CITIZENSHIP AND INDIGENOUS CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: DRAWING INSIGHTS FROM BEST PRACTICES IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT
This paper delves into the intricacies of Nigerian citizenship, particularly the indigene-settler dilemma, by drawing parallels with the U.S. citizenship model. The study utilizes secondary data and content analysis to explore the complex interplay of belonging, rights, and identity in American citizenship, highlighting the role of birthright citizenship as stipulated by the 14th Amendment. This U.S. principle, prioritizing birthplace over lineage, contrasts with the descent-based approaches prevalent in Nigeria and some other countries. The analysis reveals that the U.S. model, by automatically conferring citizenship to those born on its soil regardless of parental heritage, fosters inclusivity and national integration. This paper suggests that Nigeria could benefit from a more inclusive citizenship model that combines elements of birthplace and lineage. By adopting lessons from the U.S., including the emphasis on inclusivity and rights-based citizenship, Nigeria could address its indigene-settler conflicts more effectively. This study makes a significant contribution to the literature by providing a comparative analysis of citizenship models, highlighting the potential benefits of the U.S. approach for Nigeria. Unlike previous studies that may focus solely on Nigerian citizenship issues or U.S. citizenship in isolation, this research uniquely bridges the two contexts to offer a fresh perspective on how Nigeria might reform its citizenship policies. The recommendations propose a nuanced approach to citizenship in Nigeria, aiming for policies that support national unity and integration, drawing on the U.S. experience as a potential guide for reform. By examining the successful elements of the U.S. model, this paper provides a roadmap for Nigeria to enhance its citizenship framework, promoting greater inclusivity and social cohesion.

Introduction

Nigeria grapples with intricate challenges regarding citizenship, the indigene-settler dichotomy, and the quest for national integration, a discourse enriched by insights from American citizenship practices. Citizenship, as a fundamental aspect of belonging, grants both rights and responsibilities within a nation (Marshall, 1950). While the United States adopts a birthright approach to citizenship, wherein anyone born within its borders is deemed a citizen (Bosniak, 2000a), Nigeria's citizenship framework intertwines birthright with indigenous lineage, influencing the status of individuals born to Nigerian parents or grandparents abroad. The dichotomy between indigenes and settlers within Nigeria amplifies the issue of discrimination against non-indigenous individuals (Bello, 2019). This discrimination persists despite their substantial contributions to Nigeria's progress, posing a stark contrast to the inclusive ethos inherent in citizenship principles. Such disparities call for a critical reassessment of Nigeria's citizenship framework to ensure equity and inclusivity.

National integration, akin to America's ethos of unity amid diversity, remains a formidable challenge in Nigeria (Musa, 2023). Although Nigeria has instituted integration initiatives resembling American practices—such as Unity Schools and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)—ethnic diversity, religious extremism, and leadership shortcomings impede effective integration (Asaju&Egberi, 2015a, Musa, 2023). While Nigeria's constitutional provisions mirror established democracies like the United States in ensuring fundamental rights, the practical application often falls short, perpetuating divisions instead of fostering unity (Weissbrodt& Danielson, 2004 a,b).

This paper delves into the nuances of citizenship, the indigene-settler dynamic, and national integration in Nigeria, leveraging insights from American practices to illuminate potential avenues for enhancing inclusivity, unity, and equity within the Nigerian socio-political landscape. While existing literature has extensively explored the dichotomy between indigenes and settlers (Bello, 2019) and the challenges of national integration (Musa, 2023), there remains a gap in comparative analysis that draws lessons from the U.S. citizenship model. This study addresses this gap by examining the principles of birthright citizenship and inclusivity in the U.S., proposing that Nigeria could benefit from adopting similar elements to resolve its indigene-settler conflicts.

This paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a novel comparative perspective, highlighting the potential benefits of integrating U.S. citizenship principles into Nigerian policy. Unlike previous studies that focus on either Nigerian citizenship issues or U.S. practices in isolation, this paper uniquely bridges the two contexts. It provides a fresh viewpoint on how Nigeria might reform its citizenship policies to foster greater inclusivity and national unity. By critically analyzing the U.S. model, this study creates a new scholarship that suggests practical policy recommendations for Nigeria, advocating for a citizenship framework that combines birthplace and lineage elements to enhance social cohesion and integration.

Conceptualising Citizenship Question, Indigene-Settler, National Integration and Best Practices

The concept of citizenship, a subject of extensive discourse among scholars, holds multifaceted interpretations within the social sciences. IGI Global (2023) defines citizenship as membership in a political community, signifying equal status among citizens regarding associated rights and duties. The Center for the Study of Citizenship (2023) perceives citizenship as a legal status delineating an individual's relations with a state, encompassing legal, economic, and cultural practices that establish competence within society (Bosniak, 2000). This relationship signifies reciprocal rights and obligations between the individual and the state (Lister, 2012; Heywood, 1994). Marshall (1950) elucidates citizenship's constitution by three dimensions: civil, political, and social rights, encompassing liberties, political participation, and economic welfare, respectively. Neglecting these rights may evoke the citizenship question, signifying a challenge to fundamental rights, often resulting in agitation from affected individuals or groups. Weissbrodt and Danielson (2004) emphasize citizenship's implication of permanent allegiance, and Lija (2011) underscores citizenship's embodiment of legal status, political recognition, and associated rights and obligations within a community.

The indigene-settler concept is equally multifaceted and subject to diverse interpretations. Its lack of a universally accepted definition mirrors the array of viewpoints among scholars who have extensively researched this

complex notion. Okonjo (2016) dissects the socio-political implications of the indigene-settler dichotomy, meticulously examining its historical underpinnings and contemporary relevance. Adesina's (2018) comparative study explores the nexus between indigeneity and citizenship in Nigeria within a global context, illuminating both commonalities and disparities. Igwe (2020) delves into how ethnicity perpetuates the indigene-settler divide and its reverberations on citizenship rights and societal unity. Uche's (2019) historical scrutiny traces the evolutionary path of indigene-settler relations in Nigeria, offering valuable insights into its historical trajectory. Meanwhile, Okafor (2017) scrutinizes the dynamic interplay between citizenship, indigenous rights, and the indigene-settler paradigm, analyzing its profound impact on societal structures. Collectively, these scholarly perspectives navigate the historical, social, and political dimensions of the indigene-settler dichotomy, providing nuanced insights into its origins, development, and intricate implications for citizenship and societal cohesion in Nigeria.

National integration, synonymous with national cohesion or unity, signifies the harmonization of diverse societal elements within a territorial boundary (Musa, 2023). Duverger(1976) defines national integration as the unifying process aimed at establishing harmonious relationships based on an equitable social order. It seeks to foster unity amidst societal diversity, ensuring equitable lifestyles without sacrificing established principles (Musa, 2023). Ogunjenite (cited in Ojo, 2009) perceives national integration as nation-building amid incongruent socio-economic, religious, ethnic, and geographical elements. Asaju and Egberi (2015) see it as the cultivation of a shared identity among citizens, while Bello-Imam (1987) views it as the harmonious coexistence of diverse social groups. In Nigeria, government initiatives like Unity Schools, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and policies promoting unity aim to foster national integration (Musa, 2023). Despite these efforts, challenges such as ethnic diversity, religious extremism, and leadership failure persistently hinder integration.

The concept of "best practices" in citizenship often refers to policies, initiatives, or strategies that effectively foster inclusivity, address social divisions, and promote equal rights and opportunities for all citizens within a country. Best practices, formulated through trial and error, offer effective approaches for seamless operations (Wright, 2022). These references cover various aspects of citizenship, indigene-settler issues, and strategies for fostering national integration, providing comprehensive insights into this multifaceted subject.

