The Irony of American Integration Policy

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The argument

- America has no “integration policy”
- Existing policy is (mostly) antidiscrimination policy
- Focus on policy for economic and educational integration
- The irony: Though designed for African Americans, African Americans are the least integrated minority group
The antidiscrimination law framework

- Reconstruction’s 14th Amendment of the Constitution
- Civil Rights Act of 1964: Title VI and Title VII
- Executive Orders, set-asides and Small Business Administration programs
Title VII’s mechanics for economic integration

- No discrimination on basis of race or national origin
- Individuals and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission can initiate lawsuits; race reporting requirements
- Two theories of discrimination: disparate treatment and disparate impact
Status of economic integration

• February 2010 white unemployment rate: 9.7%; African American 16.2; Latino 13.4; Asian 8.4

• Studies show widespread preferences for immigrants over native-born, especially African Americans (Wilson, Waldinger, Moss and Tilly)

• EEOC litigation failures
What about diversity policy?

- No government policies for diversity in employment
- Executive Order for affirmative action benefits Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Native Americans
- Voluntary affirmative action and diversity policies (more than 1/3 of large companies have a diversity policy; more than 1/2 have training)
Integration into capitalism?

- Small Business Administration and set-aside programs in spending bills
- Controlling for education, age, time of immigration and language ability, still wide variation in business formation rates
- Korean (23.7); Chinese (10.6); Spanish Central American (5.9); Black Caribbean (5.7); African American (4.5); Laotian (2.6)
Title VI and education

• No discrimination on the basis of race or national origin
• Threat of fund cut-off (rare but powerful)
• Title VI key to end segregation of African Americans in schools
Unintended integration effects of Title VI

- May 25 memorandum: failure to accommodate LEP children is discrimination (5% limit)


- Mandatory ESL or bilingual education

- *Plyler v. Doe* and undocumented children
Integration, diversity and multiculturalism

- No federal “diversity” policy in schools
- Diversity constitutionally permissible for higher education (not required)
- Decentralized education; multiculturalism voluntary and highly variable; tendency toward culture with language instruction
Race and integration: mixed picture

- High school drop out rates show Latinos disadvantaged: 27.5% of Latinos in 2007; blacks 21.5; whites 12.2

- But Latinos and Asians outperform African Americans on SAT: Asians 1623; whites 1581; Mexican Americans 1362; African Americans 1262

- Test gap persists when controlling for socio-demographic variables
What is to be done?

• Nothing? America’s laissez faire policy largely works

• Persistent issue of African American exclusion from American mainstream
The ultimate measure of integration?

- % of married in racially exogamous marriage
- Source: Lee and Bean (forthcoming)

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