over the U.S.-Canada border will continue to evolve alongside the twists and turns of the broader debate over security and civil liberties in the post-9/11 era.

See also Border Fence; Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border; Symbolic Security; Terrorism and National Security; Undocumented Immigration Policy

References:

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CIVIC INCORPORATION

In the United States, becoming civically incorporated has generally been thought of as an essential process for immigrants, since large numbers of unincorporated and disenfranchised individuals are considered detrimental and destabilizing to democratic societies. This civic incorporation has historically been measured through the process of citizenship acquisition or naturalizing, the route by which a foreign-born individual becomes an American citizen, gaining virtually all of the guarantees, protections, and political and economic benefits of those born on American soil.

The civic integration of immigrants has become somewhat controversial, in terms of its importance, inevitability, and determinants, as patterns of immigration have changed. During much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,
immigrants arrived in the United States from Europe, with only a small percent-
age ever planning to return to the country of origin. Fleeing famines and religious
persecution and seeking a dearth of economic opportunities, the great majority
of those who arrived viewed the United States as their permanent home, doing
all they could to become American.

Changing immigration laws, changing migration flows, and changing tech-
nologies have all led to a decline in the long-term settlement intentions among
many of today’s international migrants. The United States has seen the rise of
shorter-term immigrants, those who come to the United States with the inten-
tion of returning to the home society after a certain economic goal has been met.
These target migrants who emigrate from their countries of origin with a specific
economic target in mind and with every expectation of returning to their home
societies once that financial goal has been met, have little interest in or need to
become civically incorporated in the American system.

Technological advances have further deteriorated the desire and need for
civic incorporation among immigrants in the United States. The development of
new technologies, ranging from the advent of (low cost) air travel to inexpensive
calling plans to cellular phones to e-mail, has led to an increasing rate of trans-
nationalism, the experience of immigrants moving between the home and host
societies repeatedly over the course of a lifetime.

As a result of the ability to remain connected to the country of origin, many
immigrants become less civically incorporated in the United States as civic in-
volvement in the home society remains strong. The growth of binational identi-
ties, immigrants identifying with both the country of origin and the host society
(as both Brazilian and American, for example), may limit the need and desire for
the traditional manner of civic incorporation within the United States, namely
through citizenship acquisition. A rise in undocumented immigrants, those who
have arrived in the United States through illegal means or overstayed their once-
legal visas, has also meant that a significant portion of immigrants are unable to
become civically incorporated in the traditional sense. Is it still necessary to both
the immigrant and larger-scale American society for immigrants to become civi-
ically incorporated? If so, is citizenship acquisition the only way possible for this
civic integration to occur? Does becoming an American citizen even secure civic
incorporation? Perhaps citizenship acquisition has become a necessary, but not
sufficient, condition for becoming civically incorporated in the United States.
Or perhaps immigrants who have not acquired American citizenship through
the naturalization process may be able to become integrated into civil society in
other ways.

BACKGROUND

Defining Civic Incorporation

What exactly is meant by civic integration is in itself a debate; scholars fight
among themselves over what should be included as part of this process. It is
generally agreed that civic incorporation is the manner by which immigrants
become a part of the host society’s civic realm. It is also generally agreed that
civic incorporation includes formal political engagement, such as acquiring citizenship and voting.

The extension of citizenship in societies around the world falls into one of two categories: jus sanguinis and jus solis. The jus sanguinis form of citizenship extends citizenship to anyone who is viewed as having the blood of the respective society, regardless of place of birth or residence. Countries such as Germany and Israel have tended to grant citizenship through this framework. In contrast, countries that practice the principle of jus solis citizenship grant it to anyone born on the soil of that society, regardless of the status of the child’s parents.

Some societies allow the extension of citizenship, and all of the rights and obligations that often accompany this membership, to those who are neither born on the soil nor are of the blood. When citizenship is gained through this latter path, it is known as a process of naturalization. Naturalization is the form of citizenship extension that has garnered the most attention from immigration scholars, public policy officials, and the general public, as it is viewed as a sign of active civic engagement on the part of immigrants—a status an individual must actively acquire rather than gain through osmosis.

Yet, civic engagement is not solely through formal political participation, participation. Civic activity is viewed as any behavior that attempts to influence government policies, the distribution of resources, and the formation and reformation of public institutions. Informal methods of palpably political acts, such as protesting, participating in marches, and signing petitions are also viewed as signs of civic integration on the part of immigrants.

