

**International Migration at a Crossroads:  
Will Demography Change Politics before Politics Impedes Demographic  
Change?**

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Demography is destiny.

-- usually attributed to Auguste Comte

Demography is not destiny.

-- (Teitelbaum and Winter 2004)

Demography need not be destiny.

--(Ladner and Lips 2009)

No self-respecting political scientist will accept the cliché that demography is destiny; political structures, practices, and leaders intervene between raw numbers and electoral or policy outcomes. Nevertheless, as a country's demography changes, if the politics do not change in accord with the circumstances or desires of the new residents, one sees greater and greater strain and even disruption in governance. That is the situation now with regard to immigration in many wealthy western countries.<sup>1</sup> The crucial question is whether the political effects of native-borns' anxiety about immigration will slow migration or keep migrants out of the social, economic, and political mainstreams, or conversely, whether migrants and their allies will become strong enough to create political dynamics in their favor. The answer to that question will profoundly affect most countries in the world.<sup>2</sup>

This paper examines those two plausible trajectories. I first remind readers of the most important, or at least politically most salient, demographic features of mass migration. I then set up the conceptual framework for the analysis. Next, I use that framework to consider the

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<sup>1</sup> It is equally the case in less wealthy and nonwestern states; because of my lack of detailed knowledge about them, however, I focus in this paper on OECD countries.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Freeman (Freeman 2006) agrees that "demographic change has notable implications for politics but it is not a prominent interest of political scientists, and he characterizes our discipline's study of immigration as "marginal and relatively underdeveloped" (p. 645).

conditions in which a country changes in response to the demographic pressures of immigration, and those in which political resistance to further immigration or to immigrants' incorporation into the receiving country's mainstream might carry the day. The paper concludes with a brief case study of what happens when the forces of change and inclusion are balanced against those of resistance and exclusion—that is, “migration at a crossroads.” I focus primarily on the United States, but to some degree refer to other countries as well.

The conceptual framework for this analysis is that of policy feedback – the idea that policies change politics, which in turn reinforce, change, or undermine the initial policy. The strengthened or changed policy in turn affects political dynamics, and so on. As those sentences suggest, the idea of policy feedback is both intentionally iterative and unintentionally loose – a policy can affect politics for a variety of reasons, in a variety of ways, after which the politics can affect the original and subsequent policies in a variety of ways, and on and on. Part of that looseness is a faithful reflection of the real world, which is much less directional and much more contingent than scholars who aspire to a science of politics care to recognize (Shapiro and Bedi 2007 ). But part of the looseness results from the underdevelopment of theories of when and how policy feedback stalls, fails, or leads to reversal; the case of immigration and immigrant incorporation is a good arena in which to further develop that theory.

### **Demographic Change**

Migration from one country to another has increased steadily for two decades. The United Nations estimates that as of 2009, 3.1 percent of the world's population (214 million people) are migrants – 10.3 percent in more developed regions and 1.5 percent in less developed regions. Generally, the highest proportion of immigrants per population occur in the countries with the smallest populations: Singapore and Israel (both at 40 percent), Luxembourg (at 35

percent), Bermuda (at 31 percent), Switzerland (at 23 percent), New Zealand (at 22 percent), Kazakhstan and Ireland (both at 20 percent). However, some larger countries are now hosts to many millions of immigrants: Canada has over 7 million (21 percent of its population), Germany has almost 11 million (13 percent), the Russian Federation has over 12 million (9 percent), and the United States has almost 43 million (14 percent). (Australia has 4.7 million immigrants, about 22 percent of the total population) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2009 ). If the relevant population is not immigrants but people of “international migrant stock”<sup>3</sup> – which is the salient figure for many countries – these proportions and absolute numbers rise further.

This 214 million is only a fraction of the number of people who would like to migrate. Surveys by the Gallup Organization show that about 700 million adults worldwide would “like to move permanently to another country if they had the opportunity.” Over 165 million of them would choose the United States – thus increasing the number of foreign-borns by 400 percent. If all of these potential migrants actually moved to the country to which they aspire, the United States would have a net population gain of 60 percent, and Mexico would lose 15 percent of its net population [(Clifton 2010); (Esipova and Ray 2009)]. Of course, not all of these people would actually move to or stay in the receiving country if borders were opened, but if even half moved, even temporarily, the numbers would be staggering.

