical research and literatures on social movements and political process. At first blush, these literatures seem antithetical. Institutional analysis concentrates on continuity over time, pointing out how government policies, institutions and social norms pattern the actions and understandings of individuals and organizations (Clemens and Cook 1999; Hirsch 1997; Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Social movement research examines opposition to institutionalized politics, concentrating on how political challengers mobilize to win concessions or alter the political order (Andrews 2001; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 1994). Yet the theoretical gap is small because the central concepts identified by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) – political opportunity structures, organizations (or “mobilizing structures”) and framing dynamics – overlap with central arguments in institutional analysis.<sup>18</sup>

Melding the two approaches produces significant benefits because immigrant political incorporation involves normal politics, which are heavily structured by institutional environments, *and* immigrants’ status as political outsiders or challengers. Considering the predicament of Latinos in New York City, Jones-Correa concludes, “To enter into politics, then, immigrants must overcome the

inertia of the political system to be taken seriously as political players. Immigrants have to mobilize themselves first..." (1998:65) Such mobilization must be conducted not only vis-à-vis the mainstream political system, but also within the community. Immigrant leaders and advocates must convince compatriots to become involved or to shift attention from private economic concerns or homeland politics to domestic political issues.

A fruitful synthesis requires two further steps: the elaboration of mechanisms that link institutional and policy structures to people's everyday thoughts and activities, and the identification of mechanisms that let individuals modify structures. Under many institutional or political opportunity arguments, immigrants and minority communities can do little once they find themselves in one nation-state or another. German ethnic conceptions of nation, French universalistic citizenship or British multicultural race relations become both explanation and destiny for immigrants' political trajectories. We hear little about how immigrants negotiate these constraints or how national structures reproduce patterns of citizenship and incorporation. What are the mechanisms through which host societies shape immigrant lives?

**Figure 3. Immigrant Political Incorporation through Structured Mobilization**



To conceptualize this interaction, I simplify the relevant actors, as shown in Figure 3. Political incorporation involves actions taken by ordinary immigrants and the mobilizing work done by community organizations and leaders. Outside the immigrant community, mainstream actors – such as political parties, unions, churches and other groups – can also influence and mobilize newcomers. All of these actors play a role in the dynamic of immigrant political incorporation.

At the same time, government institutions and policies affect mobilization activities. They can do so directly, by influencing immigrants, or indirectly by affecting the goals, understandings and resources of community organizations, leaders and mainstream actors. State influence occurs through at least two analytically separate dynamics. One is interpretative: host countries' institutions and policies affect newcomers' and native-born citizens' understandings of immigrants' legitimate political standing in a country. Are foreign-born residents to be welcomed or shunned? Should they be treated as future citizens or temporary labor? Does national membership include diverse origins and cultures? What accommodations, if any, must newcomers and native-born residents make in remaking the national and civic community? A second dynamic is instrumental, affecting people's ability to participate and mobilize. Do public programs or policies provide material resources, such as funding, meeting space or technical assistance to immigrant communities and organizations? Does the state encourage different levels of government or private actors to support newcomers? Are there policies in place to materially affect immigrants' ability to acquire citizenship, such as language training? Institutions and policies affect understandings of citizenship and the ability to participate.<sup>19</sup> Once mobilized, immigrants – and those opposed to their political projects – can reinforce, undermine or modify existing policies or institutional practices via feedback loops (Pierson 1993, 1994).

### ***The Social Nature of Citizenship***

Scholars of contentious and routinized politics repeatedly document how civic and political engagement occurs most readily through personal contact and social interaction, rather than impersonal appeals or spontaneous engagement (e.g., Gould 1995; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Verba and colleagues (1995) demonstrate that involvement with voluntary associations, workplaces and religious institutions teaches civic and political skills, while Putnam (2000) argues that social capital drives civic and political engagement, as well as trust in the political system.

These studies focus almost exclusively on native-born citizens, but there are strong theoretical and empirical grounds to believe immigrant political incorporation also depends on interpersonal and organizational contact. Students of immigration document the importance of intra-ethnic ties, and the social capital that results, for migration (Massey 1990; Palloni et al. 2001), educational outcomes (Zhou and Bankston III 1998; Portes 1995) and success in the labor market (Aguilera and Massey 2003; Sanders, Nee and Sernau 2002). When migrants need to interact with legal systems and government bureaucracies, dense interpersonal ties facilitate the diffusion of information about legalization programs (Hagan and Baker 1993) and provide assistance with naturalization applications (Alvarez 1987; Bloemraad 2006).