Increasingly, less obvious political acts are understood as forms of civic integration, as well. For example, participation in parent-teacher associations, community groups, and church organizations are viewed as other ways of becoming civically engaged in society. Although these forms of participation may not always or immediately translate into civic integration, they are often backdoor approaches to influencing public policies and institutions and the distribution of resources, all goals that we know to be political in nature.

Civic Integration throughout American History

The United States grants citizenship based upon both the principles of jus sanguinis and jus solis. Children born abroad to American citizens are legally viewed as American citizens, as a result of their blood. Children born in the United States to noncitizens, whether by choice or exclusion, are also considered to be American citizens. Individuals, neither born on American soil nor born to American parents, may also become American citizens through the naturalization process if certain criteria are met. These criteria include legal residency in the United States (generally for at least five years), proficiency in English, the ability to pass tests in American history and civics, and being judged to be of good moral character in an interview with a representative of the U.S. government.

The first piece of federal legislation to deal with formal civic integration of immigrants was passed by Congress in 1790. Under this legislation, the residency requirement was set at two years, for any free white adult alien, male or
female. Individuals who met these demographic requirements had to prove they were of good moral character. If one's character was deemed acceptable, he or she was required to take an oath of allegiance to the U.S. Constitution and thus was granted citizenship by either a state or federal court judge.

Large-scale immigration to the United States began in the 1840s, when millions from Ireland and Germany came to seek economic opportunities. This first large-scale wave of migration was followed in the 1880s by the migration of millions of Italian, Greek, Polish, and Jewish immigrants also seeking economic advancement, as well as religious and political freedom. This second large wave lasted until the early part of the twentieth century.

Academic and popular interest in the civic incorporation of immigrants began in earnest during the early twentieth century, as questions about the ability of immigrants to assimilate arose. The Naturalization Act of 1906 formalized naturalization requirements and procedures and added English-language ability as a requirement for citizenship, suggesting the unifying nature that U.S. citizenship was intended to have for society. Americanization programs, both of a required and voluntary nature, developed in the early twentieth century to teach immigrants, often viewed as unable to assimilate, how to become American. Such programs taught English, history, and civics to ensure the common body of knowledge that was viewed as essential for a unified society.

Over the course of the twentieth century, adjustments continued to be made around requirements and procedures. For example, the Act of May 9, 1918, following World War I, allowed noncitizen soldiers to become naturalized at various military installations. Perhaps more importantly, citizenship laws over the course of the twentieth century also changed to extend U.S. citizenship to groups that had previously been formally excluded from the U.S. civic sphere. Women, historically viewed as appendages of their fathers and husbands, were granted the right under the Married Women's Act of 1922 to become U.S. citizens, independent of the status of the males in their lives. Individuals of Chinese descent, a national group barred from entering the United States and barred from acquiring U.S. citizenship under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, were permitted to become citizens in 1943. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 officially removed race as a criteria in the naturalization process, making citizenship acquisition possible for anyone who had met the outlined requirements of residency, English-language ability, and knowledge of American history and civics provided they had been deemed to be a person of good moral character.

Civic Integration as Essential Component of Society

Civic integration is viewed as an essential component of full-fledged membership of virtually any society. Citizenship acquisition places an individual on theoretically equal footing with individuals who were born in that society or received citizenship automatically upon birth.

This membership may be even more important in democratic societies, where the hallmark of belonging has historically been the ability to participate in the electoral system, via the ballot box. An inability to participate politically
In a democratic society may lead to feelings of frustration and alienation at the individual level. Lacking full membership may also retard integration in other critical areas, such as the social or economic spheres of a society (“California Must Prioritize Citizenship” 2007).

In 1970, the rate of naturalization among all legally documented immigrants stood at 64 percent; it dropped to 39 percent in 1995 but then increased to 49 percent in 2002. It should be noted that these are the rates of naturalization among all legally documented immigrants in the United States, rather than all immigrants eligible for naturalization. As of 2005, naturalization rates among all eligible immigrants stood at approximately 59 percent (Passel, 2007).

Civic incorporation at the group level is viewed by academicians as critical to the health of the host society, particularly in a democracy such as the United States. A lack of political integration may lead to mistrust and disunity at the group level. Large numbers of disenfranchised residents are viewed as destabilizing to the society as a whole. There is more to democracy than the ability of individuals to go to the voting booth—working together on a regular basis to improve overall societal conditions.