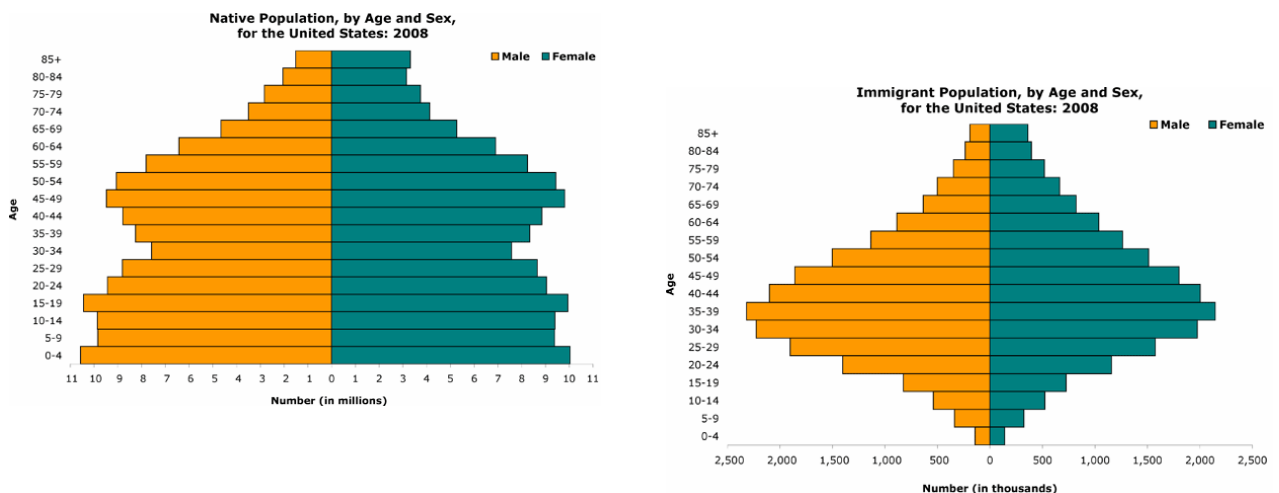
Migrants are disproportionately young adults, and often have higher birth rates than native-born populations. For example, a study of Asian migrants to Australia shows a huge and growing spike in the number of 20-24 year olds coming to Australia from 1996 through 2007, and a considerable “bump” in the number of 40-44 year olds, with some variation

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<sup>3</sup> That is, “the number of people living in a country other than that of their citizenship,” as the U.N. puts it.

depending on whether the migrants are from Hong Kong, China, or Northeast Asia (Hong 2008). Figure 1 shows the age and sex distribution of immigrants to the United States, compared with that of native-born Americans:

**Figure 1: Age and Sex Distributions for Immigrants and Native-borns, United States 2008**



*Source:* Migration Policy Institute, *MPI Data Hub*, “U.S. Historical Trends”

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/pyramids.cfm>

Immigrants often are children or have children. The year 2004 saw 56.7 births per 1,000 native-born women in the United States, and 83.7 births per 1,000 foreign-born women in the United States. A politically salient figure is the fact of 53.4 births per 1000 native-born nonHispanic white women, a lower figure than for any other combination of nativity and ethnicity (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005). Thus it is newsworthy that in Texas, “Hispanic children [not all of whom are immigrants or descendents of recent immigrants] represent 91 percent of the public school enrollment increase over the past decade. The proportion of Asian-Pacific Islander children rose by 74 percent (from a relatively low base); the absolute number and proportion of Anglo children declined (Scharrer 2010). More generally, as an

advocacy group that is fairly hostile to immigration reports, “immigration accounts for virtually all of the national increase in public school enrollment over the last two decades” in the United States (Camarota 2007). One could find similar data with regard to most migrants in most receiving countries (Castles and Miller 2009).

There is thus good reason to assume that migration will increase over the next few decades as much as it has over the past two, so long as borders are not absolutely sealed. And even in the unlikely event that borders are sealed, people who have already migrated will in the foreseeable future bear more children than do the native-born populations in their receiving countries. The 2008 recession in the wealthy west has slowed some migration flows, and economic growth in some poorer countries might also slow it (for the opposite reason). But millions or perhaps hundreds of millions of young adults will continue to move if they are able to do so, and to bear children in their new countries. To understand the political implications of those facts, we need to step back to develop a conceptual framework.

### **Policy-Politics Feedback Loops**

The now standard framework of a policy-politics feedback loop is useful for evaluating the possible trajectories of political response to these migration flows.<sup>4</sup> Scholars have long recognized that political pressures can promote adoption of new policies [(Page and Shapiro 1992); (Erikson et al. 1993)], after which pressure groups can become protective constituencies. But despite observations from an earlier generation of political scientists (Schattschneider 1935, 1960); (Lowi 1964); (Weir and Skocpol 1985); (Wilson 1995)], only recently have analysts systematically and fully developed the insight that policies are not only “outcomes to be explained” (Soss et al. 2007): 4), but also causal forces themselves.

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Vesla Weaver for contributing substantially to this paragraph, and my thinking about feedback loops more generally.

Implementing new policies can change the incentives, beliefs, and behaviors of political actors, and can enable constituent groups to emerge, grow stronger, or change direction. If these actors and groups support the infant policy, it is strengthened and in turn rewards an increasingly powerful constituency (Schneider and Ingram 1997) . The new policy may also generate new political institutions with practices, resources, and follow-up of their own, again strengthening the policy and being strengthened by it. The cycle continues, as the newly powerful policy provides state actors with new capacities or generates new pressures from the politically attentive public, thereby influencing the menu of possibilities in later rounds of policy-making and the next round of political pressure [(Pierson 1993); (Thelen 2003)]. As the “policy feedback” continues, the once delicate innovation sinks deep roots [(Skocpol 1992); (Mettler and Soss 2004)]. If rooted deeply enough, the policy and its attendant politics will outlast the circumstances that brought it into being and take on a life and trajectory of its own – perhaps for generations.

