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RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences,
Volume 6, Number 3, November 2020, pp. 96-116 (Article)

Published by Russell Sage Foundation



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The Value of Citizenship and Service to the Nation



CARA WONG AND JONATHAN BONAGURO

Noncitizens in the United States have been receiving citizenship for military service in every war and almost every significant military operation since before the country was founded. Currently, many noncitizens fight for the United States and in return receive faster access to naturalization and citizenship. Nevertheless, politicians and pundits across the political spectrum tend to avoid mentioning this policy altogether. To explore the possible mass bases of this elite silence, we provide the first look at whether contemporary Americans support jus meritum (citizenship based on service) or not. Using experiments, we also examine whether opinions differ if the immigrants initially entered the country with documents or not, and whether the type of service (military or other) affects public support for these long-running policies.

Keywords: citizenship, immigration, service, undocumented, public opinion

Aliens have fought in American wars since before the United States was even a country (Burk 1995; Kestnbaum 2000).¹ This aspect of history is not mentioned in civics classes and is not common knowledge among most Americans

(beyond, perhaps, the name of Lafayette). In addition, noncitizens who fought on behalf of colonial militias and the United States were given the right to apply for citizenship—state and national, once the latter existed—as a re-

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© 2020 Russell Sage Foundation. Wong, Cara, and Jonathan Bonaguro. 2020. "The Value of Citizenship and Service to the Nation." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 6(3): 96–116. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2020.6.3.05. This research received funding from the Cline Center for Advanced Social Research and the Research Board of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. This article was written when the first author was a Lenore Annenberg and Wallis Annenberg Fellow in Communication at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, 2018–2019. Thanks also to Jake Bowers, Sam Luks, and Marissa Shih for their help, advice, and comments. Direct correspondence to: Cara Wong at carawong@illinois.edu, Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 420 David Kinley Hall, 1407 W. Gregory Dr., Urbana, IL 61801, United States.

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1. In the rest of this article, we use *noncitizens* to refer to those the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) calls *aliens*. The latter term is offensive to some, but obviously, many noncitizens throughout American history were not immigrants. Given the limited scope of this article, we do not discuss the extensive military service of noncitizens who were not allowed to be or become citizens because of their race or ethnicity.

sult of their service, a practice defined as *jus meritum* (Wong and Cho 2006).² Again, this policy of granting citizenship for service throughout American history is generally unfamiliar, although the existence of noncitizen soldiers and the practice of granting them citizenship has been mentioned by the media more frequently since the start of the Iraq War in 2003.

Some of the first casualties and deaths after the invasion were of noncitizens (Amaya 2007), and about once a year (usually on July 4), reporters have covered the naturalization ceremonies for soldiers who were wounded or killed (Stolberg 2006; Liptak 2014). In these recent news stories, the implicit normative argument is that naturalization is a just reward for military service (Navarrette 2003). After all, someone brave enough to volunteer and fight for the United States—a duty that many American citizens have eschewed—deserves a reward worthy of that sacrifice.

What is not discussed in the stories, however, is that this is an odd inversion of the typical relationship between membership and responsibilities, or consent and obligation (Pitkin 1965; Gilbert 2006). Usually, someone becomes a member of a group *before* taking on the special duties or responsibilities of membership (Scheffler 2001; Jeske 2002)—owed only to the subset of people with whom that individual has a “special relationship,” such as family members or fellow citizens—and benefits follow from the fulfillment of those obligations. In this case, however, by performing a specific duty that can last for years, noncitizens are eligible to apply for naturalization. And, despite the policy’s long history, we do not know whether the American public agrees that noncitizens should even be allowed to serve the nation in this way, much less whether they should receive citizenship as a result of their service.

Another issue not raised in these media ha-

giographies is whether any other type of service deserves equal reward. One could imagine that self-sacrifice on behalf of a country deserves accolade, regardless of its nature. After all, the government compensates its employees for their service, perhaps even more than the private sector does (Falk 2017). Even in strictly cost-benefit terms, one imagines that a country should compensate those who suffered costs and damages in its service, whether in terms of time, ambition, physical well-being, or finances (O’Neill 1987). However, U.S. citizenship itself has not been granted for service that is not explicitly in defense of the nation. This raises the question of whether Americans think there is something special about military service. If not, should AmeriCorps volunteers, for example, also be granted citizenship for their service?

Although some discussions have addressed whether noncitizens should be included in military drafts in historical congressional debates (Capozzola 2008), to our knowledge, no national public opinion data have been available until now about the existence of noncitizen soldiers or about the policy of granting citizenship for military service.³ What do ordinary people think of these policies, which are as American as apple pie and older than baseball? What do they see as the value of citizenship? In this article, using experiments fielded in two nationally representative public opinion surveys, we show the effects that types of service have on who Americans think should be allowed to serve the nation and on who they believe should receive citizenship for that service.

Because the unsuccessful DREAM Act proposal included military service as one pathway by which undocumented immigrants could gain access to citizenship, we also look at whether the legal status of immigrants affects attitudes about who can serve the country and

That is another important story in American history that deserves its own focus and shows that race trumped notions of *jus meritum* well into the twentieth century (Burk 1995; Salyer 2004; Wong and Cho 2006).

2. Of the eight people declared honorary citizens of the United States, three were noncitizens who fought on behalf of the Americans in the Revolutionary War.

3. A few excellent recent works have discussed proposals for *undocumented* immigrants, particularly Dreamers, to gain citizenship via military service (Wallace and Wallace 2019; Sullivan 2019), but not the more general, centuries-old, practice of granting citizenship for military service.

what are one's just rewards as a result. In other words, do attitudes about noncitizen soldiers and granting citizenship for that service, for example, differ, depending on whether the immigrants were authorized to enter the country?⁴

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

Special obligations, political obligations, and associative obligations are largely implicit in political psychology, but are widely discussed in political theory (Pitkin 1965; Scheffler 2001; Horton 2007; Wong 2010). The assumption across fields is that via social identities and group membership, belonging to a group can lead individuals to feel a desire to promote the well-being of ingroup members (Tajfel 1981; Simmons 1996). When the group is the nation, it implies a sense of duty and obligation to the state and its people, despite debate about whether these responsibilities should be spelled out (Transue 2007; Waldron 2011).