Scholars have devoted scant attention to the role of community organizations in incorporation, but evidence suggests that informal associations, such as hometown-based soccer teams, formal voluntary organizations and even for-profit ethnic businesses (such a notary public or newspaper) are crucial conduits of information and assistance with political incorporation. Alvarez (1987) reports that community centers in Los Angeles and Chicago, and the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union in New York City, act as intermediaries between immigrants and the (then) Immigration and Naturalization Service. They assist Latino immigrants with the application form and studying for the civics exam. Bloemraad (2006) shows how for-profit and non-profit organizations encourage naturalization among Portuguese and Vietnamese migrants in Toronto and Boston by providing services and generating norms favoring citizenship. Gilbertson and Singer (2003) report that following passage of the Welfare Reform Act, ethnic businesses, professional groups, social associations, social service providers and even Dominican political parties mobilized to facilitate naturalization in New York City. All three accounts document the role of the ethnic media in providing information about citizenship, while Bloemraad and Gilbertson and Singer also identify community leaders as important catalysts. A robust organizational infrastructure also facilitates political mobilization because politicians see such groups as an efficient way to reach many potential voters (Marwell 2004; Parenti 1967).

### ***The Nested Nature of Political Incorporation: National Policies***

The social dynamics of political incorporation differ little in the United States and Canada. What varies – and helps explain the citizenship gap – is the degree to which actors and institutions outside the immigrant community help newcomers. Especially important are the specific policies of integration and diversity that greet newcomers. Some have contrasted American and Canadian political cultures to explain cross-national differences in politics and social behavior (e.g., Lipset 1986, 1990), but cultural accounts turn a blind eye to competing ideological traditions within a country, they often lack a causal mechanism explaining how culture produces specific outcomes and they assume historical continuity over long periods, about 200 years in the case of Lipset's analysis.<sup>20</sup> Patterns of citizenship in Canada and the United States had similar trajectories prior to the 1970s; if political culture plays a role, this culture changed over the past 40 years.

While this might be the case, the most concrete divergence in American and Canadian institutional environments lies at the policy level. Scholars who have paid attention to reception contexts in North America mostly emphasize border policy, the regulations that dictate entry into U.S. or Canadian territory. Thus Portes and Rumbaut (1996) use the intersection of U.S. immigration policy, societal discrimination, ethnic community strength and immigrants' human capital to understand between-group differences in education and language acquisition among the children of immigrants. The argument here takes inspiration from this approach, but goes further by asking which American practices and institutions provide a common fate for U.S. immigrants as compared to compatriots living in Canada once they cross the border. It also asks how government policies help constitute (or undermine) the strength

of other variables affecting incorporation, such as the cohesion of ethnic communities or the importance of human capital.

### **The Contours of Canadian and U.S. Policy Environments**

Three sets of policy differences stand out. The first is the different perspectives of the bureaucracies overseeing citizenship. In Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is a stand-alone federal department. In the United States, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), part of the Department of Justice, oversaw naturalization until March 1, 2003. Since then, the Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), housed in the Department of Homeland Security, administers immigration and citizenship adjudications.

Comparing the two countries' bureaucracies, we find that CIC generally promotes citizenship and integration, while an ethos of law enforcement loomed large over the former INS and imbues the overall mission of Homeland Security. According to Canadian officials, immigrants are free to make their own choices regarding citizenship, but government seeks to sway such decisions. "The Canadian policy is that we are a country of immigration. The only way an immigrant can influence how the country is run, to do that, you need to vote. And you can only vote if you become a citizen. The Citizenship Act ensures the facilitation of citizenship, so that immigrants can exercise their voting capacity. That is the main policy thrust."<sup>21</sup> In contrast, former INS Commissioner Doris Meissner describes a very different attitude, where "the dominant culture of the agency... [was] rooted in a view of immigration as a source of security and law enforcement vulnerability more than of continued nation building." (2001:2) Service functions, such as administering naturalization, often take second place to border control (Andreas 2000; Magaña 2003). The move of citizenship services to the Department of Homeland Security continues this tradition.

