

Issue Brief: The Intersection between Immigration and Social Welfare Policy

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Key Words (4-6): Immigration, Welfare State, Policy, Exclusion, Identity, and Redistribution

Description (1-2 Sentences): This brief will examine the difficulties in effectively measuring appropriate applications immigration and social welfare policy in contemporary American society. Globalization fuels the expansion of America’s multicultural society and tension has arisen due to fears of a robust immigrant nation taking away the social benefits enjoyed collectively by the majority white class.

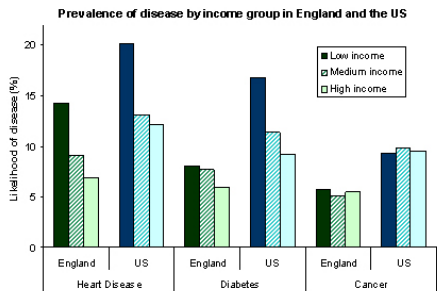
Key Points (4-6):

- The Multicultural Welfare state
- The challenges caused by rapid growth in **immigrant** populations
- The issue of American identity and threats to the welfare state don not come from a society rich with foreign born citizens but rather the racial and ethnic tensions that weaken support for redistribution
- Exclusionary policy

Images: (1-3)



Despite the rapid growth in immigration in this country, there are also those immigrants and family members who have been citizens for generations, yet still struggle due to their displacement as non-white minorities. Advocates for immigration argue that immigrants and immigration are at the core of American society and the this country is and idea not a nation.⁴ the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican American War and ceded the modern day Southwest to the United States. **Many** Mexican-born people were absorbed in the process and have been embedded in American society ever since. Despite Latino U.S citizenship, 62% by birth and another 7% by naturalization, anti-immigrants sentiments have arisen again due to many non-citizen family members residing in the U.S. Public policy profoundly shapes the Latino experience in the U.S. “Contemporary debates on immigration and public welfare policy are framed by past ideas about American identity” ²¹ (Rudolph)⁵



Immigration and multiculturalism are fueled by the progressive globalization of our economy and society. Excess immigration causes the emergence of a multicultural and ethnically rich America. “Historically, challenges to immigration and multiculturalism have tended to come from the conservative right.” (99 Welfare State) However, recent studies show a strong left and central opposition to multiculturalism and immigration due to the concern that an overly multicultural society is not sustainable for redistributive economic and social policies. (Banting)¹

Arguments arise that immigrants abuse the generosity of **the American** welfare state. ² Every country **was** a country **of** immigrants at some point. What makes America a more unique case is the rapid rate **of** immigration. A 1790 U.S. population census as compared to 1980’s percentage of immigrant residents shows that the American population would be nearly **half** of what it is today with a closed door policy. (O’Sullivan)⁴

A comparison of the United States and Canada showed that racial and ethnic tensions **weaken** support for redistribution **in the US**, whereas in Canada immigration and multiculturalism represent a stable political balance. Multicultural and immigrant rich societies like Canada have not struggled to maintain a healthy welfare state but the rapid growth in immigrant communities between the 1970s and 1990s have created tensions. The struggle for American identity within a society filled with diverse ethnic sub-groups makes welfare allocation to those who genuinely need it increasingly difficult. A strong welfare state facilitates familial and societal structure; **conversely many Americans feel that** increased multicultural communities threaten **that** structure. ¹

Advocates for immigration argue that not only are 22% of white children and 70% of black children born out of wedlock, demonstrating weak family structure, but that immigrants benefit and stimulate the economy. Various immigrant groups have come to occupy various jobs many native-born Americans would refuse due to long hours, low wages, **and often poor working conditions**. Metropolitan areas such as New York City harbor many immigrant communities with **frequently start small businesses, for example** Indian-run newsstands, Korean Groceries, and

Comment [ES1]: He means well here but it might be interpreted as offensive?

Chinese restaurants all exemplify hard-working entrepreneurs trying to attain the American dream for their families.

Additionally, statistics show that in many states like California, the welfare distribution between non-refugee immigrants and the general population is very similar; in this case 7.8 vs. 7.4 percent of the general population received welfare. (Website) 2

Advocates for immigration do not overlook the utility of having a strong immigrant influence on the economy. They work towards creating a strong community and social base. This "social structure provides a mechanism for distribution of the valued resources, including wealth, status, privilege, etc.,"²² the great disparity still present in the United States is the overwhelming influence of the white majority. This current social structure accompanied by racial and ethnic position separates the haves from the have-nots. Therefore the minority non-white population has been socially and economically disadvantaged compared to the white class. (Rudolph)⁵

The ultimate goal is finding the appropriate application of welfare policy, benefiting those who truly need and deserve it, while maintaining that no group whether majority or minority will be excluded from the rights and privileges enjoyed by all citizens.



Issue Brief: 677 Words

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