What exactly is required of a citizen of the United States? Given the emphasis on citizens' rights in schoolchildren's American history lessons—particularly the Bill of Rights—it is perhaps surprising that no explicit responsibility of citizenship is listed in the Constitution. Various duties are *implied*—to obey the law, avoid treason, and serve on juries and the armed forces when called, though when specified, they apply to “persons” generally and not to “citizens.”⁵ In contrast, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

lists the following as responsibilities of U.S. citizens:

- support and defend the Constitution
- stay informed of the issues affecting your community
- participate in the democratic process
- respect and obey federal, state, and local laws
- respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others
- participate in your local community
- pay income and other taxes honestly, and on time, to federal, state, and local authorities
- serve on a jury when called upon
- defend the country if the need should arise⁶

Most responsibilities on this list are not required by law, many do not demand specific actions be taken, and only jury duty is restricted to citizens.⁷ The other responsibilities can all be performed by noncitizens with impunity. However, fulfilling these responsibilities does not mean that a noncitizen's status changes in the eyes of the government.

The performance of ordinary duties associated with a role or position rarely leads to changes in legal status. For example, taking care of children does not necessarily make someone a parent in the eyes of the law, even if the adult has raised a child from birth. Simi-

4. The only undocumented immigrants currently allowed to serve in the U.S. armed forces are DACA recipients included through the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, the status of which is currently in limbo (Copp 2018). The Encourage New Legalized Immigrants to Start Training Act (ENLIST) was first proposed in Congress in 2013 (and most recently in 2019), which would allow undocumented immigrants who entered the country before the age of fifteen to serve in the military and subsequently qualify for legal permanent residence after honorable service. It has more than two hundred bipartisan cosponsors.

5. Of these duties, only jury duty is now restricted to citizens; until the early nineteenth century, noncitizens were able to serve (Lombardi 2009).

6. USCIS, “Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities,” <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/citizenship-rights-and-responsibilities> (accessed May 14, 2020).

7. Voting is restricted in almost all locales as well, though many other forms of political participation are open to noncitizens (Hayduk 2006). Until the early twentieth century, immigrants were granted the right or duty to vote in many states, regardless of citizenship status. However, alien suffrage ended almost everywhere after World War I, once anti-immigrant opponents were able to change the laws.

larly, the performance of almost any of the responsibilities listed by the USCIS does not affect the legal status of noncitizens. A Chinese tourist to Disneyworld must pay sales tax for a Mickey Mouse hat, a legal permanent resident has to obey highway speed limits, and a young male undocumented immigrant is legally required to register for selective service. Payment of taxes and law-abidingness do not trigger any officially recognized changes in national membership, and attempts by noncitizens to behave as only citizens may (voting, for example) can land them in prison or deportation proceedings.

The only task for which a noncitizen can gain immediate access to membership in the nation is to actively defend the country in times of crisis.⁸ For example, in extremely rare circumstances the U.S. government has promised citizenship to foreign nationals in exchange for “one-shot” services hugely beneficial to the country’s welfare, such as during the scramble in the weeks following 9/11 to find reliable and useful information about terrorist activity (Stout 2001).⁹ When the practice of recruiting noncitizens for military service began in the colonial militias, necessity was the main motivation: inadequate numbers of volunteers meant that defenses were inadequate for the safety of a community, whether local or national (Kestnbaum 2000). To recruit men for

this risky job, political and military elites had to provide adequate incentives: inclusion in the community, with its concomitant benefits, would be attractive to some (and cheap for the elites, relatively speaking) (Kettner 2014).¹⁰ The policy has continued over the centuries for noncitizen permanent legal residents, even if the need is no longer so clear (Wong and Cho 2006; for an argument that noncitizen soldiers may allow native-born Americans to avoid a draft, see Wong 2007).

Until recently, certain noncitizens who had legal status but who were not permanent residents also were allowed to enlist in the armed forces and thereby become eligible for citizenship.¹¹ Via the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest program (MAVNI), noncitizens who were legal but not permanent residents in the United States and who had either medical training or fluency in certain languages could join the military.¹² The pilot program began in 2008, was frozen in 2016 due to security concerns arising from inadequate background checks, and has not been restarted.

Despite these various programs, noncitizen soldiers are not recruited explicitly in such an instrumental fashion. No posters are in evidence, for example, in which Uncle Sam says he wants to make a tit-for-tat bargain with noncitizen legal residents, swapping citizenship for service. Instead, noncitizen soldiers are re-

8. Individuals of extraordinary talent are sometimes given access to citizenship in anticipation of the benefits—Olympic gold medals, Nobel science prizes, or better training for Americans—that will accrue to the United States (Shachar 2011). However, this Olympic citizenship is given before the athlete can compete as an American, and citizenship is not revoked if medals are not earned. In these situations, the United States is making a gamble ahead of time, not rewarding services rendered.

9. This practice also exists outside the United States. In France, for example, Article 21-19 states that a foreign national who has “performed exceptional services for France, or whose naturalisation would be of exceptional interest for France” is eligible for expedited citizenship (Schofield 2018).

10. Even when drafts were called to make up for shortages in personnel, some political elites still opposed allowing noncitizens into the armed forces, arguing that fighting for the United States was a *right* of citizenship, and others worried about national security.

11. This includes asylees, refugees, recipients of Temporary Protected Status, and those who hold one of a range of non-immigrant visas (DOD 2015).

12. Undocumented immigrants generally were not eligible for MAVNI. At the time, the program was developed, the plan was that the proposed Dream Act would cover undocumented immigrants and allow them to enlist (Stock 2015). DACA recipients did later become eligible to enlist via MAVNI, though the actual number enrolled was small (Watson 2018).

warded for their service by becoming eligible for naturalization, expedited in times of peace and immediate in times of war.¹³ The offer of membership is not a payment or restitution; similarly, veterans are not paid with educational benefits (Mettler 2005).¹⁴ All soldiers receive a salary for their labor, but access to higher education and health services—and citizenship for noncitizens—are benefits of service, both concurrent and future. They are not legally or morally compelled compensation for any previous damage or injury (O'Neill 1987).

Gratitude for Performance of Duties by Members (and Nonmembers)

If benefits resulting from the performance of service are not payments, how are they seen by ordinary Americans? “Gratitude” is perhaps the common response (Emmons and McCullough 2004), given that it is the “proper or called-for response in a beneficiary to benefits or beneficence from a benefactor” (Manela 2015, 1). In the case of noncitizen soldiers, the immigrant is the agent who intentionally chooses to defend the community, which benefits the members of the community. Of course, it is unlikely that defending the community is the only motivation for the choice to act; some philosophers question whether agents who act with the intention of receiving a return in the future deserve gratitude at all or to a lesser degree (Card 1988). However, it is clear that noncitizens have no obligation to defend citizens, so the service is definitely a supererogatory act, and the action is risky and costly on the part of the noncitizen (Weiss 1985).

