

Fear and anxiety over national identity

Contrasting North American and European experiences and public debates on immigrant and second generation integration

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The last decade has seen a spectacular rise in concerns about national identity in much of Western Europe. In European countries with a tradition of multiculturalism, a nationalistic backlash has followed sensational murders and public debates on Islam and the integration of the second generation (The Netherlands) or bombings and anxiety about fragmentation along ethnic community lines (UK). In Britain and the Netherlands, as elsewhere in Europe, newly-introduced “civic tests” for naturalization reflect an ideal vision of the nation and require skills and knowledge that even most long-established residents do not have. Debates on national identity and the failure of integration have also taken place in more assimilationist countries like France and Germany. The debates have been problematized as a “civic turn” by Joppke (2007), a “return of assimilationism” by Brubaker (2001), and a backlash against multiculturalism by Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010). They are reflected in, and have influenced, recent public stances by Angela Merkel on the failure of the “MultiKulti” creed in Germany (10/2010), David Cameron on the excess and wrong-doings of “state multiculturalism” in the UK (2/2011) and Nicolas Sarkozy on the need to reinforce national identity values in France (2/2011). The emphasis on national identity and values in western European societies is taking place against a background of a steady increase in ethnic and racial diversity and a substantial immigrant and second-generation population which, in many ways, is transforming mainstream society. Fears and anxieties about the “lack of integration” of immigrants and the second generation have been reinforced by concerns about the emergence of a European Islam which is viewed as challenging basic norms and values associated with modern western democracies (Brahm Levey and Modood, 2009).

In light of these developments, it is important to critically evaluate the impact of national policies and practices and political discourse -- as well as national identity and associated common norms and values -- on the integration or assimilation of immigrants and their children. The social science literature provides evidence that most immigrants and their offspring in Europe combine a sense of belonging to the country of origin and to their country of residence, but that they are often suspected of lacking loyalty to their (new) land. The perception that ethnic minorities are undermining national cohesion by their separateness, and lack of attachment to the country where they now live, is frequently voiced in political discourse and is widespread in public opinion in most western European countries. A crucial question is how much this emphasis on the need to comply with collective norms is hindering the integration of immigrant minorities. Is the discourse on national identity contributing to a hardening of the boundaries between “us” and “them,” thereby reinforcing exclusion rather than enhancing prospects for inclusion?

Across the Atlantic, public debates in the US and Canada are less focused on national identity issues. Americanization and becoming Canadian are seen as less problematic (Bloemraad, 2006). This has not always been the case. American nativism involved widespread anti-immigrant feelings at the turn of the 20th century, ending up in the quota act of 1924 and a strong assimilationist creed (Higham, 1955). The (re)discovery of the central role of immigration in American history (Handlin, 1952) and the celebration of the United States as a “nation of immigrants” (Kennedy, circa 1958-1964) did not occur until after the termination of mass immigration in the mid-twentieth century. It was in the context of low immigration and the mass assimilation of the second generation that cultural pluralism and hyphenated Americans became the norm.

In the present context, and in light of massive contemporary immigration, nativist fears have bubbled to the surface again. Latinos, especially the undocumented, are often seen as a threat to the American nation. And post 9/11 prejudice against Muslims has contributed to increased hostility towards Islam. In Canada, especially in Quebec, there have been passionate debates on “reasonable accommodation” of religious practices and rituals. Even so, there is not the same level of fear or anxiety about national identity in the United States and Canada that is found in Western Europe. What has remained stable is the confidence in Americanization as an irresistible process. Whereas in Europe, Muslims’ attachments to their home societies (and their values) are seen as undermining the nation (Amiriaux, 2005), in the United States, ties to the country of origin are not perceived as a threat to national identity. In the United States and in Canada, normative expectations that newcomers will – and should -- conform to, and adopt, mainstream norms and values are taken for granted. Ethnic retention is not perceived as a serious potential threat to national cohesion.

How can we explain transatlantic differences in the framing of “integration issues”? What consequences do different national discourses and policies have for the participation of immigrants and the second generation in political and social life? How – and to what extent -- do national policies try to stimulate the development of national identity among new citizens? And how are policy makers, planners, and scholars attempting to measure national identity? There is a need to critically examine the literature on citizenship, transnationalism, identity and belonging, and assimilation or integration. Bringing together scholars working in these different fields in North America and Western Europe will create fertile ground for a new understanding of the role of public discourse, policies, and practices concerning national identity in the integration of immigrants and the second generation.

**Venue: Russell Sage Foundation
112 East 64 Street, New York**

Friday December 9

8:45 Welcome conference participants

9:15 Presentation of the goals of the conference, Eric Wanner, Aixa Cintron, Nancy Foner and Patrick Simon

Chair for the two morning sessions: *Karthick Ramakrishnan (Political Science, UC Riverside)*

9:30- 11:00 ***Identity politics and National identity***

A long historical process has shaped the definition of the nation and the “nationals” who are considered “natives” in European countries, the United States, and Canada. National identity can be relatively open for newcomers, and thus operate as an integrative force, or be a barrier to inclusion --- and a source of exclusion. How have conceptions of national identity functioned to integrate --- or exclude -- migrants and ethnic minorities in the US, Canada, France and Europe? Has this process changed over time, and how?

