IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION: SIMPLE QUESTIONS, COMPLEX ANSWERS

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This era is marked by unprecedented human mobility across regions and continents. The sheer volume and diversity of migration is unparalleled in history; as a result, immigration has become an enduring feature in almost all Western countries. Not surprisingly, the adjustment of these newcomers to their new societies has become the focus of significant academic and policy concern, with an emphasis on finding effective interventions that will promote integration of immigrants.

Current interest in integration appears to be based on three major trends:

- Demographic transitions in most of the Western countries due to low birth rates have produced acute labour skill shortages at a time when post-industrial economies have significant demand for highly skilled immigrants. As a result, given the high levels of global mobility, the retention and integration of migrants is vital to the economic and social survival of these countries;
- Recent events in relation to threats to security and terrorism have heightened the need to foster social cohesion. Social isolation due to unemployment and poverty produces marginalization and disharmony, threatening the very fabric of societies. Providing opportunities for social, cultural, political and economic integration of immigrants has become an imperative for all host countries;
- Socio-economic and human rights implications of a large number of temporary and undocumented migrants in almost all countries require careful examination. In the interests of social justice, it is important to understand and implement policies and programs that guarantee fundamental rights to this category of vulnerable individuals.

Formal and operational definitions of integration

As the articles in this issue of *Canadian Diversity / Diversité canadienne* and a review of the broader literature indicate, definitions of the term "integration" vary considerably across jurisdictions. Based on this review, the following observations can be made:

- Terms such as integration, acculturation and adaptation are used interchangeably (Korac 2003, Remennick 2003);
- Integration is often treated as a process as well as an outcome (Breton 1992 as cited in Valtonen 1996, Berry 2001);
- Integration is conceptualized as an individual and a group phenomenon (Berry 2001), involving changes in attitudes as well as behaviours (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder 2001);
- Integration can be understood as holistic or differential where the latter refers to the selected adoption of host society characteristics (Henry 1994, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2005);
- In spite of statements to the contrary, integration is often treated as a one-way process, where the host society expects enduring changes on the part of the immigrants (Saygeh and Lasry 1993, CIC 2002, IMO 2006);
- Integration and other related processes are often conceptualized as dichotomous categories. As Gans (1997) points out, this polarization is not an empirical reality, and therefore, consideration is to be given to a "range of adaptations." This calls for more sophisticated empirical categories of integration.

It is important to note that in the absence of a widely-accepted definition of what constitutes integration, it is impossible for newcomers to fully understand a host society's expectations and this leaves them dangerously exposed to the vagaries of populous politics with ever shifting goal posts of what constitutes success. This danger is discussed in this issue, in several national case studies (e.g. Inglis, Penninx).

Dimensions and factors of integration

To further complicate matters, there is little agreement on which dimensions of integration ought to be considered. Much of the contemporary discourse revolves around labour market outcomes and adherence to an inchoate set of "values" that the host society is deemed to espouse (Simon).

Yet, research suggests that social, cultural and political/civic integration may be equally important aspects of integration to consider (Jedwab). For example, a review of the literature reveals that the dimensions of integration are expressed in terms of the following factors:

- Feelings and patterns of social interaction of immigrants (Scott and Scott 1989, Henry 1994);
- Roles that immigrants occupy and spheres of immigrant activity (Guest and Stamm 1993, Kallen 1995);
- Characteristics of immigrant communities such as group size, social and cultural distances and the availability of social capital (Esser 2004);
- Professional skilled employment in the mainstream economy, diverse circle of socializing and social networks, and exogenous cultural media consumption (Delander, Hammarstedt, Månsson and Nyberg 2005);
- Opportunities for participation in the various societal spheres (Potoky 1996, Korac 2003, Valtonen 2004, Wilcox 2004).