Political and bureaucratic decisions regarding policy and priorities drive these decisions, not legal structures. CIC has adopted a more aggressive policy of citizenship promotion as part of Canadian nation-building, while geographic location reduces border control worries. The Canadian Citizenship Act does not require citizenship promotion, and in the United States, the "promotion of naturalization programs... is clearly permitted, if not actually mandated" under the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act (North 1985:58).

A second policy area is newcomer settlement. Settlement policies aim to ease migrants' integration. Programs might include language training, employment counseling or even social assistance. The American federal government tends to see immigrant settlement as a private concern; USCIS oversees no settlement programs and it disburses no grants for community-based integration programs. Only officially recognized refugees, historically those fleeing Communist regimes, receive benefits under refugee resettlement programs (Zucker and Zucker 1989; Hein 1993). Everyone else must rely on their own resources and the assistance of friends, family and the immigrant community.

The Canadian state views settlement and incorporation as a public issue necessitating some government intervention and support. Currently CIC oversees three programs open to immigrants or organizations helping immigrants. Language

Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) provides basic language instruction in English or French to recently arrived immigrants, with a goal of serving about 45 percent of adult immigrants; the Host Program matches Canadian volunteers with new immigrants to provide early settlement support; and the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funds community organizations to provide reception, orientation, translation, interpretation and referral services, as well as some counseling, especially pertaining to employment.

Finally, the two nations differ in their policies on ethno-racial diversity. Both countries embrace multiculturalism, but the American variant centers on race and civil rights, while the Canadian version favors ethnicity, recognition and integration.

As Judith Shklar (1991) has noted, one cannot understand U.S. citizenship without taking into account the legacy of slavery and the concomitant sense of hierarchy and standing in American society that is predicated on race.<sup>22</sup> In the private sphere, newcomers perceive widespread acceptance of multiple cultural identities and “hyphenated” Americanism, but ethnic or immigrant-centered claims have limited political salience in the public arena. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and ‘60s and subsequent movements for native rights, Chicano rights and Asian-American rights forced the U.S. government to create remedial policies such as the Voting Rights Act, anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action programs. One result is that political understandings of multiculturalism are couched in broad classifications of white, black, Asian-American and Latino.

Because the United States has no formal policy on *immigrant* diversity, the patchwork of civil rights legislation and minority policies create incentives for community leaders to define communities in racial terms (Joppke 1999; Skerry 1993). Race-based multiculturalism is a salient political tool, but it resonates poorly with ordinary immigrants (Bloemraad 2006). As Joppke suggests, “Race is different. Its content is not a positive heritage (however modified) transplanted into the new society, but the negative experience of oppression at the hands of the receiving society. Its direction is not integration into a (white) majority... but restitution for harm and public existence as a protected, separate group.” (1999:143)

In Canada, conflict over diversity centered historically on ethnicity rather than race. The Canadian climate was not amenable to a plantation economy built on slavery.<sup>23</sup> British conquest of New France in 1659 produced a country divided into two linguistic and cultural groups, French Catholics and British Protestants. The Constitution of 1867 sought accommodation in a federal state with special language and religious guarantees. This helped mediate conflict, but inter-ethnic inequalities – described by John Porter (1965) as a “vertical mosaic” – spawned threats of Quebec separation in the 1960s and 1970s at the same time that the United States dealt with racial conflict. The federal response to this threat, as well as mobilization by Canada’s “other” ethnics, led to official multiculturalism in 1971.