Gratitude may depend on whether the recipient wants the beneficence (military service) from the benefactor (noncitizens). Although most citizens probably desire some level of protection from the state, it is less obvious whether they want the benefit from these particular benefactors.¹⁵ And if they do not want this service performed by noncitizens, how likely is it that they believe gratitude should be expressed for this unwelcome behavior? These are empirical questions we can answer with public opinion data.

What is the grateful response? If one acknowledges the beneficence, the resulting positive affect often leads to grateful behavior. The response can lead to reciprocity and a desire to extend generosity (Bartlett and DeSteno 2006), but the goal is not simply to compensate the benefactor for costs incurred (McCullough, Kimeldorf, and Cohen 2008; Manela 2015). What is the proper degree of response? Apathy or ingratitude is equally as reprehensible as servility or excess gratitude, yet it is unclear how much gratitude should be expressed. This article asks how ordinary citizens make these decisions and studies the extent to which gratitude may lead to reciprocity in granting a boon—citizenship—for the service provided by those who bore no responsibility to do so.¹⁶

What Is Service Worth?

National membership or citizenship is only one possible reward for service on behalf of a country. As mentioned, members of the military, their families, and veterans are eligible for a

13. In peacetime, members of the U.S. armed forces are eligible to apply after one year of honorable service. It is not automatic in times of peace or war, however; the military does not consistently facilitate this process, and the process has slowed significantly with added background checks and the closing of USCIS offices at U.S. army basic training camps. As of October 2017, there is also an additional requirement to serve 180 consecutive days (Bergengruen 2018).

14. That said, although citizenship has not been promised, at times freedom and pay have been advertised in recruitment posters (Freeman, Schamel, and West 1992).

15. For example, some view military service as a *right* of citizenship. Also, the use of mercenaries is banned by international laws, and use of private military companies by the U.S. government—though common—is not welcomed with open arms (McFate 2016; Wehle 2017; Ramirez and Wood 2018).

16. We do not measure gratitude directly in our surveys; instead, we examine the extent to which Americans support granting individuals group membership in response to service to the group, even in circumstances when that service was not initially desired.

range of health and education benefits.¹⁷ Government and nonprofit employees are also eligible for the Department of Education's Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (Federal Student Aid 2016). People working in public service jobs earn less than if they were to pursue other careers, it is argued, and the Forgiveness Program therefore allows them to enter and continue working for the government or nonprofit organizations. As a result, individuals who work for AmeriCorps, for example, may have some of their educational loans forgiven as a result of their service to thousands of the nation's communities. However, applicants are eligible only after about ten years of payments, and only a small percentage of applications are approved (Maldonado 2018).

In many ways, it is easier to determine the dollar value of military service than for other types of service, perhaps because of its long history. For example, during the Civil War, all male citizens (that is, white) between twenty and thirty-five (and all unmarried men age thirty-five to forty-five) were eligible for military service. Draftees could present an "acceptable substitute" or pay \$300 (roughly \$5,000 today) as a commutation fee to avoid service (Bernstein 1991); recruits could also receive bounties for volunteering up to \$400 (Levi 1997). Individuals who fought on behalf of the country could also receive benefits that were less material. Throughout U.S. history, minority groups—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation—that served in the armed forces have sought to help diminish societal levels of prejudice and discrimination toward their group by demonstrating their worth, patriotism, and bravery explicitly (Rochin, Fernandez, and Oliveros 2005; Belkin 2012). However, service did not lead to citizenship for black soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War or for Japanese immigrants who fought for the United States in World War I, for example (Salyer 2004; Haney-Lopez 2006). The sacrifice of American soldiers was compelling, but race was still the prevailing factor for most of the country's history.

From the point of view of immigrants, what is citizenship worth? Fixed costs imposed by the government include the fee for obtaining the correct visa, the expenses paid to gain legal permanent residence (which often includes the costs of civil surgeons and lawyers), and the cost of naturalization, totaling in the thousands of dollars per person. In addition are the costs of coming to the United States, residing here for a specified amount of time, learning English and American history, and proving that one will not become a burden on the state. Given these monetary and especially temporal costs, Margaret Stock (2015) argues in defense of MAVNI that a smart immigrant will weigh these costs with the benefits of service and choose to join the military if at all possible for citizenship.

Is Military Service Unique?

If we reward military service, especially in time of a national need, do we reward other service in a similar fashion? One might argue that our H-1B visa program has a passing resemblance. When the United States needs programmers or nurses, for example, they are allowed to immigrate from other countries to the United States. However, they are allowed only to cross the country's borders and work legally; they are not granted permanent residence or membership to the national community, even if that pathway is a possibility in the distant future. Immigrants who invest money in a business and hire American workers are also granted a limited number of visas (EB-5 investment green card or E-2 temporary work visas) to reside in the country; again, this is limited to residency, not citizenship. To the best of our knowledge, performance of no other normal duty or service regularly gains a person access to U.S. citizenship directly. As a point of comparison to *jus meritum*, however, we discuss public attitudes about these investment visas.

Why is military service still special now? Scholarship is extensive about the heroic and noble nature of soldiers in the past, but is it still

17. However, even benefits given to veterans were not always directly intended as expressions of gratitude. As much as we think of the GI Bill today as providing the opportunity for a college education to the Greatest Generation and beyond, it was formulated primarily with demobilization and reintegration in mind (Mettler 2005).

viewed in a distinct light in the current age of the all-volunteer force?¹⁸ Army recruitment continues to be affected by the state of the economy, such that quotas are harder to reach when unemployment is low and easier during a recession (James 2009). Also, as is true for other jobs with stringent requirements, between 70 and 75 percent of American youth are ineligible even to be considered for military service, mainly because of obesity, too little education, and criminal records (Christeson, Taggart, and Messner-Zidell 2009; Spoehr and Handy 2018).

Nevertheless, signs also indicate that military service is not considered to be like other jobs. Jonathan Ebel (2015, 2) explains the role of American soldiers in the narrative of America's civil religion as "not simply as protectors and preservers of the nation and its ideals, but as incarnations of those ideals—the Word made flesh—whose willingness to suffer and die brings salvation to an often wayward but nevertheless chosen people."

