

## IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND ASSIMILATION

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I

Immigration is now a matter of bitter public controversy in the U.S.A. The most pressing moral issue in the controversy is the extent to which the nation should continue to welcome poor immigrants, especially from Mexico. Parallel political disputes about the reception of migrants from Africa and Eastern Europe have opened deep political divisions in Western Europe. In each case controversy is compounded by disagreement about the best way to incorporate recent immigrants into the host society. The two sources of political conflict are distinct. The justice or wisdom of policies in rich countries that create high volume immigration from poor citizens of poor countries has no necessary connection to the justice or wisdom of encouraging them to remain faithful to their inherited culture or to adapt to their new environment in ways that might radically alter or even undermine that culture. Yet a familiar constellation of views on the political left in both America and Europe joins together advocacy for open or very porous borders with disdain for policies that might encourage

assimilation. My argument suggests that that particular combination of policies is a bad mistake. I shall focus on the American case, though the argument I make for a particular moral principle as the proper basis for immigration policy does not hinge decisively on unique features of that case and should be broadly applicable to immigration policy in materially prosperous liberal democracies anywhere.<sup>1</sup> My purpose is not to make specific policy prescriptions but to clarify and defend a principle to be heeded in framing such prescriptions.

I argue that the extent to which admitting the poor of Mexico (and other countries) to the USA is justified, all things considered, depends importantly on how well they can be integrated into the fabric of American society. The greater the ease with which immigrants are integrated, the stronger is the case for admitting more of them; and conversely, the higher the costs and the more formidable the obstacles to integrating them, the stronger the case becomes for less open border. This is the *integration principle*. Justifying the principle depends on showing that integration is a better outcome for immigrants and other citizens than the alternatives. First, public policies that would protect alternatives to integration across generations would have to impose grave restrictions on the economic opportunities of immigrants' children or else discourage the assumption of their full responsibilities as citizens. In either event, the policies would violate the norm of equal citizenship. The second

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting comparative essay on the challenges of immigration in both western Europe and the U.S.A. that emphasizes the similarities of the two cases is Zolberg and Woon (1999)

reason for the principle, like the first, has an egalitarian basis. High levels of integration among those who were in the recent past poor and poorly acculturated immigrants will bolster the argument to admit additional poor immigrants who are themselves promising candidates for integration; and conversely, weak levels of integration among poor immigrants would strengthen the case for more restrictive, and hence less egalitarian, policies on the admission of similar new immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My argument for the integration principle was inspired by a passage in Michael Dummett's fine book (2001, p. 52): "Any country has the right to limit immigration if its indigenous population is in danger of being rapidly overwhelmed. The word "rapidly" is essential here. A gradual influx of people of a distinct culture is little threat to the native culture, since the immigrants will in large part assimilate the manners of their new home. They will not wholly assimilate to the indigenous culture, but will contribute new elements to it. That is almost always an invigorating effect, however. The new cultural elements will be generally adopted if they are found to be compatible; it is they that will be assimilated . . . In no case will a gradual influx of people of a distinct culture threaten a native culture, even if, over the very long run, the influx amount to quite large numbers. The danger of submergence occurs only when the immigrants arrive in a short time in such large numbers that they see no need to assimilate." Dummett's argument relates to my own in the following way. He wants to reassure those who worry about the effects of immigration on the host society that unless the number of newcomers is so great as literally to overwhelm the existing society, we can trust that they will in the fullness of time be "assimilated" to that society, even if they change and enrich it in some respects. He is obviously using "assimilation" in a more inclusive way than I do to cover both additive acculturation and what I call assimilation, but our differences are more interesting than that. The passage provoked me to think more systematically about what the alternatives to integration (or what Dummett calls "assimilation") might be and whether a polity might reasonably use immigration policy to preempt those alternatives. Dummett thinks that only one such alternative – viz., the possibility of the host society being "submerged" – could warrant restriction. I think there is a somewhat ampler range of undesirable alternatives to integration that a society could reasonably seek to forestall.

One important way in which the principle is subject to discrepant interpretations should be noted at the beginning. We might accept the principle and still disagree strongly about the optimal relation between the rate at which recent immigrants are being integrated and the rate at which new ones should be admitted. I might favor a more permissive immigration regime because, although I value the integration of citizens, I am willing to live in a society that contains substantial numbers of immigrants who are still very far from being fully integrated. I am willing to do this because of reasons that in my view justify the loss of integration that a permissive immigration regime requires. These reasons might have to do with national self-interest, as when large numbers of immigrants are needed to protect a national economy against the consequences or impending demographic decline, or they might have to do with benevolence or principles of cosmopolitan justice. On the other hand, you might favor a more restrictive immigration regime because you attach greater weight to the value of integration and are unpersuaded by the reasons I invoke in support of permissiveness. My argument does not really speak to the debate between more and less permissive interpretation of the integration principle. Still, the argument for the principle tells against both radically permissive and restrictive approaches to immigration policy, and to that extent, it helps to focus debate on the limited range of moderate views that are the proper focus of reasonable dispute. My argument focuses on the badness of the alternatives to integration, especially the badness of social marginalization for immigrants themselves.

Once that argument is taken to heart, it makes little sense to espouse immigration policies so permissive that the likely fate of immigrants is social marginalization for the foreseeable future. The argument for the integration principle tells in a different way against strongly restrictive policies. What is properly worrying in the case for such policies is concern about whether immigrants can in fact be successfully integrated into the host society. But the worry is dispelled once the admission of new immigrants is calibrated, as the integration principle stipulates, according to their incorporation into the host society.