In order for this concerted action to take place, a sense of group identity and belonging must exist. The rules and regulations around citizenship acquisition, particularly as they relate to length of residency in the United States, the ability to speak English, and knowledge of U.S. civics and history speak precisely to the U.S. government’s belief in citizenship as a mark of belonging to a national community. When feelings of alienation and inefficacy become widespread in society, the fabric of that society begins to fray.

**Civic Integration as No Longer an Essential Component of Society**

The passage of the Hart-Celler Immigration Act, often known as the Immigration Act of 1965, hailed a new period of immigration to the United States. This major change in immigration law placed family reunification and the labor needs of American society as primary in the determination of who could gain access to the United States and removed country-of-origin criteria.

Many of these new immigrants chose to migrate solely for economic reasons and held longer-term intentions of returning to their countries of origin. Immigrants may come to the United States for the sole purpose of sending money home to the country of origin in the form of remittances. Similarly, target migrants may come to the United States with the express purpose of saving up a particular sum of money in the host society to return home to start a business or to retire.

These shorter-term settlement intentions are quite different from those of immigrants arriving in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of whom immigrated for a combination of economic, political, and/or religious motivation with the intention of permanent settlement. Beyond immigrating to the United States for somewhat different reasons and with different intentions around settlement, earlier waves of immigrants simply did not have the options
for return migration in the way that today's immigrants do. Changes in technology and transportation, particularly in the form of low-cost air travel, have made return a possibility in a way that it was not in previous generations.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that between the years 1995 and 1997, 220,000 foreign-born residents of the United States emigrated. The agency projected that by 2005, the United States would see the departure of over 300,000 foreign-born residents each year. Out of an estimated 1.2 million documented and undocumented immigrants entering the United States annually, this out-migration is significant. Further, Mexico, the country of origin viewed as sending immigrants who are the least likely to become civically integrated, is the leading destination for foreign-born émigrés (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2004).

Should American society be concerned about incorporating individuals into the civic realm when the individuals have little intention of staying over the longer term? If many immigrants are entering the United States with more limited settlement plans, civic integration may be less important than was once the case. For these foreign-born émigrés, civic integration may simply be irrelevant both to them as individuals and to larger scale American society from which they depart.

What is sometimes viewed as more essential than civic integration for immigrants is their economic, educational, and linguistic integration into American society, particularly for those who plan on remaining long term. Immigrants, in general, hold high school degrees at one-third the rate of the native born, with poverty rates among immigrants about 50 percent higher (Lowell and Kemper, 2004). Immigrants who are eligible to naturalize, but do not, are very different on a variety of characteristics from their counterparts who have made the decision to acquire U.S. citizenship (Buecker 2006). Approximately 60 percent of those who have not naturalized, but are eligible, report having limited English proficiency. Of this same group, over 25 percent have less than a ninth-grade education, as compared with 9 percent of the naturalized population (Margon 2004). Among recently naturalized immigrants, there are higher levels of income and higher levels of college degrees, as compared with those who are eligible but have not naturalized (Fix, Passel, and Sucher 2003). The findings that recently minted citizens have higher levels of education, income, and English-language proficiency strongly suggest that other forms of integration often come prior to civic integration. Given the implications in American society of failing to speak English, possess a high-school degree, or participate in the workforce, these forms of immigrant integration may be more important, to both the individual and to the United States as a whole, than civic incorporation.

Civic Integration as Inevitable Result

Immigration scholars have historically thought that civic integration of the foreign-born and their offspring was both essential and inevitable. Immigration scholar Milton Gordon developed an argument known as the straight-line theory of assimilation. This theory predicted that the offspring of immigrants
would within three generations assimilate to the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) population that dominated the United States. The grandchildren of immigrants would be entirely incorporated into the various spheres of American society and would be indistinguishable from the great-great-grandchildren of those who had migrated from England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and settled in what came to be known as the United States.

As defined by Gordon, the straight-line theory of assimilation is comprised of seven steps. The first step towards assimilation is cultural, defined as the acquisition of the dominant group’s language, customs of dress, food, and the like. This is followed by structural assimilation, the penetration of the core society’s primary groups and organizations, such as clubs and neighborhoods. Marital assimilation, i.e. intermarrying with the dominant group at significant rates, is the third step. Identificational assimilation follows and is the process by which the self-identity of individuals is linked to the dominant culture. Phases five and six relate to how the dominate group perceives the once immigrant, now ethnic group. According to Gordon, phase five is attitude-receptional assimilation, meaning the absence of prejudice and stereotyping on the part of the dominant group. Step six is known as behavior-receptional assimilation, the absence of discrimination.