Canadian multiculturalism provides symbolic recognition and some public funding and technical support to communities. The importance of multiculturalism

is by no means universally accepted, but it has undermined the view that Canadian immigrants and their children are subordinate to the descendants of British and French colonists (Breton 1986; Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). It tends to identify groups by national (or ethnic) origin, labeling people as Vietnamese-Canadians rather than Asian Canadians. Multiculturalism consequently bolsters immigrants' sense of recognition and resonates well with their self-image as culturally distinct. It also provides a language to frame grievances when groups feel that they have not received the respect they deserve.<sup>24</sup>

Importantly, the timing of Canada's investment in settlement and its shift to multicultural citizenship occurred precisely when levels of naturalization in Canada and the United States parted course. Federal government spending in these areas, while uneven and subject to cutbacks, grew rapidly over the 1970s and 1980s, and then modestly into the mid-1990s. In the 1966-67 fiscal year, the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State gave \$88,150 to 12 groups concerned with settlement and ethno-racial citizenship (Pal 1993:108). A subsequent programmatic overhaul and the assignment of multiculturalism to the Citizenship Branch generated significant expansion. In 1970 more than 100 new staff and consultants were hired by a unit that previously employed 110 employees. In the 1974-75 fiscal year the branch gave \$2.65 million in grants to 648 groups (Hawkins 1988:311, 365; Pal 1993:189, 192). The federal Department of Manpower and Immigration, which oversaw immigrant entry and labor force insertion, estimated that about half of all new migrant workers visited one of 360 Canada Manpower Centers for job counseling and training (Hawkins 1988:339). In fiscal year 1987-88, the multiculturalism program distributed more than \$20 million in grants, with almost \$6.5 million directed to "Citizenship and Community Participation." (Pal 1993:200) In fiscal year 1996-97, the federal government allocated almost \$60 million for multiculturalism programs.

The late 1990s brought serious cutbacks to multiculturalism and stagnation to settlement initiatives. The multicultural budget was cut in half, to just under \$30 million in 1997-98, while settlement funding failed to keep pace with inflation. From the 1995-96 fiscal year to 2003-04, the budget of the Settlement Branch went from \$166 million to \$175 million, with the proportion of CIC's budget devoted to settlement falling from 46 percent to 37 percent (CIC 1995; House of Commons 2003). Of the total authorized in 2003-04, CIC allocated \$100 million to LINC, \$2.8 million to the Host program, and \$30 million to ISAP (House of Commons 2003:2). Thus in 2004, the government spent about \$1,500 per new immigrant (House of Commons 2003:6), an amount critics claimed was inadequate.

We have no comparable figures for the United States because the federal government does not run such programs for non-refugee immigrants. The budgets of immigrant-serving organizations clearly show their dependence on funds provided by federal, state, county and local agencies in the form of contracts or grants (Bloemraad 2006:169-70; Cordero-Guzmán 2005), but these programs usually do not target specific immigrant concerns such as language and civics training or translation services. Non-refugee migrants receive much less government support, and the support they do receive tends to fluctuate with political change. Large scale social spending, envisioned by

President Johnson's Great Society initiative, did not survive the 1970s. Even local efforts to support citizenship deal largely with crises rather than long-term services. For example, the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 spurred the state of Massachusetts to provide \$2 million in funding to community agencies assisting with naturalization, but the appropriation was authorized for only three years. Lobbying by immigrant advocates continued some state support after the three-year period, but in 2002 Gov. Jane Swift vetoed the allocation of \$750,000 in a push to balance the state budget. Other states followed a similar pattern. Many made no investment in naturalization, even though citizenship was a requirement for various public benefits.

### **The Mechanisms of Structured Mobilization**

These three sets of policies channel immigrants' political incorporation. Most obviously, government funding and grants change incentives and newcomers' material resources, as does the provision of meeting spaces, technical assistance and other help. We thus find that communities that receive more support – as immigrant groups in Canada do relative to those in the United States, and as refugee communities in the United States do relative to other newcomers – build larger organizational infrastructures and have more diverse sets of community organizations (Bloemraad 2005). These organizations in turn provide instrumental help with citizenship and political integration. Settlement and diversity policies can also encourage legislative committees, civil servants and elected representatives to seek immigrants' input on programs directed at them, thereby opening access to the political system.

Yet a dense organizational infrastructure does not automatically lead to political activity. An institutionally complete immigrant community (Breton 1964) – one that has a well-developed organizational infrastructure – might instead insulate its members from the political mainstream into ethnic "ghettos."<sup>25</sup> Political mobilization requires motivation in addition to capacity. The policies highlighted above also generate interpretative effects making citizenship more attractive to immigrants.