The integration principle may be subject to two qualifications. First and most obviously the principle applies only other things being equal, and other things may not be equal. If the very lives of prospective immigrants are under threat and there is no reasonable way of allaying the threat other than by granting them refuge, a compelling moral argument to do so will hold regardless of how difficult it might be to integrate them. That is no doubt often true of those who seek admission to the U.S.A., but it is often not true as well, and that being so, the principle I want to defend has some real bite. The second caveat is more interesting. One common obstacle to integration is the chauvinism of the native community – its racism or religious prejudices, for example – and the moral relevance of that fact might be captured in an *anti-chauvinist proviso*. The proviso entails that any morally defensible application of the integration principle will discount obstacles that are due to hostility among the native population to characteristics of others, including prospective immigrants,

that would otherwise be irrelevant to their integration. The anti-chauvinist proviso is, at best, a less clearly justified principle than it would initially seem, and I argue that we have good reason to reject it.

Integration does not strictly entail assimilation; it can be accomplished through additive acculturation, a process whereby immigrants learn what is necessary to adapt to their new environment without forfeiting the practices and values that constituted their identity prior to immigration. I discuss the relations between integration, assimilation, and additive acculturation in more detail below. Yet even though additive acculturation remains a possible route to integration, we cannot rationally suppose that when it plays out across generations, integration will not come without extensive assimilation. Recognition of that fact is necessary to the development of policies, in education and elsewhere, that effectively advance integration; it is also necessary if prospective immigrants are to understand the likely long-term consequences of their decisions, and avoid the bitter disappointment of finding that the perpetuation of a cherished identity across generations may not be a feasible prospect in the host society. Nevertheless, I argue that the likely assimilative consequences of integration, which many immigrants will reasonably regard as profoundly unfortunate, cannot justify policies that would provide any state-sponsored support to alternatives to integration.

## II

The conceptual basis of my argument is a set of distinctions between assimilation, the integration of immigrants, and additive acculturation, and so I begin by explaining these.

Assimilation involves leaving one culture and joining another. And so what we count as assimilation depends on what we take “culture” to mean in this connection. On one common interpretation, cultures are distinct societies, and therefore, a corresponding concept of assimilation would strictly require moving from one society to another. Will Kymlicka’s influential idea of a “societal culture” captures that concept pretty well: a societal culture is “a set of institutions, which has historically developed over time in a given territory, covering both public and private life, with a common language, which provides people with a wide range of choices about how to lead their lives” (Kymlicka 2000, 53).<sup>3</sup> But “culture” can also mean something like a way of life more or less self-consciously shared by a particular community, defined primarily by religion, a cherished common ancestry, or some such criteria either alone or in combination. The corresponding idea of leaving a culture to join another is not tightly linked to migration because the same way of life can be lived in different societies, and a single society can harbor a teeming diversity of cultures in this second sense. When I came to live in the U.S.A. from Canada, I found myself living in a suburban neighborhood quite like the one I had left, shopping in

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<sup>3</sup> What Kymlicka evidently has in mind here are liberal, pluralistic societal cultures. Not all societal cultures embody the distinction between public and private spheres and not all afford a wide range of choice about how to live.

stores almost identical to the ones I had been accustomed to using, and having much the same kind of academic conversation in the same language with students and colleagues who were remarkably like their Canadian counterparts. I was now living in a new culture in Kymlicka's societal sense but in "the way of life" sense there was negligible discontinuity between my experiences in the two societies. No one would dream of saying that Canada and the USA do not comprise distinct societies, although they bear innumerable close resemblances and are nested within an increasingly integrated North American (and global) Anglophone society. Conversely, a Latina who is admitted to Stanford University from a rural community a hundred miles away, and whose ancestors have lived in California for many generations, might experience a radical rupture of identity as she abandons one way of life for another while traveling only a small distance within a single, but culturally variegated society. "Assimilation" as I shall use it here is intended to signify personal transitions from one culture to another in the sense that implicates communally defined ways of life rather than distinct societal cultures. Migration across state boundaries necessarily involves moving from one societal culture to another, though for more privileged individuals it may involve little or nothing in the way of assimilation in the sense that interests me. Still, the concept of a societal culture is important to my argument for this reason: any societal culture will be congenial to different ways of life to varying degrees, and the challenge of integration will be greatest



precisely for those immigrants whose way of life must change the most if they are successfully to adapt to their new society.

What does it mean for immigrants to be integrated into the fabric of the receiving society? Some of the requirements are obviously attitudinal. We would expect native citizens to welcome immigrants into their neighborhoods, the places where they work and worship, and generally to be as open to the possibility of fellowship with them as with any compatriot. A reluctant tolerance of newcomers could not be enough. But if integration creates attitudinal demands on natives, it imposes them on immigrants as well. If steadfast self-segregation thwarts integration when native citizens are the ones self-segregating, it will have just the same effect when practiced by immigrants. Here too, mere tolerance of those with whom one shares the society cannot suffice as a basis for integration.

Successful integration is an ongoing process that requires much patience from all on whose lives it impinges, and predominantly ethnic neighborhoods and economic enclaves can be powerful and necessary means of helping newcomers adapt to the new society. They ease what might otherwise be profoundly disabling transitions in peoples' lives, and they provide them with precious resources to begin their lives anew in what may seem a bewildering and perilous environment. But merely to describe ethnic enclaves in these terms is to express the hope that they will function for the most part as routes to integration rather than the final terminus for radically distinct and intergenerationally

sustained communities. Venerable ethnic neighborhoods add vitality to the life of any city. San Francisco would not be the glorious place that it is without its Chinatown. But venerable ethnic neighborhoods are nothing to boast about if they are unwelcoming to outsiders, pockets of social deprivation and hopelessness, or the only places where people of a particular race, religion or ethnicity can find a home because of either their contempt for others or others' contempt for them.