Despite extensive literature on citizenship, indigene-settler dynamics, and national integration, there remains a gap in comparative analyses that draw lessons from different global contexts to address local challenges. This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the U.S. birthright citizenship model's inclusivity and its potential application to the Nigerian context. The study contributes to existing scholarship by proposing a novel perspective that combines elements of both birthplace and lineage-based citizenship. By leveraging insights from American practices, the paper suggests innovative policy recommendations for Nigeria, advocating for a more inclusive citizenship framework that can mitigate the indigene-settler dichotomy and foster national integration.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial Theory, pioneered by scholars such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and HomiBhabha, provides a critical lens for examining the enduring impacts of colonialism on societies and cultures, including Nigeria (Said, 1978; Fanon, 1963). This theoretical framework emphasizes the complex dynamics of power, identity, and representation in postcolonial contexts (Bhabha, 1994). Central to Postcolonial Theory is the recognition of the lasting legacies of colonialism, which continue to shape social, political, and cultural landscapes long after formal independence (Said, 1978). In the Nigerian context, the legacy of British colonial rule has had profound effects on indigenous communities (Achebe, 1958). The imposition of colonial borders, land dispossession, cultural assimilation, and marginalization have left lasting scars on indigenous populations (Musa, 2023; Achebe, 1958). As Chinua Achebe depicted in his novel "Things Fall Apart," the arrival of colonial powers disrupted traditional ways of life and undermined indigenous governance structures (Achebe, 1958). This disruption continues to reverberate in contemporary struggles for citizenship and indigenous rights in Nigeria.

Postcolonial Theory also foregrounds the dynamics of power and resistance, highlighting how colonial encounters generate processes of

both domination and resistance (Fanon, 1963). Frantz Fanon, in his seminal work "The Wretched of the Earth," analyzed the psychological and existential effects of colonialism on colonized peoples, emphasizing the transformative potential of anti-colonial resistance (Fanon, 1963). Indigenous communities in Nigeria have historically resisted colonial oppression through various forms of cultural preservation, political mobilization, and legal advocacy. The ongoing struggles of indigenous groups such as the Ogoni and the Igbo attest to the enduring legacy of resistance in postcolonial Nigeria. However, Postcolonial Theory has faced criticisms for its potential to perpetuate Eurocentric perspectives and neglect the agency and diversity of non-Western societies, as noted by scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988). This critique underscores the importance of adopting a nuanced and inclusive approach to understanding indigenous experiences within the framework of Postcolonial Theory. Additionally, Postcolonial Theory has been faulted for overlooking gender and intersectionality, particularly concerning the experiences of indigenous women, further highlighting the need for a more comprehensive analysis (Spivak, 1988).

In the context of citizenship and indigenous challenges in Nigeria, Postcolonial Theory offers valuable insights into the historical roots of marginalization and discrimination faced by indigenous communities. By examining how colonial legacies divided rather than united the people they colonized (Musa, 2023), and how these legacies continue to shape contemporary struggles for citizenship and indigenous rights, researchers can highlight the structural inequalities persisting within Nigerian society. Colonialism in Nigeria differed significantly from that in the United States. While both countries experienced colonization, the processes and outcomes were markedly different, shaped by the specific goals, methods, and impacts of the colonial powers involved. A significant disparity between Nigeria and the United States lies in the legal and political frameworks governing indigenous rights and citizenship. In Nigeria, indigenous communities often lack adequate legal recognition and protection, leading to marginalization and discrimination in accessing resources and political representation.Conversely, the United States has a multifaceted legal system acknowledging the sovereignty and rights of Native American tribes, although challenges persist in their implementation and enforcement, particularly concerning land disputes and jurisdictional conflicts (Spivak, 1988). Moreover, differences in socio-economic contexts contribute to distinct experiences of citizenship and indigenous challenges in Nigeria and the United States. In Nigeria, factors such as rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and socio-political instability exacerbate existing inequalities and tensions between indigenous communities and the state. Conversely, the United States contends with issues such as economic disparities, healthcare access, and educational attainment among indigenous populations, reflecting broader systemic injustices rooted in colonialism and structural racism (Spivak, 1988).