Thus the creation and maintenance of a public policy “is less a destination than a political journey.... Only by examining policymaking *developmentally* will we be in a position to obtain an accurate sense of the possibilities and limits of broad-based reform efforts in American government” [(Patashnik 2008): 10]; see also (Hacker 2004)].<sup>5</sup> However, as various analysts are now pointing out, the study of policy feedbacks is much stronger on cases where innovation takes root (a.k.a. path dependency) than on cases where it does not, even

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<sup>5</sup> Patashnik himself points to three developments that affect whether a feedback loop thrives: whether the new policy creates the administrative capacity to run it effectively, how it links to market mechanisms that can support or undermine it, and whether citizens become aware that the new policy exists from which they benefit” (Patashnik 2008, Chap. 2). In a later paper, he and Julian Zelizer point to additional, or perhaps more analytically abstract, criteria for success or failure of a feedback loop: “weak policy design, inadequate or conflicting institutional supports, and poor timing” (Patashnik and Zelizer 2009). This all seems persuasive, but doesn’t capture the case of immigration policy and immigrant incorporation.

though the latter are arguably just as important. The particular branch of malfunction relevant here is not failure to thrive or distortion but rather negative feedback. After all, as the brief section on demographic change shows, immigration policy was dramatically more successful than any of its promulgators imagined, or wanted. (President Lyndon Johnson was only one of a long string of supporters of the 1965 Immigration Act who believed and promised that “this is not a revolutionary bill. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives or add importantly to our wealth and power” [October 3, 1965]; see (Hochschild and Burch 2007)). Its very success has generated the set of conditions under which it has recently become highly contentious in the policy and political arenas.

Few social scientists have studied negative feedback loops (the phrase is most common among biologists). Theda Skocpol introduced the concept to most readers in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, and Vesla Weaver has developed it through her concept of “frontlash” (Weaver 2007). Weaver focuses on elites who, after losing one policy battle, create a new policy debate in which they have a better chance of winning. Skocpol’s framing is more useful here, however, since she focuses on hostility to a policy that arises many decades after the policy is promulgated, precisely *because* the policy has persisted and grown over several generations. That is the situation with regard to policies to regulate immigration and to incorporate immigrants in the United States.

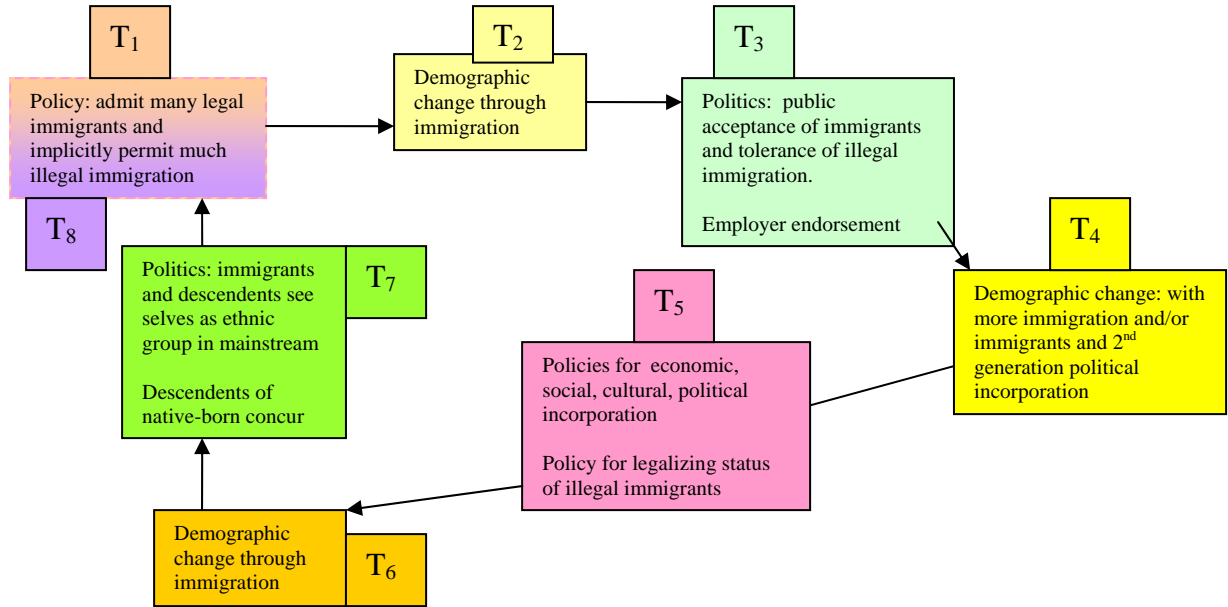
In short, although scholarship is lopsided on this point, the concept of policy feedback permits analysis of (at least) two distinct policy-politics interactions over a long time. In one case, the policy changes politics in ways that reinforce the policy and further develop the politics of reinforcement. In the other case, the policy may begin to change politics in ways that reinforce the initial policy, but something occurs to recalibrate the political dynamics toward opposition to the policy, which ultimately deflects or transforms the original policy.