News stories about Americans thanking veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for their service have been numerous, often trying to compensate in some measure for the hostility Vietnam War veterans received (Bell 2016). The military consistently tops a list of ten occupational groups (including teachers, doctors, clergy, and scientists) in terms of its contribution to the well-being of society, and this support does not differ by gender, education, or age (Pew Research Center 2013). The American public also has more confidence that the military will act in the best interests of the public (80 percent), relative to the news media, business leaders, and elected officials; only 25 to 45 percent express confidence in these institutions (Johnson 2018).¹⁹

Despite this admiration expressed for mem-

bers of the armed forces, a national poll conducted in 1988 and 1989 showed an ambivalent picture about taking on this responsibility personally: almost all Americans said they were proud of the men and women who serve in the military, yet more than one in five nonveterans said that they would not want their children to do so (Holsti 2001). A 2011 Pew survey shows that this ambivalence has continued over decades: whereas three-quarters of veterans would recommend a career in the military, only about half of Americans who have a family member who served would advise a young person close to them to join the military, and only 43 percent of those without a military relative would agree with that advice (Pew Research Center 2011).²⁰ Admiration does not trump self-interest for all Americans, especially now that the end of the draft has concentrated military service in some communities and largely removed the experience of military service from others (Florida 2010; Pew Research Center 2011; Winnefeld and Schafer 2017).

At the same time, people can perform public service for their community and country in many other ways, informal and formal. Public servants range from post office employees to public school teachers to police officers, and programs explicitly designed for public service—such as the Park Rangers or Peace Corps—developed throughout the twentieth century. Of course, some of these are more directly aimed at conservation or humanitarianism, for example, or are more standard jobs for which employees draw regular salaries (and perhaps are not seen as deserving additional gratitude). In 2020, the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service completed its report that reviewed the selective service registration process (particularly with regard to the inclu-

18. Individuals are still required by the Constitution to serve if called upon, but they also have to serve on juries when requested, and citizenship was not offered to noncitizens for serving on a jury of their peers when this was still a common practice. Proposals have been made that voting or serving on juries would be excellent socialization tools that would create better citizens, but legislation to include noncitizens has met with limited success (DeSipio and de la Garza 1998).

19. Of those who expressed confidence in the military, 12 percent mentioned the selfless bravery of the volunteers willing to give up their lives as a reason for that confidence (Newport 2017).

20. Even if a choice had been made, support was mixed. A 2005 Gallup poll showed that only 51 percent of Americans chose support when asked, "If you had a son or daughter who was planning to enter the military, would you support that step or would you suggest a different occupation?" (Gallup 2018).

sion of women), and examined and recommended ways to “increase participation in military, national, and public service as a means to strengthen our nation” (Heck et al. 2019, 5). Although the very title of the commission lumps together different types of service, the main issue driving its creation was the military draft.

Little explicit comparison is made of military service with other types of public service in public discourse, even when *heroes* is a blanket term used to describe many of them.²¹ When President Bill Clinton’s call to service heralded the creation of AmeriCorps in 1993, the Clinton Foundation equated volunteering for the armed services with volunteering to be a member of AmeriCorps (Clinton Foundation 2013). However, in general, discussion of these types of public service does not associate them, and it is possible that ordinary citizens see military service as more of a sacrifice than other types of selflessness on behalf of the country. The casualty rates are different albeit not the highest (Planes 2014), and members of Congress and presidents have not seen all service as equal in their bills and executive orders. It is possible that Americans’ perceptions of the risk to one’s life involved in military service distinguishes it from AmeriCorps, or that they see the former as particularly patriotic.

However, military service does not seem to hold special status as a patriotic service in the public’s mind. In a 2008 Gallup poll, 62 percent of Americans thought serving in the U.S. military indicated that a person is patriotic “a great deal.”

However, voting was more universally seen as patriotic: 78 percent said that the act of voting indicated a person is patriotic “a great deal.” As a point of comparison, 53 percent thought the same for saying the pledge of allegiance and 28 percent for wearing an American flag pin (Morales 2008).²² And, according to a Pew poll, only 37 percent of Americans think that veterans are more patriotic than other people in the country (Taylor 2011). We come back to this issue of patriotic service in the conclusion.

What we examine next is whether ordinary Americans have the same views about the value of service and citizenship as their political institutions and leaders. Do they support allowing noncitizens to serve the country and granting citizenship for that service? Using experiments, we can also answer questions about whether the type of service (military or non-military) or the type of noncitizen (authorized or not) affects their opinions. We hypothesize that both will matter.

DATA AND MEASURES

The data used in this study are from the 2014 and 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES).²³ The questions and experiments, which were fielded on the post-election questionnaire in 2014 and on the pre- and post-election questionnaires in 2016, were administered to modules of a thousand respondents each year.²⁴ In 2014, 897 respondents completed the post-election wave questions; in 2016, a thousand respondents did.²⁵

21. One implicit equation of service arises from the list of individuals who can be excused from federal jury duty categorically: active duty members of the armed forces, police officers, firefighters, and public government of-ficers (U.S. Courts, n.d.).

22. Serving in the U.S. military is seen as patriotic by a majority of Republicans and Democrats and a majority of Americans of all ages and education levels. The same is not true for saying the pledge of allegiance or wear-ing an American flag pin.

23. The CCES was conducted by YouGov/Polimetrix, which recruits and maintains a large online panel of survey respondents. YouGov takes a target random sample of adults from the American Community Survey and matches each member of this target sample with people from their opt-in sample on a range of characteristics. The matched sample is then weighted using propensity scores to ensure that it is nationally representative. For more information, see <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu>, accessed August 3, 2020.

24. The pre-election survey is fielded in September and October, and the post-election survey is in the field in November.

25. The questions were originally tested using departmental subject pools. Because college students (and po-litical science undergraduates, in particular) can differ significantly from the general population in many ways,

In 2014, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

- 1a (A/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military.
- 1b If someone who is not an American citizen were to serve in the U.S. military, he should be granted American citizenship as a result of his service.
- 2a (A/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen should be allowed to serve in the Peace Corps.²⁶
- 2b If someone who is not an American citizen were to serve in the Peace Corps, he should be granted American citizenship as a result of his service.