This paper adopts Postcolonial Theory to offer a critical comparative analysis of citizenship frameworks in Nigeria and the United States. By drawing on the theory's emphasis on historical context, power dynamics, and resistance, this study aims to illuminate the ways colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary citizenship practices and indigenous rights. This approach extends existing scholarship by not only applying Postcolonial Theory to the Nigerian context but also by drawing meaningful parallels with the U.S. model to suggest potential pathways for reform.

By examining the U.S. birthright citizenship model's inclusivity and its potential application to Nigeria, this paper contributes to theory development by proposing a nuanced adaptation of Postcolonial Theory that considers the specific socio-political contexts of different countries. This study underscores the importance of centering indigenous perspectives and voices in policy discussions and decision-making processes. Collaborative approaches that prioritize indigenous self-determination, cultural revitalization, and land rights are indispensable for addressing citizenship and indigenous challenges in Nigeria in ways that are attuned to the needs and aspirations of indigenous communities.

This paper however critiques and extends Postcolonial Theory by integrating best practices from the U.S. model of citizenship. It proposes innovative policy recommendations for Nigeria, advocating for a more inclusive citizenship framework that can mitigate the indigene-settler dichotomy and foster national integration. This approach not only enriches the theoretical discourse but also offers practical solutions for contemporary issues in Nigerian society.

Dynamics of Citizenship and the Problem of National Integration in Nigeria: An Analytical Review

The concept of citizenship within Nigeria's sociopolitical context remains a topic of fervent scholarly discussion, lending itself to various interpretations. As posited by IGI Global (2023a), citizenship is defined as membership within a political community, bestowing individuals with rights and obligations. This status endows citizens with legal, social, and economic entitlements, fostering an egalitarian society (Center for the Study of Citizenship, 2023; Bosniak, 2000a). Noteworthy scholars like Lister (2012a) and Heywood (1994b) underscore the reciprocity inherent in citizenship, emphasizing the reciprocal obligations between the individual and the state. Marshall's influential work (1950) delineates citizenship along three crucial dimensions: civil, political, and social rights. The denial of these rights often sparks the citizenship question, challenging fundamental individual or group rights and potentially leading to social unrest (Weissbrodt& Danielson, 2004a,b; Lija, 2011).

National integration, synonymous with societal cohesion, involves the intricate process of harmonizing diverse societal elements within Nigeria's territorial boundaries. Musa (2023) equates national integration with a unifying process aimed at establishing equitable societal harmony. Duverger (1976b) emphasizes the objective of national integration as fostering harmonious relations based on an established social order, ensuring unity amid societal diversity.

Scholars such as Asaju&Egberi (2015) and Bello-Imam (1987b) highlight the significance of national integration in cultivating a shared identity among citizens and fostering harmonious coexistence among diverse social groups. Nigerian government initiatives, exemplified by Unity Schools and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), strive to bolster national integration (Musa, 2023). However, persistent challenges such as ethnic diversity, religious extremism, and leadership failures hamper effective integration efforts (Ojo, 2009; Asaju&Egberi, 2015b).

Concerning Nigerian citizenship rights, the constitutional framework mirrors established democracies like the United States, ensuring the enjoyment of civic and fundamental human rights across the nation. These rights encompass voting, employment, education, property ownership, religious freedom, and freedom of speech. Despite these provisions, numerous Nigerians find themselves detached from their presumed regions of origin, striving for recognition as legitimate citizens in their perceived home regions. Adding complexity to this issue are groups within Nigeria facing discrimination as "settlers," despite their enduring familial connections to the land, spanning generations without clear knowledge of their ancestors' migration origins.

A pivotal identifier in Nigeria is proving indigenous status via an "official document of indigeneity." Individuals unable to establish such ties face discrimination across the federation, being denied rights and opportunities at various administrative levels. This scenario, despite their significant contributions to the state's development, especially post-1999 democracy (Pongri, 2003), necessitates a critical review of the definition and characteristics of Nigerian citizenship.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria delineates distinct citizenship categories—by birth, registration, and naturalization (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: 15). Citizenship by birth encompasses individuals born in Nigeria before or after independence to Nigerian citizen parents or grandparents belonging to indigenous communities. Citizenship by registration entails acquiring citizenship by adhering to the country's laws, often necessitating movement to one's supposed "state of origin." Conversely, citizenship by naturalization applies to individuals recognized as Nigerian citizens despite lacking indigenous ties.