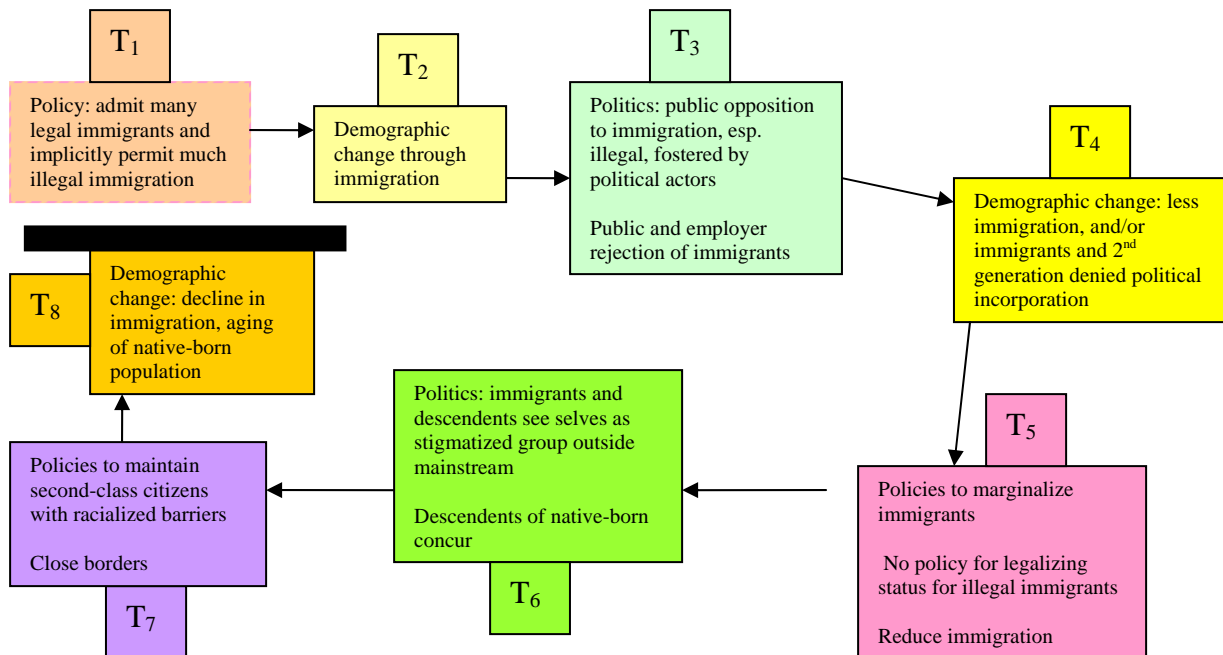
Less abstractly, Figure 2 shows two plausible versions of the feedback loop with regard to immigration, with very different implications:

**Figure 2: Two Plausible Policy-Politics Feedback Loop with Regard to Immigration**

*A. Positive feedback: continued immigration and reasonably effective immigrant incorporation*



*B. Negative feedback: blocked immigration and/or failure to incorporate immigrants*



In panel A, a liberal immigration policy leads to an increase in immigrants, which generates political support for or tolerance of immigration and immigrants. That leads to further demographic change which has political effects that eventually reinforce the liberal immigration policy. In panel B, a liberal immigration policy also leads to an increase in immigrants, but in this case demographic change generates political opposition to immigration and immigrants. That leads eventually either to the reduction or end of immigration, to the maintenance of immigrants and their descendants in second class status, or both.

In the case of immigration (and perhaps other policies), demographic change is an essential part of the policy-politics feedback loop. But demographic change is not by itself determinative; it can produce a large and growing population of people who are immigrants, closely associated with immigrants, or allies of immigrants and who gain increasing political power and support, *or* it can produce a large and possibly growing population of people who are immigrants or closely associated with immigrants but who are seen as more and more

threatening and encroaching by the native-born. Demographic change can reinforce a positive feedback loop of incorporation, or a negative one of repression, or perhaps both over a long period of time or across a wide expanse of space.

### **Factors Shaping the Role of Demographic Change in Feedback Loops**

I do not yet have a well-developed theory to explain when demographic change is associated with positive or negative feedback loops. At this point, I can offer a list of factors likely to shape the trajectory of policy success or failure, along with some sense of how they are interrelated.

*Conditions for a Positive Feedback Loop:* Time is the first thing needed for the demographic changes of immigration to generate a positive feedback loop. Almost by definition, immigrants are not politically incorporated into the host country when they arrive (except in the unusual case of former colonial subjects or expatriate co-ethnics who are well attuned to the society into which they are moving). In most cases, immigrants do not know the language, culture, shared but unspoken customs, political dynamics, or geography of their new home. Their first priority is usually to attain a steady flow of income, through a job, public support, or some other means. Immigrants must also settle their families, find a place to live, develop a strategy for maintaining contact with loved ones left at home, learn to negotiate their new environment, perhaps find a place of worship. All of that requires a great deal of time and effort; it may take years or decades before immigrants come to perceive the importance of political incorporation, if they ever do. Immigrant children or children of immigrants need time to grow up, to figure out how to locate themselves psychically and physically in a society in which they are may be suspended among several loyalties and practices. At a minimum, they cannot become politically incorporated until they are old enough to take political action.

The native-born population also needs time. In many immigrant-receiving countries, residents do not think of themselves as a country of immigration; people need repeated exposure to the idea and fact of newcomers to learn to see them as potential co-nationals. Political institutions also need time to adjust. Politicians and political parties must revise their extant profile to promulgate programs and policies in this new arena; courts must develop case law for adjudicating claims arising from immigration; regulators must work out standard operating procedures to address the myriad complexities left after immigration laws are passed; schools, hospitals, police departments, libraries, armies, and other front-line organizations must learn how to engage with new populations that have new needs, demands, perspectives, and resources [(Marrow 2009); (Jones-Correa 2008); (Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005)].