Mettler (2002:352) suggests three interpretative mechanisms. First, policy beneficiaries are more likely to feel that politics are relevant. Second, those targeted by policies can become the focus of strategic mobilization, increasing feelings of personal and political efficacy. Finally, being the recipient of government attention may enhance awareness of one's rights, duties and obligations. Applied to immigrants, proactive policies teach the importance of politics, make immigrants targets of political mobilization by mainstream actors, and increase newcomers' sense of political legitimacy. The lack of such policies or policies seen as punitive communicates the irrelevance of political membership or suggests second-class citizenship.

Positive interpretive effects should be more apparent in Canada than the United States. In-depth interviews with U.S. immigrants suggest that while some new citizens strongly value political membership, many view citizenship as a means of ensuring rights, not as an invitation or responsibility to engage in decision-making. Gilbertson and Singer discuss how some Dominican immigrants felt coerced into citizenship following welfare reform, "viewing [citizenship] narrowly as a set of



legal rights, rather than as a change of affective orientation or allegiance." In my interviews with Vietnamese and Portuguese migrants similar themes emerged (Bloemraad 2006). For example, Thien, a Vietnamese refugee in Boston with a primary education and limited English language skills, explained that American citizenship provides security, access to economic opportunity, a passport for travel and the responsibility of obeying American laws:

*The good thing about the U.S. is it has a very strong and effective law system... [Also] life in the U.S. is flexible. If you go to work, you will have money. You have all the necessities that you need. But if you don't work then you won't have any money... I don't have much more to say because my whole life surrounds only these things. If I work hard then I can buy a car and a house. I also have the freedom to travel. But if I commit a crime then I will go to jail.*

Citizenship does not necessarily include a strong participatory element. Thien does not engage in political activities nor does he vote, "I have no time... I don't know who is good or who is bad."

In contrast, more Canadian immigrants see a link to government that entails rights, responsibility, participation in the polity and emotional attachment. Hiep, a Vietnamese Canadian senior living in subsidized housing, votes regularly even though his language skills are limited and he is relatively new to the country. He speaks confidently about Canadian multiculturalism:

*To my understanding, Canada is a country with a true meaning of multiculturalism. It is very good and suitable to this country. Why? The Canadian government listens to the voice of the people's will, the requests, and helps to respond. They not only respect the cultures of the different community backgrounds, but they always try to develop the culture and tradition of that community more.*

Such interpretative effects are also evident among immigrant community leaders. Hai, a middle-aged Vietnamese Canadian who has been active in organizing various community initiatives, explains:

*Here we try to provide an opportunity for everybody. It doesn't matter whether you have a language ability or you do not have a language ability. You, as a person, you have the right to live, you have the right to access, to service, to government.*

Discourses around the public management of diversity influence leaders' ability to speak up. On one level, multiculturalism and settlement policies provide discursive resources to make claims on government or fellow citizens,

much in the way that social movement scholars talk about framing strategies. On another level, national beliefs about diversity and the appropriateness of political intervention structure immigrants' conception of their interests, identities and understanding of what is politically possible or preferable. Public ideologies thus act as cognitive maps or moral schemas (Clemens and Cook 1999; Zucker 1991).<sup>26</sup>

The material and interpretative effects of government policy help explain why Canadian citizenship levels are higher than in the United States. While some of the U.S. decline stems from larger cohorts of recent and undocumented immigrants, contemporary immigrants also wait longer to naturalize and are less likely to pursue citizenship, in part due to the limited resources available to help them and an ambiguous message about government's interest in new citizens. In Canada, while large cohorts of recent migrants should also have depressed citizenship levels, bureaucratic orientations, settlement programs and multiculturalism policy encourage citizenship.

Further support for this approach emerges in comparing refugees in the United States – newcomers who receive state assistance – with the majority of family and economic migrants who receive little public support. Refugees are one and a half times more likely to become citizens than eligible legal immigrants with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Fix, Passel and Sucher 2003:6). Although refugees have clear political reasons to participate, the support given to them by the U.S. government probably plays a significant role in explaining Cubans' high levels of political participation (Moreno 1996). The prevalence of Vietnamese mutual assistance associations can be linked directly to government disbursements (Hein 1997). Ethnographic research finds that in the health care system, Latino immigrants who are official refugees benefit not only from having medical services paid by the government, but medical staff also see them as more deserving and treat them as citizens who can make demands; non-refugees are discouraged from making claims on American institutions (Horton 2004). The dynamics of structured mobilization, applied here to cross-national variation, can also illuminate citizenship gaps between migrant groups.