This seven-step process of incorporation ends when the descendents of immigrants become civically incorporated, participating in the democratic process in ways and at rates comparable to longer-settled Americans. Democratic values and practices are internalized. Political power struggles along immigrant or ethnic lines cease to exist, and the descendents of immigrants simply become Americans involved in the mainstream democratic process.

The inclusion and placement of civic assimilation in this seven-step process speaks to its critical role in the making of Americans. According to this theory, one is not completely assimilated until he or she has gone through this final step of becoming incorporated into the civic realm. Assimilation in every other sphere, from cultural to structural to identificational, can take place, but without becoming part of the civic life of the United States, one remains to some degree an outsider. According to Gordon, inclusion in all spheres is inevitable, given enough time.

Although this seven-step process of assimilation is argued to take multiple generations, naturalization rates suggest movement towards civic integration even within a single generation. Among immigrants who have been in the United States since 1969, approximately 81 percent have naturalized. The naturalization rate for those who entered the United States between 1970 and 1979 is 70 percent, and for those who entered between 1980 and 1989, the rate is nearly 50 percent (Larsen 2004). Although the process of civic integration is far from immediate, Gordon argues that becoming American is inevitable.

Civic Integration as No Longer an Inevitable Result

With the removal of country-of-origin-criteria and the placement of family reunification and labor needs at the center of American immigration policy,
The Immigration Act of 1965 allowed, for the first time, large numbers of individuals from Asia and Latin America. The new racial and ethnic diversity of migration flows in the post-1965 period, combined with shorter-term settlement intentions and greater ongoing contact with the country of origin, raises questions about the likelihood of integration for this new type of immigrant.

A theory of segmented assimilation has arisen as a competing theory to Gordon’s straight-line assimilation, which was developed with nineteenth-century European immigrants in mind. Segmented assimilation theory posits three possible paths for immigrants to take: full assimilation along the lines of what Gordon argued was inevitable, partial acculturation in which individuals become integrated in some but not all segments of American society, and downward assimilation whereby immigrants assimilate to an excluded and isolated native-born underclass. Under this line of thinking, civic incorporation is not an inevitable outcome, as argued by Gordon, but an end point experienced by only a subset of the immigrant population.

The debate that takes place around the ability of the new immigrants from Asia and Latin America to become integrated versus the previous waves of immigrants from Europe is somewhat misleading. Segmented-assimilation theory examines immigrants within a single generation, or at most, across the lifespan of immigrants and their native-born children, rather than across multiple generations as straight-line assimilation theory does. However, the debate about the level and type of incorporation of today’s immigrants vis-à-vis earlier waves is one that has dominated public policy conversations and is an important one to have.

By some standards of civic integration, the children of immigrants, regardless of country of origin, skin tone, level of education, household income, legal status of parents, or any of the other factors that are thought to encourage or discourage civic integration, are automatically integrated into the civic sphere of American society, given the jus solis aspect of American citizenship. Children born in the United States, regardless of anything else, are American citizens. As such, anyone other than the actual immigrant him or herself, is civically incorporated if citizenship status means civic incorporation.

If the active pursuit of citizenship among immigrants, via the process of naturalization, is the measure used to determine civic integration, then the inevitability of civic integration among the immigrant population is more debatable. Although over 80 percent of all immigrants who entered the United States prior to 1970 have naturalized and rates remain high in later cohorts, the rate of naturalization drops off significantly among immigrants who entered in 1990 or later, with less than 15 percent having naturalized as of 2003 (Larsen 2004). The significant differences in rates of naturalization by region and country of origin also suggest that the presumption of civic integration must be rethought. Seventy-one percent of eligible immigrants from Asia had naturalized as of 2005, as compared with 46 percent from Latin America. Naturalization rates vary to an even greater extent when citizenship acquisition is studied by country of origin. Among Filipino-origin immigrants, 76 percent of those eligible to naturalize did so as of 2005 while among Mexican-origin immigrants, the rate stood at 35 percent (Passel 2007).
Naturalization as Essential to the Civic Integration Process

Many view the acquisition of citizenship as the key sign of integration in a society, since it is a status that must be actively achieved rather than passively received. Citizenship is of specific importance to civic integrations because it is essential for electoral participation. Voting remains the most formal, and arguably, most important political act in a democratic society. Without U.S. citizenship, one is without a formal political voice.