And so on. Except in rare cases, immigration is disruptive even if it benefits all participants, so a polity needs enough stability over several decades for the disruption to be absorbed into manageable routines.

Time and simple physical presence together can do a lot to ease the strains and generate the benefits of migration, especially for those who grow up in the new demographic context. But a viable pathway to political incorporation is important, perhaps essential, for the demographic changes of immigration to generate a positive feedback loop. The most obvious and probably most effective route is attainment of citizenship. Citizens have legal standing; they can vote and hold office and public service jobs; they have demonstrated a commitment to the receiving country. Naturalization laws combine with time to lower the most serious obstacle to political incorporation for immigrants;<sup>6</sup> birthright citizenship combines with time

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<sup>6</sup> Time matters for naturalization in several ways. Most countries require continuous residence for some number of years before a legal immigrant is eligible for naturalization. In addition, the longer a person lives in a host country, the more likely he or she is to naturalize if that is permitted [(Wong and Pantoja 2009); (Portes and Curtis 1987)].

to lower the most serious obstacle to incorporation for immigrants' children (Bean et al. 2006); (Bean et al. 2009).<sup>7</sup>

Immigrants can attain at least some political incorporation even if they lack citizenship. Participation in advocacy groups, religious organizations, community associations, the military, and political movements can all bring people into the public arena even if they cannot vote or hold office [(Wong 2006); (Heredia 2008); (Jones-Correa 1998; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008)]. Government policies can foster political incorporation for particular groups, such as for Cuban refugees to the United States in the 1960s, or Jews immigrating into Israel under the Law of Return. Whether host country policies also provide a means of incorporation for people who immigrate illegally or as an asylee, refugee, guest worker, person with Temporary Protected Status or a U visa, or high-skilled temporary employee also strongly affects whether immigrants can become actors with some possibility of political influence.

An encouraging context is less essential than time and a pathway to political incorporation for immigration to generate a positive feedback loop – but surely it helps. I will not try to summarize the increasingly dense academic literature on this topic [a small sample includes (Bloemraad 2006); (Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009); (Bail 2008); (Kasinitz et al. 2008); (Marrow forthcoming 2011); (Williamson 2009 )]. But surely welcoming neighbors, penetrable institutions, decent or at least steady jobs, reasonably effective schooling, knowledgeable intermediaries, places of religious or spiritual succor, first steps toward political representation -- all will enable immigrants and their children to thrive in their host

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<sup>7</sup> If immigrants' children have to choose whether to become a citizen of the receiving country or – worse – have to overcome obstacles in order to be able to make such a choice, then obviously this route to political incorporation is much less effective. On citizenship laws, see [(Hansen 2008); (Joppke and Morawska 2003); (British Council and Migration Policy Group 2007); (D'Amato 2009); (Baubock 2006)].

communities and thereby diminish the possibility that demographic change is interpreted as threat. Not all of these elements of local context are accessible to public policies, but politics, policies, and demographic change can work together to produce a positive feedback loop in some local arenas.

The national context, the arena of most research on policy feedbacks, also matters. Almost all trustworthy opinion surveys in western countries show that native-borns are skeptical about immigration, do not want more immigrants in their country, see both gains and losses for their country as a result of immigration, and are fairly sympathetic to the immigrants who are already there (Hochschild 2010). That mixture provides the raw materials for a multiplicity of political positions. A candidate for office can promote nativism and know that he or she will have a hard core of passionate supporters and a wider set of sympathizers (Minkenberg 2009) – or a candidate could promote a program of inclusion and managed immigration increases, with roughly the same prediction. In most western countries, major businesses are eager to recruit high-skilled temporary workers (some of whom they would like to keep on as permanent employees) [(Lowell 2005); (Shachar 2006); (Cerna 2008)], as well as, when the economy is growing, low-skilled, even illegal, workers. Politicians with some ethnic or religious identities or an immigration background are eager to recruit new potential constituents, and people with a commitment to cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, or compensation for western colonialism or racism can be valuable allies. Electoral structures can make it easier or more difficult for immigrants to move into political office, and they can give politicians more or less incentive to represent and promote immigrants' needs and desires [(Mollenkopf and Sonenshein 2009); (Rogers 2009)]. In short, policies, politics, and

demographic change can be mutually reinforcing given the right context and a start in the right direction.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, policies, politics, and demographic change are much more likely to form a positive feedback loop if the immigrants themselves have certain characteristics. Holding the same religious beliefs and practices as most host country residents, having a similar skin color or physical appearance, offering skills needed in the economy (whether as a computer programmer or as a construction worker), having escaped from a repressive regime, sharing norms and practices with regard to family and gender relations – all of these characteristics are not intrinsically meritorious but do make newcomers' inclusion much easier to accomplish.

The exact set of conditions matters less than the general point: demographic change can foster a positive link between immigration policies and political dynamics. The key is an effective use of time – time for immigrants and especially their children to become politically meaningful actors, time for native-borns to get used to the new profile of their country, time for immigrants and their children to make personal, occupational, religious, neighborhood-based, and organizational ties with native-borns. Perhaps most important, when children grow up in a society full of people from different places, they can – although they do not necessarily -- come to see that as simply a fact of life rather than an innovation to be evaluated.