### **Conclusion: Implications for Future Research and Theorizing**

This article makes the claim that civic and political attachment is strengthened by public funding and programmatic support, and it is undermined by the absence of such support. For example, government provision of English language classes has a material impact on a newcomer's ability to satisfy the language requirement for citizenship, and it also communicates immigrants' importance to the receiving society, creating the foundation for political membership. Beyond immigrants' own skills and interests, we must examine whether those outside the immigrant community provide newcomers with a helping hand.

These findings require researchers to consider levels of analysis beyond individual or group attributes. In essence, I suggest a "European" turn to the study of citizenship in traditional immigrant-receiving countries. American scholarship has largely ignored the role of the state in immigrant integration, except for how state policy determines entry. As Nathan Glazer writes, "the

settlement, adaptation, and progress, or lack of it, of immigrants is largely, in the U.S. context, up to them.” (1998:60) I believe that state action – or inaction – influences immigrants’ potential to achieve citizenship. Scholars of immigration in Europe demonstrate how legal structures and national ideologies channel incorporation, but most have assumed that such differences would be absent in North America, given broad similarities between the United States and Canada. I suggest that we must consider not only ideal-typical citizenship regimes, but also specific policies and their effects.

The argument here extends a nascent research agenda examining institutional effects on immigrants’ integration, whether political (Ireland 1994; Jones-Correa 1998; Soysal 1994), economic (Reitz 1998) or linguistic (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:207-31). In the behavioral tradition, institutional factors merely modify the costs and benefits individuals weigh when making decisions. Structured mobilization takes seriously the social nature of incorporation and pays particular attention to processes of mobilization and meaning-making which alter individuals’ perception of costs and benefits.

Finally, this approach cautions against a whole-hearted adoption of transnational or postnational paradigms. Forces of globalization clearly make the world a more interconnected place and facilitate the ability of individuals, businesses and organizations to be active in multiple countries. In some cases, human rights norms and globalization force states to be more flexible toward citizenship and belonging (Hollifield 1992; Jacobson 1996; Soysal 1994). However, the everyday experiences of immigrants remain grounded in specific societies, societies that are fundamentally shaped by particular government policies. A model of structured mobilization shows how nation-states continue to channel the fortunes of migrants, despite countervailing transnational or supranational forces.

## Notes

1. The Boston-Toronto study relies on statistical data on immigrant citizenship in Canada and the United States, documentary evidence from community organizations and government reports, and 151 in-depth interviews with community leaders, government officials and ordinary Portuguese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees (Bloemraad 2006).
2. People born abroad to American citizens – and who are thus American citizens at birth – are not included. The data prior to 1920 reflect only adult male naturalization; enumerators did not collect systematic information on women and minors since their status largely depended on their husband or father.
3. Most North American surveys do not ask respondents’ immigration status, so researchers use foreign birth to identify immigrants.
4. Unauthorized immigrants, most of whom overstay temporary visas, also reside in Canada. Recent news reports put the number at about 200,000, but lacking reliable estimates from government or academics, the figure is purely speculative (Jimenez 2003). Unauthorized migrants certainly

constitute a smaller percentage of the overall foreign-born population than in the United States.