This suggests additional criteria of integration, above and beyond the merely attitudinal. Over time immigrants will be geographically dispersed throughout the society, at least to the extent that they cease to be massively concentrated in just a few places which they dominate demographically. They will be ready to move into areas where native citizens predominate, and reciprocally, native citizens will move into neighborhoods that were once dominated by immigrants. There must also be socio-economic dispersal, so to speak. Immigrants, or at least their descendents, should be represented in elite social roles in numbers we could reasonably expect, given both their proportion of the general population and conditions of fair competition for elite status. Their level of civic participation will be similar to that of native citizens. Although the character of their participation will naturally reflect their distinctive interests and experience, especially in the first generation, it will also express a strong concern for the good of the society as a whole (or at least no less concern than we should demand of native citizens), and a judicious respect for

the host society's established civic traditions and mores. Furthermore, native citizens will recognize that immigrants' civic participation meets these criteria, and that recognition will nourish an evolving political trust in them. By the same token, the civic participation of native citizens will attest to a reciprocal sensitivity to the distinctive interests of its immigrant communities, a willingness to engage in coalition politics with them, and an acknowledgement that some adjustment to established public practices may be necessary to ease their integration.

Integration as I have described it is a delicate process of mutual give and take between immigrant communities and the host society. I say the process is delicate in part for the obvious reason that it is easily stalled or reversed by lapses of goodwill on either side, which may trigger mistrust and malice in response. Individuals will inevitably generalize about their particular encounters across the boundaries between native and immigrant communities, and generalizations are liable to harden into stereotypes, sometimes invidious stereotypes, that resist revision.

A yet more fundamental problem may stem from confusion about the shared purpose that underpins integration. The integration of immigrants into a host society through the mutual adjustment of native and immigrant groups is not the same as the co-creation of a new society in which the same groups come together as equal partners. The difference parallels the distinction between being invited to participate in some game that is already under way and being invited

to invent a new game on the condition that invitees and inviters have equal corporate voices. Of course, the rules of any game might be revised to make it more enjoyable or challenging to participants. But if veteran participants would do well to be alert to that possibility, newcomers must also appreciate the cherished continuities that constitute the game as it is already played, and they should be unsurprised (and unembittered) if efforts at revision often meet with resistance.

The fragility of integration is intensified by the fairly weak range of measures that a free society can take to advance the process without compromising its own freedom. So far as state coercion goes, antidiscrimination law is one vitally important strategy, and government may use the power of the purse to encourage practices that promise to bolster cohesion between immigrant and native communities, such as common schooling. Nevertheless, the ultimate success of integration depends massively on individual immigrant and native citizens freely choosing to do things they have a right not to do – to live in mixed neighborhoods, to make friends across ethnic and religious divides, to show active goodwill across such divides, and the like. Precisely because the state can employ only a modest array of measures to promote integration among those who reside within its borders, and given that integration has the value I shall claim for it, it becomes all the more important that the integration principle guide the control of migrant flows across its borders.

Integration does not require assimilation. And that is not just because the most economically and educationally privileged migrants will have little new to learn in adapting to their new environment. What uneducated newcomers need to succeed in the host society could be added to their repertoire of skills and customs without requiring any subtraction, so to speak, from their existing repertoire. This is additive acculturation rather than assimilation (Gibson 1988). An obvious example is learning the language of the host society. That may be a daunting challenge. But it does not require immigrants to abandon their native language, and only an appallingly tyrannical regime would attempt to enforce such a requirement. Nevertheless, if some achieve linguistic integration through becoming bilingual, their accomplishment is not automatically replicated among their children, to say nothing of their grandchildren, and thus the linguistic additive acculturation of the immigrant generation may be followed by partial or complete linguistic assimilation within a generation or two after their arrival.

What holds true of the acquisition of skills in additive acculturation may also apply to the maintenance of values, given the partitioning of private and public life in any liberal society. Immigrants whose culture supports a strictly gendered division of labor will have to learn to pay some homage to norms of gender equity in the workplace, but they can cleave to most of their traditions in the home, or at least try to do so. But again, whether their efforts are likely to succeed across generations is another matter.

Immigrants' assimilation from one way of life to another in a society that is acutely susceptible to social change, individualistic, and confers a generous range of social freedoms will obviously be different than assimilation under more constraining conditions. The culture that immigrants bring with them can be expected to affect the native culture strongly even as it affects them. This makes the distinction between additive acculturation and assimilation murkier at the level of application than it might seem as a matter of sheer abstract definition. If a third generation Italian immigrant to the USA never drinks coffee in any form other than espresso and rarely eats anything except Italian food, just as her grandparents did, would this suffice for us to say that her cultural incorporation is still to some extent a matter of additive acculturation rather than assimilation? I think not for the simple reason that no American would now be particularly surprised to find a compatriot who was a Chicana or WASP with a strong partiality for espresso and Italian cuisine. Once upon a time, such preferences might have been a criterion that marked the boundary of one largely unassimilated immigrant community among others. But now they signify no such thing; they are part of a common, mongrel culture in which just about all Americans participate and whose exuberant internal diversity accounts for much of its charm.

### III

Assimilation and additive acculturation are alternative routes to integration and the feasibility and desirability of each might be expected to vary from one situation to another. But why should we value integration in the first place?

Perhaps the best way to begin to answer the question is to look at the alternatives. By far the most empirically likely of these is that immigrants could be economically and politically marginalized despite their desire to integrate, which is to say they would be denied the benefits of full membership in the host society. So far as an immigrant community is characterized by unusually high rates of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, poor educational outcomes, political disengagement and social isolation, and these phenomena are not to be explained by a widely held preference for cultural separation from the host society, it is marginalized in the sense that matters here. These outcomes could coincide with geographic dispersal, though without the opening of economic and related opportunities which normally accompany dispersal. Marginalization is plainly a serious social evil. A society that integrates its immigrants rather than marginalizing them is to that extent morally superior. So far as marginalization adversely affects the life prospects of individual immigrants and their children, the overall benefits of their migration will be negligible in some, and perhaps in very many cases. If systemic deprivation is to be their fate, the moral rationale for allowing them into the country in the first place will be elusive.