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<sup>8</sup> However, I see two problems with the claim that welcoming contexts help to transform potentially threatening demographic change into acceptance if not welcome of new countrymen. First, if one is not careful, the link between a welcoming context and immigrant incorporation becomes tautologous: How do immigrants become included? By moving into a welcoming context. How does one know that a context is welcoming? Because immigrants are becoming included. So one needs to define context through a precisely specified policy or political practice, such as citizenship law or recruitment by a political party, for it to be a theoretically useful concept.

Second, some evidence suggests that in fact immigrants and their children become politically incorporated more rapidly when they face a threatening context rather than a friendly or neutral one [(Ramakrishnan 2005); (Kim 2000)]. In some circumstances, a hostile context motivates people to move out of the private or economic arenas into the public or political one.

*Conditions for a Negative Feedback Loop:* Eric Patashnik argues that citizens' heightened awareness of a new policy is an important component of its sustainability; if people do not know how a new policy benefits them, they will not take steps to support it and they may even oppose it. In the case of immigration and immigrant incorporation, however, arguably the reverse is the case—the less native-borns are aware of immigrants, the more time immigrants have to become included and to begin to exert their own clout as part of the “politics” half of the policy-politics feedback loop. If somehow native-borns could be kept in ignorance of the broad scope of immigration, while at the same time coming to know, work, learn, and organize with particular immigrants, then a generation or two later the “immigrants” would have turned into “ethnics”, and the threat of demographic change will have been mitigated.

Very roughly speaking, that is what happened in the United States between the mid-1920s and the mid-1960s, except that it was the drastic reduction in European immigration rather than lack of awareness of immigrants that provided the decades during which immigrants turned into ethnics. This characterization is too simple, of course – events ranging from the Depression, World War II, and the Cold War to industrialization and the rise of higher education contributed, perhaps essentially, to immigrant incorporation. But the central point is that several decades after the 1920s, the negative feedback loop that had culminated in the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 had atrophied and disappeared.

Time works differently in a negative feedback loop. The absence of the conditions for positive feedback— pathways to political incorporation, favorable contexts, and the “right” kinds of immigrants – are surely important, but the crucial element is that continual demographic change through immigration heightens native-borns' anxiety. That is, immigrants who arrived in earlier decades or immigrants' children may be successfully merging into the host society, and thereby becoming less visible to the public. But if more



immigrants keep arriving or if rates of immigration increase or if some immigrants and their descendents are not successful, fears about demographic change can grow despite the fact, or *because of the fact*, that immigration has been going on for a long time. That is what occurred, roughly speaking, in the United States between the 1870s and the 1910s; across those several decades, the negative feedback loop gained visibility and potency, culminating in the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924.

Thus immigration policies over time can enhance both political support for more immigration and incorporative policies, and political opposition to more immigration and incorporative policies. "The question is," as Humpty Dumpty told Alice, "which is to be master -- that's all" (Carroll 1898): 164). That is, whether the immigration feedback loop that generates politically incorporated and influential immigrants and allies outweighs the immigration feedback loop that generates fear of and political resistance to immigrant-based change, or vice versa, is the crucial analytic and substantive issue. Judging by American history, as well as the recent history of countries such as Germany, England, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Australia, one or the other of these trajectories can become master, and mastery can be gained or lost after several decades [See, for example, (Zolberg 2006); (Tichenor 2002); (Castles and Davidson 2001)].

### **Further Political Complications**

So far I have focused on the relationship between immigration policies and demographic change, with little focus on the politics. However, the feedback dynamic is further complicated by the fact that immigration politics cuts across conventional partisan alliances and allegiances.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The next few paragraphs come from (Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009): 309-311. Table 19.1 (ibid.) shows public views of immigration policy in twelve OECD countries, and table

*Problems for the left:* Within the context of popular distaste for more immigration, native-born leftists in most Western nations are more welcoming to or at least tolerant of immigrants than are native-born rightists. Social democratic (in the European or Australian context) and liberal (in the American context) activists tend to be relatively more oriented toward the international arena and less isolationist.<sup>10</sup> They are often more culturally flexible or cosmopolitan in their commitments, if not necessarily in their behaviors, and they sympathize with the desire to escape poverty and oppression that drives many to emigrate from their home country. In recent years, European (and increasingly American) leftist support for Palestinians in the Middle East has augmented sympathy for Muslim immigrants.

Leftists also believe in respecting cultural differences and honoring group identities, often through explicit public policies of multiculturalism. But especially though not only in Europe, they disagree profoundly with many immigrants' gender practices, treatment of children (particularly daughters), and views on homosexuality. Leftists are often insistently secular, so they may be uneasy about immigrants' religious commitments and practices. Leftist political actors may also worry that low-skilled immigrants take jobs from low-skilled, native-born workers. That dilemma is especially acute when the threatened native workers are disproportionately ethnic minorities, such as black descendents of slaves in the United States. So the left endorses at least some immigration but has many concerns about actual immigrants.