Possible answers were agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.²⁷

This experiment includes two manipulations. The first treatment randomized the order of types of service about which respondents were asked: half were asked about noncitizen service in terms of military activities first; the other half were asked about nonmilitary activities (the Peace Corps) first. Given previous research on survey context, we hypothesized that order could matter: respondents could feel pressures to treat all types of service equally or to venerate military service more. The second treatment framed the questions in terms of whether the immigrants had documents: half of the respondents were asked about legal immigrants across the two types of service, and the other half were asked about undocumented immigrants across the two types of service. The

questions asking whether citizenship should be granted for service did not contain the word *legal* or *illegal*, although it was implied given that they immediately followed the questions about whether the two types of immigrants should be allowed to serve.

In 2014, we compared the Peace Corps with the military because it is a long-standing program that is relatively well known, and Peace Corps volunteers serve around the world, much like members of the U.S. military. However, one interpretation for potential differences in opinions about service in the military and service in the Peace Corps could be that the latter organization is focused on helping people in other countries more than the United States (although part of their mission is to foster greater knowledge and understanding among Americans). Both Peace Corps volunteers and U.S. soldiers can serve abroad, but the primary goal of the military is to protect the interests of the United States. The beneficiaries of the types of service being compared may not all be seen as Americans.

One alternative is public service in American Communities (which focuses on sending volunteers to American communities), in an agency whose name makes explicit the government affiliation and domestic focus (the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, given that people may not know that the Peace Corps is a program run by the U.S. government). If work explicitly on behalf of the United States and its citizens is what is rewarded, then noncitizens showing selflessness in other types of public service exclusively aimed to benefit Americans may garner the same support as noncitizen soldiers.

Another possible explanation for differences in opinion is that risk to life is what distinguishes service in the military from that in the Peace Corps. Few would dispute that Peace

we wanted to replicate the experiment. The samples of the CCES are nationally representative. For a comparison of the CCES with the American Community Survey across a number of demographic variables, see table A1.

26. Only U.S. citizens are currently allowed to serve in the Peace Corps.

27. The singular gendered language was chosen deliberately to get an upper-bound response by avoiding priming considerations of large numbers of immigrants and debates about women's participation in combat or selective service.

Corps and AmeriCorps volunteers often face hardship in impoverished conditions, but in general they do not have to worry about the risk of death in their work. Therefore, to learn whether military service is unique because of its potential dangers rather than because of who is helped, firefighting is added as an alternative type of service that involves greater physical risk and potentially life-threatening situations (Desmond 2011).²⁸

In the 2016 CCES, we replicated the experiment but switched Peace Corps to AmeriCorps and added firefighting as a third type of service.²⁹ The order in which respondents were asked about the types of service was randomized. We also added “legal or illegal” to the question wording about whether citizenship should be granted, just to make explicit that the question referred to the same type of immigrants asked about in the previous question.³⁰ In contrast to 2014, respondents could be asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement about immigrants with and without documents across the three types of service.

- 1a (A/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military.
- 1b If (a/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen were to serve in the U.S. military, he should be granted American citizenship as a result of his service.
- 2a (A/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen should be allowed to serve as a firefighter.
- 2b If (a/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen were

to serve as a firefighter, he should be granted American citizenship as a result of his service.

- 3a (A/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen should be allowed to serve in the AmeriCorps—a government-sponsored program to allow young people to serve in nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the United States.
- 3b If (a/n) (legal/illegal) resident of the United States who is not an American citizen were to serve in the AmeriCorps, he should be granted American citizenship as a result of his service.

We did not first ask whether respondents knew noncitizens could serve in these organizations before asking them their opinions. We assume that many Americans do not know the eligibility requirements for these organizations; we also assume that if they were told about the existing policies, some respondents would be influenced to agree with the status quo out of inertia, implicit support for government decision making and actions, or uncertainty arising from their ignorance about the relationship between citizenship and service. Although some respondents likely did know that legal resident soldiers were eligible for citizenship and supported it simply because of the status quo, many fewer would be primed and affected if information were not provided. To the extent possible, we wanted to measure attitudes about whether noncitizens should be allowed to serve, and whether they should be eligible for citizenship if they were to serve.³¹

28. First responders are often called heroes, and include firefighters, police officers, and paramedics. Police service was also considered as a possible treatment, but given the salience of Black Lives Matter and stories of police violence in the news in 2016, firefighting seemed better suited to garner the greatest positive affect.

29. The experiment with the new types of service was first tested using a university subject pool, and we had similar results to the ones reported here.

30. Depending on the location and position, AmeriCorps volunteers and firefighters do not have to be citizens.

31. We did ask about knowledge of and attitudes about eligibility for a variety of activities in the 2016 post-election wave, which we will discuss.

ANALYSIS: WHO CAN SERVE THE UNITED STATES?

A majority of Americans believe that legal immigrants should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military, the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and as firefighters (support ranges from 53 to 60 percent). Americans do not differentiate much between types of public service when it comes to deciding who should be allowed to serve. Despite concerns expressed in historical congressional debates about fears of espionage by noncitizens and perceptions that noncitizens might be unqualified for the work required in the armed forces, no evidence indicates that the public is less willing to let noncitizens into the military (versus the Peace Corps, for example).³²

However, respondents do make a clear distinction between immigrants who were authorized to enter the country and those who were not. In 2014, only about a third of respondents thought that undocumented immigrants should be allowed to serve in the military or the Peace Corps. The public was only slightly more tolerant in 2016: between 38 and 43 percent of respondents thought undocumented immigrants should be allowed to serve in the military, in AmeriCorps, or as firefighters. In other words, a majority of Americans believe that legal immigrants should be allowed to serve regardless of the type of service; for immigrants who entered the country without documents, regardless of the type of service, a majority of Americans oppose their participation.³³

Figure 1 shows the means and 95 percent confidence intervals for responses to the ques-

tions about service. The outcomes were 5-point scales, with agreement that noncitizens should be allowed to serve scored low (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree). The legality treatment is statistically significant for all five outcome measures, the differences ranging from 0.5 to 0.79 ($p < .000$).³⁴

The order in which respondents were asked about their attitudes did not have a statistically significant effect on their responses. Support for noncitizen service was the same in 2014, for example, regardless of whether someone was asked about the Peace Corps or military service first. In other words, no evidence indicates any social desirability bias (to treat all types of service equally, for example), nor does framing these types of service as comparable lead to more similar responses.