Naturalizing is also viewed as an essential step to becoming incorporated in other ways. Citizenship provides immigrants with a sense of membership and encourages greater involvement in schools, neighborhoods, and community organizations. Although involvement in such organizations does not require citizenship, being a citizen encourages these and other types of civic activity. The lack of citizenship, even among legal residents, may give individuals the feeling that they have no right to ask for government services or to attempt to influence the larger political structure in any way. Noncitizens are less likely to contact a public official, less likely to pay attention to politics, and less likely to have a sense of political efficacy. For example, only 12.6 percent of non-naturalized citizens report contacting a public official versus 25 percent of naturalized immigrants (Segura, Pachon, and Woods 2001). Contacting a public official does not necessitate citizenship, at least theoretically. Further, communities with large numbers of formally unincorporated immigrants are far less likely to gain the attention and ear of politicians and lobbying groups. Citizenship is clearly essential at both the individual and group level for formal political activity, namely voting, but it also may be critical for informal acts of civic participation as well.

Other Options for Civic Integration

Citizenship has historically been viewed as the primary measure of civic integration, as it guarantees access to the most formal method of democratic political activity, namely voting. It is not clear, however, if naturalization is always sought for the purposes of civic integration. U.S. citizenship may be acquired for a range of reasons including, but not limited to, a greater ability to help relatives enter the United States, greater access to social welfare benefits, and greater upward mobility in the economic realm. Naturalization does, of course, also allow electoral participation, but it does not equal civic integration.

Studies of voter participation among the naturalized population show significant variation in turnout by country of origin. For some immigrant groups, such as Canadians and Cubans, naturalizing translates into very high rates of electoral participation. For other groups, such as Chinese and former Soviets, who experience a difficult language transition, only a minority of those naturalized actually vote. In the latter cases, naturalizing does not suggest civic integration.

Further, naturalization may not be an option for all immigrants. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimated that as of January 2006, approximately 11.6 million undocumented immigrants were residing in the United States (Hoefer, Rytina, and Campbell 2007). For these nearly 12 million immigrants,
becoming civically integrated in the United States via naturalizing is not an option. Does that mean that these millions of residents remain outside the civic realm? Scholars argue that civic integration may be occurring for them via other, more informal channels. Even when individuals cannot formally attain civic membership due to their legal status, children born to them in the United States are citizens and may be a gateway to civic integration. For example, 64 percent of minor children living in the United States with undocumented parents are themselves native-born U.S. citizens. This citizenship by proxy may lead to some level of civic integration on the part of those who do not have naturalization as an option.

More active forms of civic integration are also evident. The large-scale immigration marches of spring of 2006 suggest that informal political activity, that is civic engagement that does not require being an U.S. citizen, exists as another mechanism by which some immigrants may become civically integrated. Participation estimates for the May Day protest marches to demand immigration reform range between one and two million immigrants (MSNBC 2006). Research has shown that although naturalized citizens are more likely to participate in informal political acts, noncitizens also participate in such behaviors. One study found, for example, that nearly 13 percent of non-naturalized citizens have contacted a public official, 44 percent have donated money to local organizations, and 41 percent feel a sense of political efficacy (Segura, Pachon, and Woods 2001). Although all of these numbers are lower than among the citizen population, the results strongly suggest some level of civic integration on the part of those who cannot or will not naturalize.

CONCLUSION

The concern over the civic integration of immigrants has existed virtually since immigrants began to enter the United States in large numbers in the mid-nineteenth century. The perceived threat of immigrants taking over American society and culture has been a driving force behind the push for assimilation. As at the turn of the twentieth century, the public, policy makers, and politicians of today debate the willingness and ability of immigrants to become what they label American. Questions of whether civic integration is still necessary for increasingly transient immigrants, whether it is still inevitable for those who stay, and whether naturalization is really the best sign of civic integration are all up for debate.

See also Birthright Citizenship; Dual Citizenship; Naturalization and Immigrant Loyalty

COERCION AND MIGRATION

The concern expressed in popular media such as radio talk shows and television news programs like Lou Dobbs about illegal immigration can be misleading. It often overlooks the jeopardy that migrants face dealing with smugglers or traffickers who may enslave them. Despite the danger, many undocumented migrants come to look for work or to join their families hoping to become permanent immigrants. The necessity for migrants who would be denied a visa to enter without legal authorization propagates a host of criminal industries. Human smugglers and traffickers are international criminals, and it is not surprising that as intensified border enforcement increases the stakes for both migrants and smugglers, incidences of coercion and predation have increased.