*Problems for the right:* Political actors on the right also face ideological and partisan dilemmas. Rightists tend to be unenthusiastic about immigration *per se*, for reasons that are the mirror image of the left: they are more isolationist, more culturally and politically nationalist,

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19.2 (ibid.) provides evidence of relative support for immigration among supporters of parties on the left and right.

<sup>10</sup> The present American political configurations with regard to Iraq, and earlier with regard to Vietnam, are historical anomalies.

more concerned about the rule of law and legal status *per se*, and more inclined to rely on international markets than on migration to alleviate worldwide poverty. But at least in Europe, rightists' views on gender and parental roles, homosexuality, and religiosity accord much more with the views of many immigrants than do leftists' views. Social conservatives are also more sympathetic to some immigrants' desire to bring religious values and practices into the public realm. Rightists, then, resist immigration but have much in common with a high proportion of actual immigrants.

The right faces additional dilemmas with regard to immigrants' political incorporation. Conservatives have little tolerance for illegal immigration, but they also sometimes manage or own businesses that depend on undocumented immigrants' labor power and their willingness to accept low wages and difficult working conditions. Industries of this sort, like a restaurant owners' association or a construction trades association, can often be a potent national interest group. Economic conservatives might prefer regularizing the status of undocumented immigrants in order to maintain a stable workforce and to discourage the casual and widespread acceptance of illegality – which can make them policy if not ideological allies with liberals. Regularization would also eliminate the hypocrisy of the government spending tax revenues on border protection while employers hire workers who foil that protection – and generate profits that can be taxed. But economic as well as social conservatives find it unpalatable to publicly endorse “amnesty” in the United States or to be equivalently “soft” on undocumented immigrants in Europe.

The right faces an even deeper predicament regarding the ultimate goal of immigration policies and policies toward immigrants. Conservatives tend to be “national particularists” (in the words of Christian Joppke (Joppke 2009), meaning that they endorse unilateral assimilationism rather than multiculturalism. But some conservatives are also nativists — and

demonstrating hostility toward immigrants is not a good strategy for persuading them to assimilate. It is not easy for a political party or organization seeking to unify rightists to reconcile these two contradictory impulses.

*Immigrants' choices:* Immigrants also get caught up in these conundrums, which surely affect them more deeply. Should immigrants ally with conservatives, who may hold similar cultural values and provide employment, but who may also oppose further immigration, want to exact a stiff price for incorporation, and flirt with xenophobia? Or should they ally with leftists, who oppose and even scorn some of their cultural or religious values, but who might promote cultural autonomy, provide more social services, support their access to the labor market, or foster political engagement and influence?

The right strategy for building coalitions with other immigrants is just as unclear. Should immigrant groups ally with refugees, undocumented, or highly skilled temporary workers, even if they come from a different part of the world and are otherwise dissimilar? Or should they seek to form coalitions with native-born residents of the same nationality or even of the same broad social class, in the hopes of avoiding competition over jobs and tension over status and resources? Another question: should immigrants aim to enter their new polity as individuals or as members of an ethnic group? Can they retain ties to their countries of origin while becoming a citizen of the receiving country; should they ally with co-religionists across national borders; should they permit or encourage their children to become full-fledged Germans, Dutch, or Americans?

These are old questions but they have a new urgency in this era of easy international travel, stateless organizations willing to use violence to attain their goals, and host countries increasingly nervous about security and national unity. For instance, Muslim immigrants might ponder how they can stay committed Muslims without being drawn into international

radicalism, while migrants from former colonies might wonder how they can take advantage of their linguistic and cultural ties while avoiding demeaning colonial-era stereotypes. And even the old questions have no settled answers, especially when it is unclear whether positive or negative feedback loops are gaining mastery.

### **Arizona's S.B. 1070**

That is precisely the situation in which the United States finds itself at present (other countries share the same crossroads, but I have space and expertise to focus here on only one). In April 2010 Arizona passed a law that (quoting CNN) “orders immigrants to carry their alien registration documents at all times and requires police to question people if there's reason to suspect they're in the United States illegally. It also targets those who hire illegal immigrant laborers or knowingly transport them.” Supporters insist that the law targets law-breaking, not a particular race, ethnicity, class, or appearance. As Governor Brewer put it, “we must enforce the law evenly, and without regard to skin color, accent or social status” (more analytically, see (Schuck 2009). Opponents see the law as a thinly veiled, or even overt, attack on Latinos, immigrants, and perhaps all people of color. President Obama asserted that “the recent efforts in Arizona... threatened to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans,”<sup>11</sup> and the Department of Justice will file a legal challenge to the law on the grounds that it illegally supercedes federal authority (more analytically, see (Fraga 2009).

At least initially, American public opinion sided with Governor Brewer. The first trustworthy national poll [by Gallup (Jones 2010)] on April 29, 2010 showed 51 percent support and 39 percent opposition, with the very high figure of three-fourths of respondents

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<sup>11</sup> AZ law as described by CNN: [cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/04/23/immigration.faq/index.html](http://cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/04/23/immigration.faq/index.html)  
Brewer: [i.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/04/23/brewer.statement.pdf](http://i.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/04/23/brewer.statement.pdf)  
Obama: [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-naturalization-ceremony-active-duty-service-members](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-naturalization-ceremony-active-duty-service-members)

having heard about the law (see also (Archibold and Thee-Brenan 2010). Legislators in perhaps half of the fifty American states have promised a bill similar to Arizona's, and Southern conservatives are "stampeding to express solidarity with the Arizona governor and legislature." This blogger explains the stampede through an informal version of my negative feedback loop:

(1) newly visible and culturally threatening Hispanic populations,<sup>12</sup> that (2) aren't large or engaged enough to represent a significant voting presence;<sup>13</sup> (3) red-hot Republican primaries; and (4) the difficulty of finding ways for Republican candidates to distinguish themselves in an atmosphere of monolithic conservatism on most issues (Kilgore 2010).