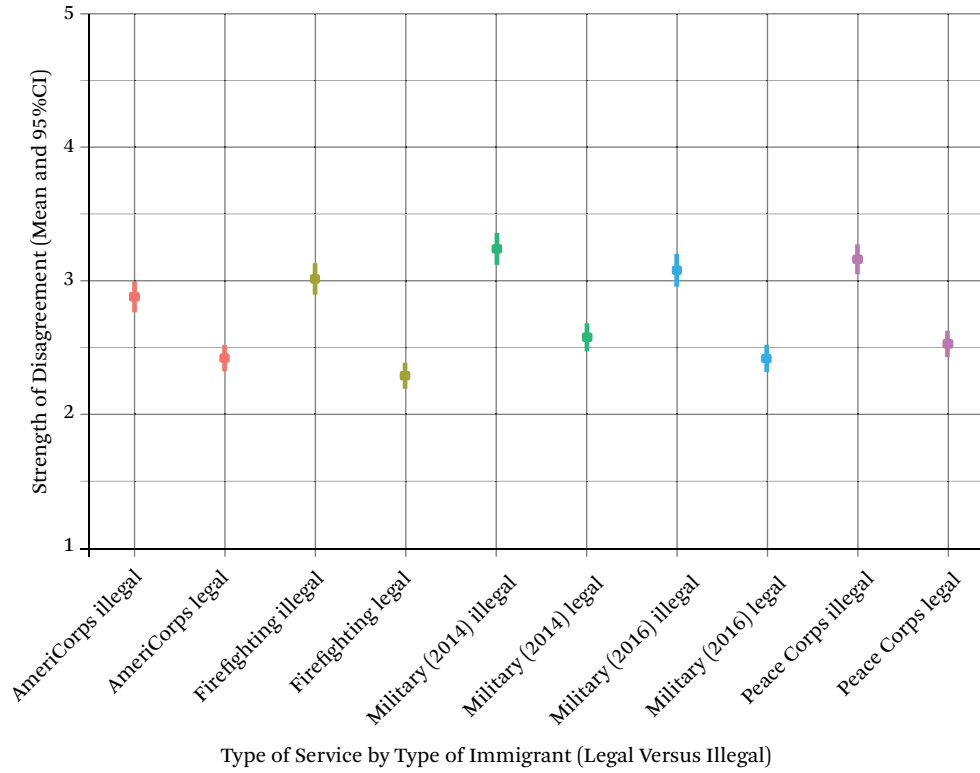
ANALYSIS: SHOULD CITIZENSHIP BE GIVEN FOR SERVICE?

Should service be rewarded with membership in the national community? Does gratitude for service merit citizenship? With respect to citizenship, respondents do differentiate between the types of public service. In 2014 and 2016, 61 percent and 68 percent, respectively, said legal immigrants who served in the military should be eligible to apply for citizenship, but only 35 percent said the same about legal immigrants who served in the Peace Corps, 38 percent about AmeriCorps, and 45 percent about firefighters. Opinion also differs about rewarding the service of undocumented immigrants, depending on what kind of sacrifice was made: a majority said undocumented immigrant soldiers should be eligible for citizenship, but only

32. Comparing attitudes about whether noncitizens should be allowed to serve—ignoring the legal-illegal manipulation—in the military and Peace Corps in 2014 and in the military, AmeriCorps, and as firefighters in 2016, paired t-tests show no statistically significant differences.

33. Exploratory analyses regressing support for immigrant service in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, firehouses, and the military on respondents' characteristics show that greater education and identifying as Democrat were related to more support ($p < .01$). Other variables included in the multivariate models that were not consistently statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$ included income, age, gender, race-ethnicity, being a veteran, living in the South, or living in a border state. Analyses not shown here.

34. Confidence intervals for both figure 1 and figure 2 were calculated using design-based standard errors (HC2) from linear regression models excluding intercepts following best practices in the analysis of randomized experiments (Gerber and Green 2012).

Figure 1. Should Noncitizens Be Allowed to Serve the United States?

Source: 2014 and 2016 CCES.

Note: Means and 95 percent confidence intervals for questions about service.

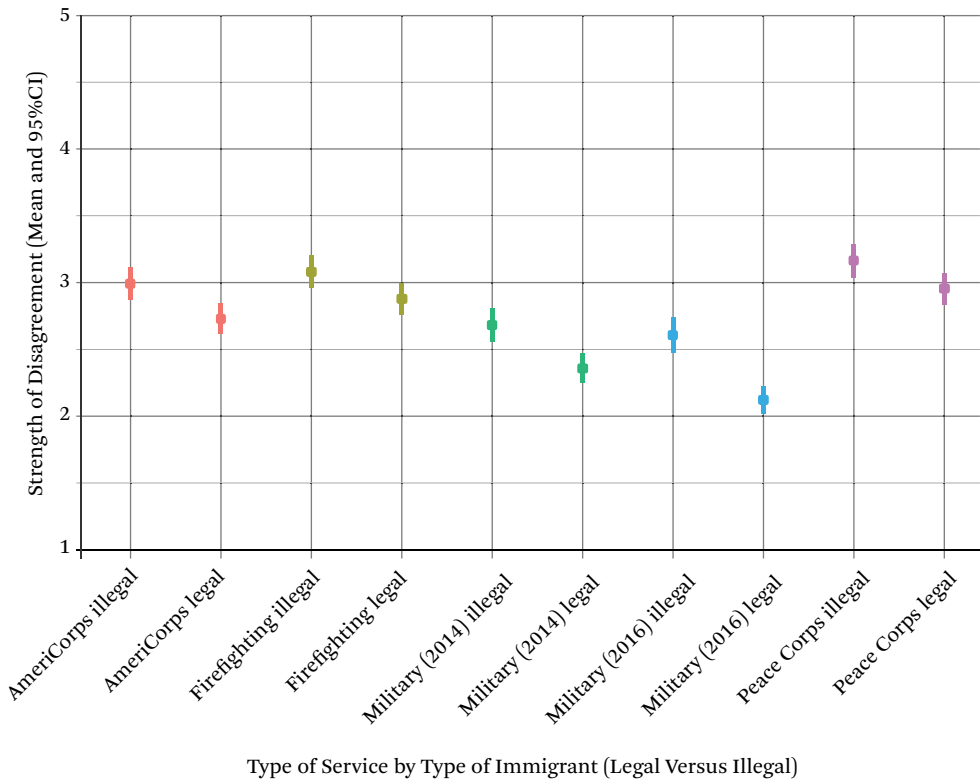
about a third agreed that undocumented immigrant Peace Corps and AmeriCorps volunteers and firefighters should be eligible.

Figure 2 shows the mean scores and 95 percent confidence intervals for attitudes about whether immigrants—documented or not—should be granted citizenship if they served in the U.S. Armed Forces, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, or as firefighters. As for the questions about service, the outcomes were 5-point scales, with agreement that citizenship should be granted for service scored low. The legality treatment is statistically significant for all five outcome measures, the differences ranging from 0.2 to 0.48 ($p < .02$).