Notice that marginalization as I have defined it here is not a condition that immigrants themselves choose. To the extent that they are marginalized as a consequence of handicaps over which they do have some control – e.g., limited schooling that curtails their eligibility for good jobs in an information economy – we can expect that integration will gradually take hold as adequate educational opportunities are made available. Yet for some immigrants, poverty in the host society may be preferable to integration if they regard the route to greater economic success as a threat to a cherished culture or religion. This takes me to integration's other alternative.

The creation of anything close to a complete societal culture through immigration would require massive numbers, territorial concentration, considerable material resources, strong group solidarity, and the forbearance of the host society (Kymlicka 2000). That is a tall order, to say the least. But it is just the sort of think that some Americans worry about when they imagine “another Quebec” developing in parts of their country where Mexican immigrants are heavily concentrated (Huntington 2004). If an immigrant community were to crystallize as a new societal culture, the project of sustaining and protecting that culture would constitute a form of minority nationalism. As Kymlicka has pointed out, this has not in fact been the fate of any immigrant community among the major Anglophone immigrant states (Kymlicka 2000). Minority nationalisms are the product of colonial conquest rather than



immigration, and there is little reason to think that current levels of Latino immigration will be a radical departure from that pattern.

Still, it is possible to imagine large-scale immigration that is linguistically homogeneous but linguistically alien to the host society leading to the emergence of some institutional ingredients of a distinct societal culture. This would count as an example of a *quasi-separatist* alternative to integration. (I say quasi-separatist to acknowledge that full-blown national separatism is too improbable to be worth considering.) After all, a distinct societal culture is not an all-or-nothing creation no more than an integrated society or a marginalized immigrant community is, and developments that push toward one of these outcomes might be simultaneously countervailed by others that pull in other directions. In the real world, the incorporation of large numbers of immigrants in any given society may attest to a complex mix of conflicting tendencies, with much variation both from one society to another and in any given society at different moments in its history.

Thus one possible future would be the partial instantiation of a distinctly Hispanic societal culture in areas of demographic concentration, and to the extent that this did occur, integration would be thwarted. This would occur if there were regions where the incentive to learn English was weaker than the incentive to retain Spanish across generations, for example, a substantial enclave economy existed in which Spanish was all you needed to get by, and mass media in Spanish were available that were more or less exclusively patronized by

Latinos, while Anglophone media were more or less wholly shunned. My criteria of quasi-separatism are deliberately framed to allow for a good deal of self-segregation that will fall below the threshold they set. That is necessary for the very obvious reason that any conception of civic integration consistent with the value of freedom of association will not entail that all self-segregation along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines is a move away from the social unity worth having. On the contrary, a diverse civil society that divides along those lines is precisely what we would expect to see in any liberal democracy with a substantial immigrant population. Quasi-separatism only becomes an issue when the degree of self-segregation a community evinces threatens to insulate them from the larger society across a large swathe of public and private activities.

I am not saying that that quasi-separatism is at all likely. The best research indicates that linguistic assimilation among Latinos currently follows the pattern of language loss across three generations that other groups have followed in the U.S.A. (Rumbaut et al., 2006). They also show absolutely no interest in creating the separatist educational institutions that might conduce to a partially distinct societal culture. Their rate of inter-marriage is on the rise, and though Latino children experience an alarmingly high level of de facto segregation in American public schools, this is a consequence of socio-economic factors (and white flight) rather than any desire for national separation on their

part. But if the prospects for integration are now broadly favorable, the outcome is not foreordained.

The development of Hispanic quasi-separatism in parts of the USA would differ from marginalization in one critical respect. The distinctiveness of quasi-separatist institutions would be sustained by members' preference for culturally and linguistically distinct social space, substantially insulated from the larger society, rather than by their limited education or other citizens' chauvinism. Two variants on quasi-separatism are worth distinguishing, though neither represents an attractive alternative to integration. The first of these favors a high degree of economic as well as other kinds of separation from the larger society; the second accepts the need for economic integration (and the concomitant educational prerequisites of economic integration) while retaining a strong propensity to separatism in all other spheres. I call these *wide* and *narrow* quasi-separatism respectively.

#### IV

Among those attracted to wide quasi-separatism, we might expect the hope that enclave economies could be developed robust enough to offer opportunities for upward social mobility roughly comparable to what others would enjoy in the Anglophone economy. The hope is almost certain to be dashed. Spanish-speaking economic enclaves in the USA simply do not provide anything like the opportunities available in the Anglophone economy, and the hope that they could do so for the huge and growing Latino population is downright Quixotic (Alba and Nie 2003, p. 234-5).

The fatal liability of wide quasi-separatism is that its economic consequences for immigrants are likely to be indistinguishable from marginalization. For many who might otherwise be attracted to the quasi-separatist project, that yields a decisive pragmatic reason to favor integration or at most a narrow quasi-separatism. People do not ordinarily want their children to be poor. Still, for some others at least, the trade-off that even narrow quasi-separatism offers might be unacceptable. Poor economic prospects are deemed preferable to the threat to cultural identity that would escalate, or at least be thought to escalate, with a process of integration that is confined to the economy. After all, integration may well develop a momentum of its own once it opens up economic opportunities, and the fear that it will carry over into other spheres of life is by no means irrational. I suspect that wide quasi-separatism is far less likely to develop when language rather than religion is the fulcrum of a

cherished collective identity among immigrants. Be that as it may, it poses an interesting challenge to any free society that purports to respect the choice of language or religion.