In spite of these attempts to formulate models of integration, it has been argued that efforts to categorize variations in integration in terms of typologies are futile. Freeman, (2004) proposes a perspective that treats integration as a product of the interactions between migrant aspirations and strategies and regulatory frameworks in four domains – State, market, welfare and culture. These institutions are not created for immigrants *per se* and therefore, national incorporation frameworks or universally valid models of integration cannot be identified.

Nevertheless, both individual and structural factors have been considered in immigrant integration. The theoretical and empirical literature highlights the functional role of education, knowledge of the language of the receiving society as well as job experience in the host country as important factors in labour market integration of immigrants (Veglery 1988, Delander, Hammarstedt, Månsson and Nyberg 2005).

Structural factors such as opportunity structure and access have been considered important as well (Lerner and Menahem 2003). The following structural factors are thought to facilitate integration:

- Ethnocultural affinity; class differences (between country of origin and receiving nation), social capital; liberal immigration policy; welfare and service provisions; humanitarian features of the social services offered by voluntary and religious organizations; and qualities in the immigrant community that emphasize accommodation and adaptation as way of life (Valtonen 1996);
- Sources of immigration are a factor in integration; however, more important are the socio-economic conditions of the host society. The rate and direction of economic change, especially from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, has had a major impact on immigrants' ability to access labour markets (Dell'Olio 2004);
- Legal and institutional conditions play decisive roles in immigrant integration (Faist 1996, Dorr and Faist 1997, Reitz 2003a). As well, four interrelated institutional components affect newcomers' integration: pre-existing ethnic or race relations within the host society; labour markets and related institutions; government policies and programs including immigration policy, policies for immigrant integration, and regulation of social institutions; and the changing nature of international boundaries in the process of globalization;
- Voluntary associations create social capital/social trust which transforms into political trust and higher political participation. The formation of an "ethnic civic community" formed and enhanced by the use of ethnic media (Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2001, Jacobs and Tillie 2004).

The articles in this volume explicitly focus on certain structural factors. In particular, authors were asked to focus on how governments conceptualize, frame and provide services to facilitate the integration of immigrants. In general, these articles address issues of integration in traditional countries of immigration (TCIs) as well as those which do not have active immigration programs. Most of the countries in the latter category are from Europe. A number of themes can be identified from the articles in this volume.

The first theme is the increasing demographic diversity in countries, most of which historically had "homogeneous" populations. The sheer volume of newcomers is simply unprecedented. Most of the countries in Europe have been transformed from sending to receiving countries, and a few recognize that they are now both sending and receiving countries. The increase in immigration, in the majority of cases, does not result from legal immigration and that impedes the efficacy of governments' efforts to address issues of integration.

The second theme is the consensus on the need for integration, although there is no clear articulation of the meaning of integration. Exceptions are Canada (Winnemore and Biles, Jedwab), which defines integration as a two-way process of change, and Switzerland (D'Amato), which describes integration as the participation of the foreign-born in the economic, social and cultural life of the country. Some of the countries have no stated integration paradigms; and there is considerable variation among the ones described in the articles: Austria's assimilationism (Fassman), Poland's "assimilation via abandonment" (Grymala-Kazlowska and Weinar); the Netherland's "neo-assimilationism" (Pennix); Spain's interculturality (Moren-Alegret); Italy's reasonable integration (Zincone and Ponzo); Norway and Sweden's ethnic or cultural pluralism (Haagensen, Bevelander); New Zealand's bi-culturalism (Spoonley) and Australia (Inglis) and Canada's multiculturalism (Winnemore and Biles, Jedwab, Lazar, Van Wyck and Donaldson). Although not explicitly stated, Finland (Tanner), Portugal (Marques) and Israel (Adler) seem to most closely follow the assimilationist paradigm. The need for a common integration strategy for the European Union (EU) has also been articulated; however, collaboration on the implementation of a common EU approach to integration has been limited (Ireland, Joppke). In this context, the

questions for Europe, raised by Modood in this volume, will be of utmost interest to public philosophy and policy. Integration issues are considered important even in the sending countries, a trend reflecting the transnational nature of immigrant integration in modern times (Fargues).