The order in which people were asked about citizenship for service had some effects, although a clear pattern is difficult to discern. For example, in 2014, respondents asked about military service first were more likely to agree that

noncitizen soldiers should be granted citizenship for service than if they had been asked about Peace Corps volunteers first (and this difference is statistically significant, $p < .000$). One might interpret that to mean that citizenship is less likely to be seen as a special reward for military service if other types of service have been made salient first. In contrast, question order had no effect on responses about citizenship for Peace Corps volunteers, so respondents did not feel the need to treat both types of service similarly. An F -test shows that in 2016, only attitudes about citizenship for AmeriCorps service are significantly affected by order ($p < .04$), but the substantive story is unclear; respondents asked about citizenship for AmeriCorps first were most in support of citizenship for that service, and support is diminished if it was asked third after citizenship for both military service and firefighting, in that particular

Figure 2. Should Noncitizens Be Given Citizenship for Service?



Source: 2014 and 2016 CCES.

Note: Means and 95 percent confidence intervals for questions about service.

order (but not when firefighting was asked before military service).³⁵

In both 2014 and 2016, even among respondents who said that undocumented immigrants should not be allowed to serve in the armed services, more than 31 percent agreed that if they were to serve, they should be eligible for citizenship. In other words, military service trumps misgivings about legal status for some. As a point of comparison, fewer than one in six who opposed service by noncitizens in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and firefighting thought service should nevertheless be grounds for naturalization. Also, military service is seen by a vast majority as worthy of citizenship: in 2014 and 2016, only 6 and 5 percent, respectively, of those who thought non-

citizens should be allowed to serve in the armed forces thought this service should not lead to naturalization.

In the CCES data, Americans clearly differentiate between the U.S. armed forces and other types of service when it comes to granting citizenship for that service. They still make some distinctions between soldiers who entered the country legally and illegally, though a majority supports naturalization after military service, regardless of legal status. In contrast, people’s opinions do not differ about reward for other types of service, regardless of whether immigrants entered the country with or without documents. Only a third believed working for the Peace Corps, for example—whose volunteers serve two years “under condi-

35. In 2014, respondents were randomized to receive the military service battery first or the Peace Corps battery first. In 2016, the order of each of the kinds of service was randomized, yielding six orders; thus we used an *F*-test to assess the overall effect of the order-manipulation.

tions of hardship if necessary”—should lead to naturalization for noncitizens.³⁶

What Is Service on Behalf of the Nation: Investor Visas?

One might argue that serving in the military is unique because it is so clearly service in the national interest, whereas serving in the AmeriCorps or as a firefighter benefits a local community. Another question in the 2016 CCES asked whether immigrants who contribute to the national economy—via capital and job creation—should be allowed to enter the country. Currently, immigrants can apply for a temporary E-2 visa (which can be renewed multiple times) or an EB-5 green card, which provides for temporary or provisionally permanent immigrant status with an investment in the U.S. economy. Because the EB-5 has the more stringent requirements (for example, investment of \$500,000 to \$1 million), the survey question used the larger amount to better gauge the greatest potential public support for the policy. In particular, respondents were randomly assigned to be asked one of the following questions:

A foreigner should be allowed to immigrate to the United States if he invests roughly \$1 million in an American business and creates ten full-time jobs for U.S. workers.

A foreigner should be allowed to immigrate to the United States and potentially become an American citizen if he invests roughly \$1 million in an American business and creates ten full-time jobs for U.S. workers.

Our experiment, priming respondents to think about citizenship via the addition of the phrase “and potentially become an American citizen,” had null results: 29 percent agree without the mention of citizenship and 28 percent

agree with it. The rest of the respondents—again for both versions—are evenly split between opposition and a neutral “neither agree nor disagree” position.

One could argue that job creation and capital investment help the American economy and therefore the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, regardless of whether contributing to the economy is seen as service on behalf of the nation, Americans are ambivalent about letting entrepreneurial immigrants come into the country, even on a temporary basis.

What Do Americans Think and Know About the Rights and Duties of Noncitizens?

Another interpretation of the results does not pertain to how people view the value of service and citizenship. Respondents may know about the existing policies, and their answers may be driven by knowledge of the status quo rather than by animus toward undocumented immigrants or preferential status for the military. For example, although we find strong differences in opinion about whether noncitizens should be allowed to serve in any capacity, depending on their legal status, the finding could simply reflect what they believe to be current practices. Also, respondents could be aware that service does not, for example, lead to naturalization generally.

Therefore, we wanted to know both how widespread knowledge was about the ability of noncitizens to serve in the military and what Americans thought about the policy. Because we did not want to prime respondents before they were asked the survey experiment in the 2016 pre-election survey, however, we included questions about eligibility in a different wave of the survey.³⁷

In the 2016 post-election wave of the CCES, respondents were asked two batteries of questions on whether citizenship should be required

36. Exploratory analyses regressing support for citizenship for service on characteristics of survey respondents show that partisanship was the only consistently significant predictor of support, Democrats being much more likely than Republicans to believe citizenship should be granted for service. Variables that were not consistently statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$ in the multivariate models included income, age, being a veteran, gender, race-ethnicity, living in the South, or living in a border state. Analyses not shown here.

37. One consequence of this ordering is that the level of knowledge may be overestimated, since respondents received cues about the military service of immigrants in the earlier wave. Some respondents may have looked up information about the topic or discussed it with someone in their social network between waves.

Table 1. Which Activity Does or Should Require Citizenship to Participate?

	Requires Citizenship	Should Require Citizenship
Voting in elections (federal)	83	85
Volunteering in the Peace Corps	20	25
Donating money to the American Red Cross	7	11
Donating money to a political campaign	19	49
Serving as a public school teacher	36	53
Serving in the U.S. military	39	53
Serving on a jury	74	76
Serving as a firefighter	29	38
Paying taxes	27	28

Source: 2016 CCES.