The first and most obvious point to make here is that people have a right to pursue quasi-separatist projects which the state must respect. Latinos who might wish to comprehensively self-segregate are no different from other citizens who choose to do so. The basic right to liberty protects these choices against state interference. The real political issue is what the state might do when faced with political demands to accommodate a wide quasi-separatist project through legal exemptions or the like. The most effective means of doing so would be by permitting an education for the children of immigrants that militates against even economic integration. In fact, western liberal democracies with substantial immigrant populations have a lot of successful experience in this regard, even if their contribution to anti-integration education is to be explained by complacency about the development of an immigrant underclass rather than any sympathy with wide quasi-separatists. We know that when immigrant (or just plain poor) children are schooled in economically blighted neighborhoods, taught by transient and poorly qualified teachers, and subject to low academic expectations, they will perform in a manner that more or less ensures their economic marginalization. Yet if an academically negligible education is what wide quasi-separatists would want, their demands cannot be squared with the

most rudimentary understanding of what equal citizenship demands in the way of educational distribution.

Bhikhu Parekh is no champion of either wide (or narrow) quasi-separatism. But in one careless passage he argues as if he were. Assailing the principle that all immigrants should be prepared for “full participation” in the economy, Parekh asks rhetorically: “If Asian shopkeepers encourage their sons to acquire only the skills needed to run their parental business, and thus confine them to the ethnic economy, are they denying their sons “full participation” in the economic life of the community?” (Parekh 2000, 97). Parekh evidently thinks such parents do nothing wrong, at least if the children end up happy in their confinement. The example is well-chosen in one respect: small shopkeepers offer what is likely to be the best hope for a modestly prosperous life in an enclave economy, at least as long as the big supermarkets stay far enough away. The parental preference Parekh wants us to honor would be more transparently contemptible if the parents wished their sons to learn no more than is necessary, say, for janitorial work. But the example misfires badly in two other ways. First, no state committed to ensuring that all its children are prepared for full participation in the economy would want to police what parents encourage or discourage their children to do. Second, encouragement cannot confine children to an ethnic economy unless they are also denied an education that confers good prospects for success in the world beyond that economy. So if parentally chosen economic confinement for children is really what Parekh wanted, then he must

want parents free to limit education to just what is necessary, for example, to be a competent shopkeeper (or janitor?). This would mean generalizing to immigrant communities something like the partial exemption from compulsory schooling law that the U.S. Supreme Court gave the Amish in its famous decision, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*. After all, the Amish way of life is itself a wide quasi-separatist project, and the accommodation of the Amish might be regarded as a multicultural precedent for others.

Wide quasi-separatism for immigrants and their social marginalization are no doubt strange bedfellows. But bedfellows they are. Both have the same disastrous economic consequences for immigrants, and the perpetuation of both across generations depends on denying children the educational opportunities that are taken for granted for other citizens. The fact that the parents of immigrant children who are victims of social marginalization are likely to be bitterly disappointed, whereas parents who are permitted to limit their children's education for cultural ends will be pleased, should not distract us from the fact that the educational outcomes for children in both cases are substantially the same. And that is surely the politically salient fact for anyone who cares about equal citizenship.

This leaves us only with narrow quasi-separatism as an alternative to integration. To take its measure, it will again be helpful to think about the educational demands that would be in keeping with the project.

Consider Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco recent argument for policies that would encourage immigrant youth in the USA to cleave to their ancestral culture. At the core of their argument is a distinction between what they call “expressive” and “instrumental” culture. Expressive culture is the realm of values, world-views, and personal attachments. “In the instrumental realm of culture, whether in Los Angeles, Lima, or Lagos, the skills needed to thrive in the global economy are in fundamental respects the same. These include communication, symbolic, and technical skills, as well as the work habits and interpersonal talents common in any cosmopolitan work setting.” The authors suggest that encouraging immigrant children to cast off their own expressive culture in favor of an American alternative is a calamity. In the poor urban neighborhoods to which most immigrant families must gravitate, the expressive culture is an “ethos of ambivalence, pessimism, and despair”. Those immigrants who have contact with “middle-class mainstream culture” will likely be rejected there, and rejection for those who identify with a culture that rejects them will be “shame, doubt, and even self-hatred”. The ability of immigrants to make successful lives for themselves in America depends on maintaining the strong family ties, optimism, and a work ethic that belongs within their native



expressive cultures. Only then can their children be expected to appropriate the instrumental culture on which their future economic success depends (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001, 156-9).

This argument gets one very important thing right. The most readily available avenues to assimilation for immigrant youth are often far less than benign, and so long as that is true, a resolute adherence to their culture of origin is the better option, not merely for them but for the rest of us as well. The children of Caribbean immigrants in New York who adopt the oppositional culture of some of their more socially alienated African-American peers have renounced the values of their parents for an identity as thoroughly American as any other. Ironically, their distance from the mainstream and its attendant benefits is more profound than what their parents ever experienced (Waters 1999). That should not surprise us. Assimilation in America has as many meanings as there are cultural possibilities in a nation of teeming internal diversity. But if benign avenues to integration into the American mainstream are absent, we might ask why the compelling policy challenge is not to create them rather than urging immigrants to resign themselves to their absence.

The importance of that question comes into focus once we note the authors' assumption that for immigrants America is no more than a place where the good life, as defined by the expressive culture they take from their homeland, is pursued with hope and hard work as their children absorb a cosmopolitan, instrumental culture no more distinctively American than Peruvian or Nigerian.

The U.S.A. is merely an empty stage, so to speak, on which immigrants enact cultural scripts that either come from elsewhere or from nowhere in particular. The idea that a distinctively American expressive civic culture could have any legitimate claims on immigrants or that their eventual standing as equal citizens might be implicated in the vigor of that culture is something that Carola and Marcello Suárez-Orozco simply do not consider. This seems to me a remarkable oversight.

No doubt prejudice toward immigrants of all races is a potent barrier to integration in America, and one that can cause much pain and even self-hatred. If attachment to their ancestral culture can provide armor against these to immigrant children adolescents, the attachment is a good thing. But it beggars belief to suppose that prejudice is so implacable or that immigrant youth are so devoid of resilience in the face of prejudice that these facts alone could warrant narrow quasi-separatism. To whatever extent immigrant youth make friends outside their ethnic group, become involved in volunteer activities that might benefit others outside that group, take an interest in the politics of their new country, learn both to appreciate its institutions and to consider how they might be improved, they are drawn into an expressive culture that is distinctively American. Their being drawn into that culture is necessary if they are fully to accept the responsibilities as well as enjoy the rights of equal citizenship. And by the way, they are also likely to find there an environment not entirely unfavorable to optimism, the work ethic, or family ties.