Gary Gerstle (History, Vanderbilt University), “Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Nationality”

Ruby Gropas and Anna Triandafyllidou (Sociology, EUI), “Migrants and the Nation in Southern Europe: Between Social Toleration and Political Exclusion”

Elke Winter (Sociology, Ottawa University), “Canadian Multiculturalism at the Crossroads?: The Rise and Fall of an International Trendsetter”

Discussant : Philip Kasinitz (Sociology, CUNY)

11:00-11:15 Coffee break

11:15-12:45 ***Politicization of National identity, political participation and citizenship***

How have issues of national identity, political participation, and citizenship become politicized in Europe, the US and Canada in the contemporary period? What are the similarities --- as well as differences – among European countries as well as the U.S. and Canada? How important are citizenship regimes in integrating newcomers into mainstream societies? In what ways is political participation related to national identity?

Irene Bloemraad (Sociology, UC Berkeley), “The Contours of Belonging: Legitimacy, Membership, and Political Claims-Making in Comparative Perspective”

Dirk Jacobs (Sociology, Free University Brussels), “Becoming Part of a Disintegrating Nation State: Political Inclusion of Foreigners in Belgium, a Polity in Crisis”

Daniel Tichenor (Political Science, University of Oregon), “The Stratified Welcome: Patterns of Nativism, Political Mobilization, and Membership Rights in America”

Discussant: Marc Howard (political science, Georgetown University)

12:45-1:45 Lunch break (Buffet in the room)

Chair for the two afternoon sessions: *Richard Alba (Sociology, CUNY)*

1:45-3:15 *National Culture and Ethnicity*

Belongings and citizenry in nation states are not only based on a political contract, but also on a shared mainstream culture (language, literature, music, art, food, etc), defined as a “national culture.” This national culture can be viewed as relatively open and adaptable to change through the incorporation of newcomers’ cultural contributions or seen as relatively fixed and resistant to the practices of new migrant groups. In fact, how accommodating is national culture to integrating cultural patterns and practices of newcomers in the US and Europe?

Peter Kivisto (Sociology, Augustana College), “Who, Indeed, Are We? National Identity, Ethnic Diversity, and Multiculturalism”

Grete Brochman (Sociology, University of Oslo), “Nationbuilding in the Scandinavian Welfare state: The immigration challenge”

Jan Willem Duyvendak (Sociology, Amsterdam University). “The Return of Nativism: ‘Autochthons,’ the Dutch Nation, and the Space Left for Migrants”

Discussant: Rogers Brubaker (Sociology, UCLA)

3:15-3:30 Break

3:30-5:00 *Race and National Identity*

In most western European countries, race is not perceived as a significant component of national identity, whereas it plays a much greater role in the US, with its history of internal slavery, legal segregation, and ghettoization of a huge African American population. Many European societies have a history of slavery and colonialism, although they usually don’t acknowledge this past in their national history and identity. How have race, ethnicity and citizenship combined in different ways to influence national identities in Europe and the US, --- and what is the impact for the integration of contemporary immigrant minorities?

Mary Waters (Sociology, Harvard) and Philip Kasinitz (Sociology, CUNY), “Insiders and Outsiders in the Post-Civil Rights USA: The Interplay of Nativism and Racism in Current Battles of Belonging”

Patrick Simon (Demography, INED), “Race and the Nation: Color Consciousness in the French Color-Blind Society”

John Solomos (Sociology, City University, London), “Migration, Race, and Social Cohesion: Shifting Perspectives in British Society”

Discussant: Jennifer Hochschild (Political Science, Harvard)

Saturday December 10

Chair for the two morning sessions: *Jennifer Lee (Sociology, UC Irvine)*

9:00- 10:45 *Islam and National identity*

Islam has become prominent in national identity debates in Europe and in Quebec, less so in the United States and English-speaking Canada. How has a focus on Islam redefined the

boundaries between the mainstream and ethnic minorities? And how is this different in Europe and North America? Has there been a shift from ethnicity to religion as a principal basis for identity and stigmatization in western European societies, and has this led to a reframing of integration issues? What role does religion play in national identity in Europe, the US and Canada?

Nasar Meer (Sociology, Northumbria University, UK) and Tariq Modood (Sociology, Bristol University), “Muslims and Nationhood in Britain and the U.S.”

Valérie Amirault (Sociology, University of Montreal), “Burqa Bashing: Does Religion Stand for Race in the EU?”

Andrew Shryock (Anthropology, University of Michigan), “Americanizing Islam: The Cultural Conditions of Political Inclusion”

Christian Joppke (Sociology, University of Bern), “Liberal or Christian? State Identity in the Face of Islam”

Discussant: John Bowen (Anthropology, Washington University in St Louis)

10:45-11.00 Break

11:00-12:30 *Competition of loyalties*

Many immigrants today maintain ties with their countries of origin, and a key question is whether – and how --- these ties affect their commitment to and involvement in the society in which they now live. How are transnational ties seen in Europe and the US in relation to issues of national loyalties and belonging? Do transnational ties hinder or promote participation in the host society, for immigrants, or the mainstream, for the second generation? What factors shape the maintenance, or even more the development, of transnational ties in North America and in Europe?

Thomas Faist (Sociology, Bielefeld University), “Doing National Identity through Transnationality: Categorizations and Mechanism of Inequalities in Integration Debates”

Ayşe Çağlar (Anthropology, University of Vienna), “The Context of Loyalties and Transnational Ties”

Deborah Schildkraut (Political Science, Tufts University), “Does Becoming American Create a Better American? How Identity Attachment and Perceptions of Discrimination Affect Trust and Obligation”

Discussant: Peggy Levitt (Sociology, Wellesley College)

12:30- 1:00 Conclusion, Nancy Foner and Patrick Simon

1:00 Lunch and farewell