Note: The order of the batteries about the current state of the law and respondents’ preferences were randomized.

for certain acts or positions, and whether citizenship is currently required for an identical set of acts and positions. The order in which respondents received the batteries was randomized so that we could determine whether responses were driven by what respondents believed was the current state of the law. The wording of the first question was “We want to see how much Americans know off the top of their heads about American citizenship. Please answer the following question quickly, without looking up the answers. Which of the following requires American citizenship.” The wording of the second was “For the following question, we want to see what you think should be the policy, not what is currently the law or practice. Which of the following do you think should require American citizenship.” The list included the following items: voting in elections (for the president or members of Congress), volunteering in the Peace Corps, donating money to the American Red Cross, donating money to a political campaign, serving as a public school teacher, serving in the U.S. military, serving on a jury, serving as a firefighter, and paying taxes.

Americans seem to know the laws regarding eligibility to serve in various organizational capacities. A clear majority of Americans knows that voting in federal elections and serving on a jury require citizenship and agree with this

requirement. A majority believes that none of the other activities require citizenship, and they are correct for all except the Peace Corps (see table 1).

In general, their beliefs about what activities require citizenship and which they think should require citizenship line up; for example, only 27 percent think that citizenship is required for paying taxes, and 28 percent believe citizenship should be required. In a few instances, Americans disagree with current laws. Legal permanent residents are currently allowed to donate money to political campaigns, and a majority of Americans seem to know that citizenship is not required (that is, fewer than one in five Americans thought only citizens could donate money to a political campaign); however, 49 percent believe only citizens should be allowed to give money to campaigns. Also, only about a third of Americans think that citizenship is required to be a public school teacher or serve in the U.S. military (36 and 39 percent, respectively); nevertheless, a majority believe that only American citizens should be allowed to teach in public schools and serve in the armed forces (53 percent for both activities). In other words, Americans would like more restrictive laws when it comes to political money, public schools, and the U.S. military.³⁸

38. Attitudes about military service are quite stable. Responses to the same question asked in the 2014 and 2016 CCES were very similar (46 percent and 50 percent, respectively, agreed that noncitizens should be allowed to

These results make it clear that Americans are not making decisions about the values of service and citizenship based on inertia. A majority believe that service (in the Peace Corps, military, and as firefighters) does not require citizenship; a majority also believe that their perception of the status quo is normatively correct for the Peace Corps and firefighting. However, even though they believe citizenship should not be required for these types of service, they do not then believe that service should lead to citizenship.

A little more than half of Americans think that citizenship should be required for serving in the U.S. military when asked in a battery of other civic rights and responsibilities in the post-election survey, but a majority also know that it is not currently required. It is clear that knowledge of the status quo alone does not seem to be driving Americans' opinions about who should be able to serve and who should get citizenship from that service.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analyses of two national surveys yield two main results. First, the legal status of immigrants makes a big difference in determining whether Americans believe they should be allowed to serve the nation. Regardless of the type of service, similar proportions of survey respondents thought legal immigrants should be allowed to join—and that undocumented immigrants should be barred from—the military, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and firefighting. Even if noncitizens are offering to provide benefits to the nation, Americans are reluctant to allow individuals who were not authorized to enter the country to serve, possibly because “illegal immigrants” and related stereotypes trigger strong negative affect (Wright, Levy, and Citrin 2016).

Second, military service is seen as different from the other types of service in terms of its

worth; a majority of Americans believes that only service in the U.S. armed forces is worth citizenship, and this support for *jus meritum* is true whether the immigrant was authorized to enter the country or not. This special status given to military service does not seem to be a result of it being a risky job, benefiting only Americans, or involving work around the globe; otherwise, firefighting, serving in AmeriCorps, or serving in the Peace Corps should be seen as similarly worthy of gratitude.

Investing financially in the country could also be seen as a service to a nation (Baubock 2018). However, our survey evidence shows that fewer than a third of Americans support the immigration (or future naturalization) of foreign nationals willing to invest \$1 million in the U.S. economy. The number of countries around the world from which investors can now “buy citizenship” is growing (Millington 2018), but the American public, at least, does not see an infusion of cash and jobs into the American marketplace as a service worthy of earning membership in the nation.

So why are Americans willing to grant citizenship to immigrants only for military service? It is not because this practice is simply familiar and therefore accepted: precedence does not explain why Americans think some civic acts should or should not require citizenship in our 2016 data. It also seems tautological to say that it is because military service is different. It has not been seen as a uniquely patriotic act, nor as more inextricably linked with citizenship in past public opinion polls. However, asking Americans whether a list of activities are indicative of patriotism may not be able to capture the differences perceived between voting—which is seen as more patriotic, but generally involves no more than one day in a year—and service in the military, which involves years in someone's life.³⁹

One preliminary clue that military service

serve, independent of the legality treatment). In the 2016 pre-election survey, 50 percent disagreed or were undecided (on a 5-point scale) about whether noncitizens should be allowed to serve; in the 2016 post-election survey, 53 percent said only citizens should be allowed to serve, given a dichotomous choice.

39. The research on the enactment of identity and noun labels versus behavior or action-adjectives may help make clear the distinction between being patriotic and being a patriot, the latter being of greater importance and requiring greater investment (Walton and Banaji 2004; Bryan et al. 2011).

has a different status comes from an open-ended question we included in the 2016 CCES. Half of the respondents were asked to name some of the people who come to mind when they hear the word *patriot*. They were allowed to give up to three examples, real or fictional, historical or contemporary. The roughly five hundred respondents gave 1,097 answers. Almost half named a president, 12 percent named someone in the military, and 9 percent mentioned another politician. These were the most common categories, and given the number of presidents (such as Washington and Kennedy) and politicians (such as Powell or McCain) who are well known for their military service, it highlights how often an identified *patriot* is a

soldier and political leader. Some others were named, but they were rarely (and likely never) chosen simply because they voted, wore an American flag pin, served in the Peace Corps, or were a firefighter. If one assumes that patriots deserve citizenship (or that it is required by definition), then the common understanding of patriotism may provide part of an understanding for why only military service deserves citizenship, why people are willing to overlook a lack of documents in granting citizenship to soldiers, and why for only this type of service can the relationship between membership and obligations be reversed. Obviously, this quick look only scratches the surface and more research is needed.

Table A1. Comparison of the CCES Modules and the American Community Survey, 2014 and 2016

	2014 ACS	2014 CCCES	2016 ACS	2016 CCCES
Female (%)	51	54	51	52
BA or postgraduate (%)	29	32	30	29
Black (%)	13	12	13	13
White (%)	74	75	73	73
Hispanic (%)	17	10	17	10
Median age	37	54	38	45
Veteran (%)	9	18	8	11

Source: 2014 and 2016 CCES; 2014 and 2016 American Community Survey.

Note: The CCES refers to the thousand person modules that contained the questions about service.

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