The simple point to be stressed here is that if immigrants were drawn to narrow quasi-separatism, their disengagement from the wider society constitutes a grievous loss of civic inclusion. No democratic state could rationally embrace educational practices that encourage that.

## VI

The justification for the integration principle can be made explicit at this point. Integration fails to the extent that an immigrant community is marginalized by the host society or practices self-segregation on the scale necessary to create and then sustain a partial societal culture. Suppose a particular society evinces the first of these failures to a marked degree. The society has been derelict in fulfilling an obligation that it incurred when it admitted immigrants in the first place: the obligation that immigrants would have adequate opportunity to integrate into the host society, thereby acceding to substantively and not just formally equal citizenship. An important question then is how the volume of current and future immigration would affect the opportunities of prior immigrants and their children to achieve integration. To whatever extent current and future immigration would swell the number of residents competing for the lowest paying jobs and increase the demand for social services for the poor, a reasonable inference is that they would at least slow the pace of integration for recent immigrants. If that is in fact the most likely outcome, then a strong moral argument emerges for limiting immigration to protect the prospects for

integration of those who have already immigrated but have been marginalized.

From an egalitarian viewpoint, there is no intrinsic moral difference between those who have already immigrated and are socially marginalized and those who are impoverished prospective immigrants. Yet there is a big contingent difference between the two categories because the former but not the latter were effectively promised adequate opportunity for integration but have been unjustly denied that prospect. No such promise has been made to those who are merely prospective immigrants. If high volume immigration would further diminish the prospects of integration for those who have already immigrated, then high volume immigration is to be *pro tanto* condemned because of that consequence.

The second relevant scenario is when an immigrant community has elected to self-segregate on a scale sufficient to create at least the rudiments of a distinct societal culture, and further immigration would likely amplify that tendency. I have already noted that this is the object of only irrational anxieties in the American context, but to placate those with such anxieties, the possibility may be worth considering anyhow. The argument for the integration principle here cannot parallel its rationale in the case of a marginalized immigrant community. The host society has not failed to offer the opportunity of integration to its immigrant community, and so any restriction of immigration cannot be justified as a means of making good on that offer. Still, a growing

constituency for quasi-separatism is an increasingly formidable obstacle to the maintenance of a stable and inclusive democratic community, and that would seem to be at least one grave risk among others that the community could rightly seek to minimize through its immigration policies. That being so, the integration principle is warranted both as a response to the marginalization of immigrant communities and to the development of quasi-separatism within them.

The values at stake in the decision of a state to mitigate the growth of quasi-separatism through immigration policy throws some light on the vexed question of the difference between the civic status of immigrant communities and national minorities, such as the Québécois or Basques. The claim for political autonomy for such groups is rooted in the fact that they already have at least the rudiments of a societal culture of their own, and autonomy is claimed to safeguard and perpetuate these. No doubt a tipping point might be reached at which an immigrant community deeply wedded to a quasi-separatist project effectively becomes a minority nation, and then its demands for autonomy would have to be addressed as such. But that does not mean a state with many immigrants should not control educational and immigration policy with the aim of discouraging quasi-separatist social tendencies from escalating in the direction of minority nationalism. The fact that an immigrant community might one day be a minority nation is no reason for the state to treat its members as if they already were or to forgo reasonable measures that would make that outcome less likely.

Whenever integration fails either because of escalating quasi-separatism or, far more likely, political indifference to the marginalization of immigrants, the failure is morally unfortunate not only because it constitutes a grievous systemic injustice and loss of democratic community; it is also unfortunate in weakening the case for less restrictive immigration policies that would benefit poor foreigners. Precisely because the failure of integration poses serious problems of domestic injustice and disintegration that reasonably command the urgent attention of citizens, the grounds for restricting immigration to make those problems more tractable are not easily dismissed, even from a thoroughly cosmopolitan viewpoint. By the same token, to the extent that integration succeeds, the case for less restrictive immigration policies is pro tanto strengthened, and therefore, an undeniably good thing from a cosmopolitan viewpoint.

## VII

The implications of the integration principle will vary according to whether or not what I earlier defined as the anti-chauvinist proviso guides its interpretation. The proviso rules out as morally indefensible any application of the principle that counts obstacles to integration due to hostility among the native population to characteristics of residents or prospective immigrants that would otherwise be irrelevant to their integration.

An artificially simple example will help to clarify how the proviso affects the integration principle's interpretation. Suppose a particular country has a small immigrant population that has been marginalized through religious antipathy. Any substantial increase in the immigrant population will trigger backlash: hostility toward immigrants would increase as their numbers rise, and as a consequence, the prospects of integration for all would be further diminished. This might be true, for example, in economies with chronically high unemployment, where immigrants compete with native citizens for scarce jobs. And there is certainly good empirical evidence that prejudice toward immigrants tends to expand both with the size of the immigrant population and the overall decline of economic opportunity (Quillian 1995). Without the anti-chauvinist proviso, the case for severely restricting immigration would be strong; with the proviso, the same case collapses.

The intuitive appeal of the anti-chauvinist proviso is easy to see. By accommodating bigotry in the native population, interpretations of the integration principle that flout the proviso seem flatly at odds with the most elementary understanding of human equality. On the other hand, when joined with the anti-chauvinist proviso, the principle leads to the escalation of the same bigotry and fails to register any morally relevant difference between those who are already legal residents or citizens, and to whom the promise of integration has already been made, and those who are merely prospective immigrants.