The third theme is the structural and institutional responses to address immigrant integration. This is reviewed under two dimensions: legal and constitutional base and service delivery for immigrants. Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which are the traditional countries of immigration (TCIs) have immigration laws that are designed to admit foreign nationals as permanent residents. In addition, Canada has a broader legislative base such as the *Constitution*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *Employment Equity Act*. Both Canada and Australia have multiculturalism policies. None of the European countries have such immigration policies; instead, most have integration policies or variants thereof to address and facilitate the integration of foreign nationals, including asylum seekers, who are within their national borders. Anti-discrimination and equity policies are in force in some of the countries (e.g. Belgium and France), with EU countries having two tracks of immigrant admission: free mobility for EU nationals, and restricted entry for third-country nationals (TCNs). In this context, border control is a major element in the policy mix.

Almost all of the countries represented in this volume have special provision of services to immigrants, France being an outlier in this regard (Simon). Some countries such as Canada, Finland and Switzerland have multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral arrangements for service delivery by non-governmental organizations, prominently as regards service provision. In almost all cases, language instruction tops the list of services and in some instances, it is mandatory. The range of service provision varies considerably; Israel has a very comprehensive system of services to its newcomers; whereas New Zealand offers very little by way of post-arrival services. It is also interesting to note that Australia and the Netherlands have adopted the fee-paying system in place of the "welfare model" of service delivery, effectively shifting the cost of integration onto the shoulders of newcomers, a move that is antithetical to the more reciprocal models of integration like Canada's. Deviating from the theme of State provision of services, Li and Dymski examine a relatively unexplored – however, very relevant – question: the role of financial institutions in immigrant integration.

The fourth theme explored by all is naturalization. The period of residency for obtaining citizenship varies from country to country. In countries such as Canada, Sweden and Switzerland, dual or multiple citizenships are accepted, giving rise to the question of potentially competing loyalties. These concerns are exacerbated if naturalization is considered the final stage of integration. At a theoretical level, naturalization can be seen as the endpoint in the integration journey; however, in practice, citizenship should be viewed as one of the independent factors enhancing the process of integration. For this reason, for example, in Belgium, Norway and Sweden, amongst others, foreign nationals who fulfill the required residency requirements have the right to vote in sub-national elections prior to naturalization.

A question that the articles in this volume have difficulty answering regards the success of the many initiatives undertaken by all the countries to foster and accelerate integration. While Australia (Inglis) and Canada (Jedwab) claim success in this realm, most countries are unable to provide definitive answers. In fact, there are intermittent periods of stress and strain in all countries. The Danish cartoon controversy highlighted in the debate between Hansen and Carens in this volume provides a sneak preview of the ideological chasm that exists between the diverse cultural and religious groups that co-habit the same geographical space. Arguably, the best means to ascertain the effectiveness of long-term integration is a study of second generations. The articles by Malik, and Kunz and Sykes provide interesting insights into this issue.

As indicated earlier, the articles in this volume focus primarily on the structural and institutional provisions made by host societies to enhance immigrant integration. Evidently, the "pathways to integration" are varied, judging from the diversity of approaches and initiatives undertaken by the countries discussed in this volume. There is, however, another important story on the other side of the equation, and that is the motivations, aspirations and activities of the immigrants themselves to realize the immigrant dream. Our understanding of this dimension is fragmented at best.

In conclusion, immigration is likely to be an ongoing process under the conditions of globalization and therefore, integration will continue to be a significant challenge for all host countries. This calls for a better understanding of the phenomena of immigrant integration and transnational citizenship. The intersections of immigrant strategies and aspirations as well as structural and institutional frameworks have to be explored in greater depth. The centrality of dialogue, debate and comparative research can hardly be overemphasized.

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