Nevertheless, the positive feedback loop obtains elsewhere: "in states with larger and more established Hispanic populations, politicians considering anti-immigrant messages have to think seriously about blowback.... Behind the scenes, GOP strategists are said to be urging their candidates not to go there" (Kilgore 2010).<sup>14</sup> But the political and ideological

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<sup>12</sup> As Kilgore points out, "Hispanic immigration to the Deep South took off during the last decade. If you rank the states by the [percentage increase in Hispanic population from 2000-2008](#), five of the top seven are in the South, with South Carolina (88.1%) ranked first, Arkansas fourth (82.1%), North Carolina fifth (79.8%), Georgia sixth (79.7%) and Kentucky seventh (76.3%). And in some states, the sheer number of Hispanics is reaching impressive heights, particularly for places with little or no prior diversity aside from African-Americans." And, Hispanics are not "disproportionately 'hidden' in the anonymity of big cities" (Kilgore 2010).

<sup>13</sup> "In ... the states of the Old Confederacy (excluding Florida and Texas), there were only two states as of 2006 in which Hispanics [represented as much as 2% of eligible voters](#): Virginia at 2.8%, and Georgia at 2.3%. The Hispanic percentage of the population in these states in 2006 was, respectively, 6.8% and 7.4%" (Kilgore 2010).

<sup>14</sup> "In endorsing Arizona's aggressive immigration policies, several prominent GOP strategists say, Republicans risk alienating Hispanic voters. The most ardent political backers of an enforcement-first approach -- a group that has the ear, and the support, of the conservative base -- often use inartful and ill-considered language in describing people who are in the U.S.

complexities for conservatives with regard to immigration, discussed above, prevent the Republican party, like the Democratic party, from taking any clear or coherent stand on the imbroglio in Arizona.

The deeper the discussion of the Arizona law goes, the more it reveals the current unstable balance between positive and negative feedback loops with regard to immigration. The law's proponents point to a recent and particularly visible murder as well as to serious crime related to the drug trade on the U.S.-Mexico border; opponents point out that crime has dropped in Arizona and other immigrant-heavy states (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2010), and that most of the drug violence is on the Mexican side of the border CITE. Proponents point to the enormous number of undocumented immigrants in the United States – 11 to 12 million – while opponents point to the decline in immigration, especially among illegals, since the economic downturn (Mazza and Sohnen 2010). And so on.

For my purposes, the most important analytic point emerged in surveys of Californians. In April 2010 a *Los Angeles Times* poll found an even split among Californians on the issue of whether unauthorized immigrants should be denied public services such as schools and health care. That in itself reflects a pro-immigrant change in political views compared with the level of support for Proposition 187 in 1994. But the real story is generational:

While more Latino and Asian American voters opposed denial of social services to unauthorized immigrants than did white or African American voters, California voters

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illegally.... Those who use vitriolic rhetoric can make the entire Republican Party appear anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic.

Immigration reform 'is becoming the third rail of politics, for Republicans in particular,' GOP pollster Steve Lombardo said. ... 'It's almost impossible to talk about immigration reform without sounding anti-immigrant' " (Hotline OnCall 2010).

For an example of Republican recruitment of Hispanic voters (not in Arizona) see: [www.publicbroadcasting.net/kera/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1663056/North.Texas/Texas.GOP.Launches.YouTube.Hispanic.Recruiting](http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kera/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1663056/North.Texas/Texas.GOP.Launches.YouTube.Hispanic.Recruiting)

aged 18 to 29 represented the majority of those who opposed the denial of services across all ethnic groups by a margin of nearly 30 points. “Although young voters in California are disproportionately Latino or Asian American compared with older voters, it appears that a broader dynamic is at work here as well. Attitudes among white voters between 18 and 29 on the question of services to illegal immigrants were almost identical to those of the entire age group” [(Hoy 2010), quoting (Schnur 2010)].

In the same survey, “the majority of California voters under the age of 45 believe that unauthorized immigrants are a net benefit to the state and ‘indicated strong support for a legalization process’ ” (Hoy 2010). Similarly, a *Los Angeles Times* poll about six weeks later found that “strong majorities of white voters and those over 50 support the Arizona law, while Latinos and those under 30 are heavily opposed” (Mehta 2010).

Scholars, including myself, are finding a broad change in young American adults’ attitudes, behaviors, and political stances with regard to immigration and, especially, to immigrants [(Kasinitz et al. 2008); (Hochschild et al. 2010)], Arguably the same dynamic is occurring in other societies (CITE and/or analyze ESS). Whether young Americans can gain in numbers and political power at a faster rate than older Americans can reduce immigration and constrict incorporation will determine which direction the United States goes from its current stasis at the crossroads. And the United States has plenty of company in that spot.

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