A revealing case in this regard is the history of Irish Catholics in America. Their arrival in huge numbers around the time the Great Famine supplied needed labor for America's growing factories, but it also precipitated intense anti-Catholicism (Jacobsen 1999; Zolberg 2006). The integration of Irish Catholics into the American mainstream is now utterly taken for granted, but its final consummation is a relatively recent event. As Conor Cruise-O'Brien once wryly noted, America elected an Irish Catholic President only after another Irish Catholic politician, Senator Joseph McCarthy, had shown the country that someone of that particular ancestry and religion could be as reliably xenophobic as any WASP (Cruise-O'Brien, 1988, p. )

The ferocity of anti-Irish, and more broadly, anti-Catholic prejudice was enough to change America's political landscape in lasting ways. But it was never enough to stem the tide of Irish, and later, Eastern and Southern European immigration throughout the nineteenth century. The power of American industrialists who wanted the cheap labor that immigrants supplied, and the power of immigrants themselves who mobilized to keep the doors open, combined to sustain an immigration regime that remained liberal until well into the twentieth century.

An interesting, if ultimately unanswerable question about this historical episode is whether the integration principle might have justified a more restrictive policy on immigration in the late nineteenth century than the one that in fact prevailed. A far stronger case for restriction would hold if we reject the



anti-chauvinism proviso than if we accept it because racist and religious hostility to immigrants was such an acute and widely shared attitude that impeded the integration of immigrants already in the country. To be sure, one of the imponderables here is the extent to which restriction would have slowed the explosive growth of American industrialization, and slower growth would inevitably have taken some toll on the pace of integration as well. And so even without the anti-chauvinist proviso, the case for substantial restriction that could have been inferred from the integration principle might not have been overwhelming. Nevertheless, some likely consequences of restriction could have encouraged integration across the most profound fissure in the body politic. With less cheap European labor for the mills and factories of the North, the benefits of industrialization would very likely have been extended to freed blacks much sooner than they were, and the shameful history of Jim Crow might have been shorter. Perhaps even the emergence of common interests between white and black labor would have made the history of unions in America a less shamefully racist story than it actually is.

All this is only plausible speculation, but the point I want to make does not require it to be more than that. The restriction of immigration will in some circumstances likely create a more favorable environment for overcoming problems that have to do with chauvinistic attitudes to those who are *already* citizens, such as blacks in America during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The integration principle, when it is conjoined with the anti-chauvinist

proviso, treats chauvinism toward prospective immigrants as if it were no less morally consequential than chauvinism toward fellow citizens. By treating all chauvinism as irrelevant to immigration policy, it implies that no distinctions with politico-moral relevance can be made among species of the genus. But that ignores the special wrong that is done to when racial or religious antipathy effectively denies citizens the full and equal membership in a democratic community that is already their due.

The case for open borders was never more eloquently made than by Herman Melville: “Let us waive that agitated national topic, as to whether such multitudes of foreign poor can be landed on our American shores; let us waive it, with the one only thought that if they can get here, they have God’s right to come, though they bring all Ireland and her miseries with them. For the whole world is the patrimony of the whole world; there is no telling who does not own a stone in the Great Wall of China” (Melville 1849/1976, p. 382; quoted in Zolberg 2006, p. 457). These are moving words. But suppose American hospitality to the misery of Ireland helped to perpetuate black misery in the Carolinas, Mississippi, and elsewhere? By compelling us to ask such questions and to acknowledge the moral weight of the answer, an integration principle unencumbered by the anti-racist proviso serves us better than the encumbered alternative.

The same, unencumbered principle raises hard questions about current American immigration policy. The labor economist George Borjas has been one

of the fiercest critics of that policy: “Immigration can be viewed as an income redistribution program, a large wealth transfer from those who compete with immigrant workers to those who use immigrant services or buy goods produced by immigrant workers. The debate over immigration policy, therefore is not a debate over whether immigration increases the size of the economic pie in the United States. Rather, the immigration debate is essentially a debate over how the pie is split” (Borjas 1999, p. 13). The principle of integration suggests that this is not quite right. The immigration debate is not essentially about how the pie is split; it is really about who has a right to a share of the pie in the first place, and whether the claims of citizens to whom the society has already denied a fair share have some priority over needy prospective immigrants who would like access to the pie. Still, Borjas’s argument is certainly relevant to my purposes here.

His argument is not racist or nativist. The poor in America are disproportionately black, Hispanic, and recent immigrants. The empirical content of the argument is controversial, though the scope of the controversy is narrow. No competent labor economist argues that immigration has been good for the poor; the controversy has been about whether its bad effects on the native poor are substantially overestimated by Borjas or not. I lack the expertise to adjudicate that controversy. What I would argue, however, is that whether or not Borjas has the facts straight is crucial to whether American policy should become more restrictive toward poor immigrants or not. Oddly enough, Borjas's

most distinguished critic among labor economists, David Card, has denied that the effects of immigration on poor native workers have much normative significance. "Some people believe that cultural and linguistic diversity poses serious challenges for a country. Others believe that diversity is good, and we'll be a better country if we have more diversity. At heart, these views have little to do with the labor market effects of immigration."<sup>4</sup> Although Card does not explicitly refer to race, many contemporary American readers will take the contrast he makes between those who are diversity-friendly and those who are diversity-phobic as a polite way of talking about those who are not racists and those who are. And no doubt many more racists oppose liberal immigration laws than support them. But given that we should discard the anti-chauvinist proviso, that fact has no bearing on the merits of proposals for more restrictive laws.