5. In the year 1960, 265,000 individuals became legal permanent residents of the United States. Two decades later immigrant admissions doubled to 530,000; and in 2000 they stood at 850,000 for the year (INS 2002).
6. An immigrant's length of residence correlates strongly with citizenship acquisition, perhaps because time in a country reduces the costs of citizenship and makes the benefits more apparent (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1986; Yang 1994), or because it marks assimilation and growing attachment to the receiving society (Evans 1988; Liang 1994).
7. These figures are calculated using the Public Use Microfile Sample data from the 1970 (Form 1, state), 1980 (5 percent), 1990 (5 percent) and 2000 (5 percent) U.S. censuses available through the Integrated Public Use Microfile Sample project ([www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org)). Unless otherwise indicated, all U.S. census data discussed below come from these sources.
8. These figures are calculated using the 20 percent sample files of the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 1996 Canadian censuses, accessed through on-site visits to Statistics Canada, Ottawa. I have not been able to do a similar calculation with 2001 Census data. Unless otherwise indicated, all Canadian census data come from these sources.
9. The perception among many immigrants that U.S. naturalization requires a figurative, or even literal, stomping on one's flag of origin might deter some (Jones-Correa 1998). However, this perception appears more rooted in symbolic understandings of American citizenship than concrete fears of material loss. The dramatic rise in sending countries' willingness to tolerate dual citizenship appears to influence immigrants more than U.S. policy (Jones-Correa 2001; Bloemraad forthcoming).
10. The U.S. residency requirement falls to three years for spouses of American citizens and can be waived entirely for those who have seen combat in the U.S. military. Both countries offer easier rules for the elderly.
11. Refusals of citizenship applications – based on inadequate language skills, lack of civic knowledge or other problems fulfilling citizenship requirements – appear roughly similar in Canada and the United States. From the 1960s through the 1980s about 2 percent of applications in the United States and 3 percent in Canada were formally rejected (North 1985:54). In the 1990s, U.S. refusal rates climbed to 15 percent as many immigrants applied for citizenship without first having fulfilled the residency requirement. In Canada, refusals stood at about 10 percent.
12. U.S. policy establishes annual quotas across a selection of preference categories, but some individuals, such as the spouse of a U.S. citizen, fall outside the quota and can gain admission regardless of the number of visas disbursed in a given year.

13. Special admissions include humanitarian cases not falling under the refugee category, home caregiver admissions and other specialized programs.
14. For example, Camarota (2001) suggests that a decline in immigrants' educational attainment relative to the American native-born depresses immigrants' propensity to naturalize.
15. "Political opportunity structure" is generally understood as persistent dimensions of the political environment that affect people's willingness to undertake collective action (Tarrow 1994).
16. The North American calculation is mine, using data from the INS Yearbooks and CIC Statistical Reports for the number of naturalizations and the U.S. Current Population Survey and Canadian Census for the noncitizen foreign stock.
17. The exception to this rule is the U.S. presidency which is restricted to those born on U.S. soil. This stands in contrast to Canada where foreign-born Prime Ministers have held office.
18. Political opportunity structures, the term for the "macro" context in which social movements operate, replicate the heart of institutional analysis. Social movement framing processes – the use of ideas and sentiments to motivate individuals – mirror institutionalists' interest in cognitive schemata and notions of legitimacy. Only mobilizing structures do not find a parallel in institutional analysis, but students working in this tradition readily acknowledge the role of organizations in drawing together individuals with similar interests and in advancing such interests through collective mobilization.
19. This formulation is indebted to Suzanne Mettler's (2002) account of how the G.I. Bill fostered civic and political participation among veterans of World War II.
20. Joppke (1999), for example, suggests that the characterization of Germany as a country of ethnic nationalism overstates ideological and institutional durability. German citizenship law is relatively restrictive, but asylum policies are generous. Multiple centers of policy-making in Germany – federal vs. local, parliament vs. the courts – muddy the ethnocentric portrait painted by many scholars. See also Skocpol (1992) on the lack of causal mechanisms in political culture accounts.
21. Author's interview with senior CIC official, June 13, 2001.
22. See also Smith (1997) on "ascriptive" American citizenship and Loury (2001) on racial stigma.
23. Estimates of the number of African slaves in Canada vary, but likely didn't exceed a few thousand. As part of the British Empire, Canada automatically adopted British emancipation laws, culminating in the abolition of slavery throughout the Empire on July 31, 1834.
24. However, Canadian multiculturalism provides community leaders with more limited symbolic weapons to attack racial discrimination.

25. Reviewing research on assimilation and transnationalism among five migrant groups, Morawska (2002) notes that the Chinese-American community in New York City has only a feeble voice in civic and political affairs, despite a highly developed institutional infrastructure.
26. Immigrant leaders are also affected by the material effects of government policies. They are often direct beneficiaries of government grants because they are most likely to run the organizations receiving funding. This creates a classic policy feedback loop: ethnic leaders pay attention to mainstream politics, in part to ensure future resources, and when funding is threatened, they mobilize community members to oppose cuts or minimize their impact.

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