Suppose I am one of those non-racists whom Card describes who delight in cultural and linguistic diversity and would like to have much more of it around. My heart being in the right multicultural place does not give me

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<sup>4</sup> Card's view about the normative core of the immigration debate depends on his claim that the effects of high volume immigration on the indigenous American poor have been negligible or a little more than negligible over the last two decades. But this depends on Borjas being wrong. And if Borjas were wrong, the moral propriety of a policy that opens the door wide to poor immigrants would not hinge on whether we had a taste for diversity or not; the integration principle would support the case for open doors because open doors are not significantly impeding the economic integration of the poor who are already citizens or legal residents. Card's seminal response to Borjas is Card (2005). My quotation comes from an interview with Card in Economist's View [http://economistsview.typepad.com/economistsview/2006/12/an\\_interview\\_wi.html](http://economistsview.typepad.com/economistsview/2006/12/an_interview_wi.html).

sufficient moral reason to overlook the economic consequences of immigration on my poorest compatriots. Now I could certainly take Card's diversity-friendly view on immigration and still heed those consequences. I might argue that the question of distributive justice within a state and the question of access to membership in that state are distinct. America should admit poor immigrants in large numbers, and if that will have a depressing effect on the income of the poor, these bad effects should be undone by re-distributive policies that benefit the poor, whether they are newcomers or not. This is a coherent view, but it is also utopian in an invidious sense. It ignores the way in which the effects of immigration are liable to change what is socially feasible, and in so doing undermine our collective capacity to realize the promise of integration for millions of Americans to whom the promise has long been denied.

## VIII

I have tried to defend integration as an ideal both for the incorporation of immigrants and the conceptual core of a principle that should regulate the admission of immigrants. But no such defense is complete without an account of the costs that integration exacts. I think the most notable of these is the risk of assimilation across generations that integration poses. For the native population, talk of "costs" here will seem incongruous. The loss of a language or a faith that is not theirs to begin with will seem like no cost at all. And even for children or grandchildren who choose to assimilate, the costs may seem inconsequential if

their estrangement from parents and grandparents is unambivalent. But for the parents and grandparents themselves, the loss may seem catastrophic, and a reason bitterly to regret the decision to migrate in the first place.

Consider the following remarkable passage from Yan Martel's novel, *The Life of Pi*:

The first time I went to an Indian restaurant in Canada I used my fingers. The waiter looked at me critically and said. "Fresh off the boat, are you?" I blanched. My fingers, which a second before had been taste buds savoring the food a little ahead of my mouth, became dirty under his gaze. They froze like criminals caught in the act. I didn't dare lick them. I wiped them guiltily on my napkin. He had no idea how deeply these words wounded me. They were like nails being driven into my flesh. I picked up the knife and fork. I had hardly ever used such instruments. My hands trembled. My sambar lost its taste (Martel 2001, p. 7).

Pi's reaction evokes the familiar power of assimilation once our incompetence or sheer eccentricity as cultural outsiders is exposed for all to see. He will not be caught eating with his hands in public again. No one wants to be caught on the wrong side of the distinction between civilized dining and the bestial ingestion of food. And for any immigrant whose integration into a new society requires learning new norms, such moments will not be rare.

The passage also captures the terrible shock of humiliation at the very moment when we feel the power of assimilative pressures. The waiter's scorn

transforms him into a sort of anti-multicultural villain, ready to trample on Pi's dignity when a more sensitive soul would turn a blind eye. But then again we do not need the scornful waiter to ascribe a vulnerability to humiliation in the situation Martel describes. Merely noticing that one is not eating as a normal adult is supposed to eat in any public setting is humiliation enough.

It might be objected that I have forgotten my own distinction between additive acculturation and assimilation. Why cannot Pi learn to wield a knife and fork in public while eating with his hands in private? Of course he can do that. But it would be foolish to suppose that the norms we learn to uphold in order to integrate into a new societal culture will not often have long-term consequences for how we live in private as well. The pressure to integrate and to assimilate are not the same thing, but the former will inevitably bring some of the latter in its wake. The man who pays some homage to norms of gender equity in the workplace while indulging his unbridled patriarchy at home lives a precarious ethical double life. His additive acculturation comes at the cost of hypocrisy, and his children, if not his wife may well tire of playing along. Immigrants in the process of integration will often be thrust into social venues where conventions and values alien to their own are entrenched, and regardless of how much cultural sensitivity and understanding they encounter – and that may well be not much -- there should be little to surprise us if their own conventions and values do not emerge unscathed.

The state has no interest in general in whether citizens integrate via additive acculturation or assimilation except in those particular cases where law-abidingness requires the abandonment of a particular cultural practice. If coercively arranged marriages were an ancestrally sanctioned norm it still cannot be countenanced in a free society, though whether immigrants favor consensually arranged marriages or recourse to the singles bars instead is up to them. Nevertheless, if integration is in many cases likely to involve a degree of assimilation that immigrants do not want or even anticipate, does the state have reason to support additive acculturation instead?

I can give nothing like an adequate answer to that question here. But two points that would be relevant to any adequate answer can be briefly noted. First, state-sponsored additive acculturation will in familiar circumstances facilitate integration. Policies that provide services to first-generation immigrants in their first language, for example, make integration easier precisely because they enable them to partake of their rights and responsibilities as legal residents or citizens before they have gained the level of proficiency in English sufficient to make use of those services in English. These policies exploit the possibility of expediting integration by relying on additive acculturation; and it is only in the imagination of dim-witted xenophobes that they could be interpreted as portents of cultural separatism. If cultural separatism among immigrants were what we wanted, then finding ways to prevent immigrants with little English from gaining access to government services is precisely what we should favor. This takes me to my



second point. There will be a danger in policies that accommodate additive acculturation if they nourish the illusion among some immigrants that old collective identities can be sustained into an indefinite future once enough state support for them is forthcoming. And where that illusion takes root, so too will the illusion that the social compact between immigrants and the host society is violated once old identities begin to dissolve and state support proves too weak to fortify them against dissolution. That immigrants must be disabused of these illusions is no good reason for policies that push them relentlessly toward assimilation. But it is compelling reason for policies that are tailored narrowly to serve the purpose of integration and whose purpose is clearly and insistently communicated to immigrants.

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