However, the practical application of citizenship rights confronts challenges. The emphasis on indigeneity for various aspects like admission, employment, and political appointments affects even those seeking naturalization. Curiously, becoming a naturalized citizen requires acceptance by the local community and assimilation into their specific way of life, paradoxically integrating them into a Nigerian community rather than recognizing them as Nigerian citizens at large (FRN, section 27(2d)). This implementation discrepancy undermines inclusivity, reinforcing divisions among citizens. Bello (2019) critically assesses the constitution's stress on community

indigeneity, highlighting its impact on admission and opportunities, thereby questioning the essence of Nigerian citizenship. This intricate citizenship framework, categorized by birth, registration, and naturalization, establishes a hierarchical citizenry structure, where residents with indigenous ties are first-class citizens, those with ties to other states are second-class, and individuals lacking indigenous proof but recognized as full-fledged citizens constitute the third class. However, the practicality of enjoying rights as stipulated by the constitution does not align with this categorization, necessitating a critical reevaluation of the citizenship framework to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all Nigerians.

Interrogating Citizenship in Nigeria: A Complex Intertwining of Birthright and Dual Allegiances

The concept of citizenship in Nigeria presents unique challenges compared to countries like the United States. This paper interrogates and dissects relevant literature to understand the multifaceted nature of Nigerian citizenship, particularly focusing on issues of indigeneity, legal frameworks, and the sociopolitical implications of dual citizenship.

i. **Citizenship by Birth and Dual Citizenship:** Bello (2019) points out that Nigerian citizenship by birth is predominantly determined by the birthplace of one's father or grandfather, rather than the individual's actual birthplace. This raises critical questions about the legitimacy and loyalty of those with dual citizenship, particularly during times of national turmoil. This framework contrasts sharply with the automatic conferral of citizenship by birth in the US and UK, which does not consider the origin of the parents or grandparents. Bello's analysis prompts an examination of the possible divided loyalties among dual citizens, which warrants further exploration to understand its impact on national security and societal cohesion.

ii. **Constitutional Parameters and Historical Ambiguities:** The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, particularly in Chapter III, Section 25, outlines citizenship by birth, emphasizing lineage from indigenous Nigerian communities. However, ambiguities arise concerning the citizenship status of communities integrated into Nigeria post-independence, such as those from the German Territories (British Northern Cameroons) in 1961. This lack of clarity necessitates a review of historical incorporations and their legal implications on contemporary citizenship rights. The constitution's silence on these post-independence communities highlights the need for updated legal interpretations to address modern citizenship challenges.

iii. **Cultural and Linguistic Interdependencies:** Nigerian citizenship is further complicated by cultural, linguistic, and traditional interdependencies among tribes and ethnic groups, both within and beyond Nigeria's borders. For instance, the Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, and Yoruba tribes share deep cultural ties with communities in neighboring countries like Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and Benin. This interconnectedness blurs the lines of citizenship and indigeneity, challenging constitutional definitions and creating scenarios where cross-border individuals may be more readily accepted as indigenes compared to other Nigerian ethnic groups.

iv. **Case Studies: Yoruba and Hausa Communities:** The acceptance of Yoruba individuals from Benin or Togo as indigenes in Yoruba States, and similarly, the recognition of Hausa individuals from Niger Republic or Chad, contrasts sharply with the treatment of other Nigerian ethnic groups. This selective acceptance underscores the complexities in defining citizenship based on indigenous status, revealing a nuanced hierarchy that favors cultural and ethnic ties over legal definitions. The implications of this hierarchy on national integration and social equity are profound, calling for a reassessment of citizenship policies to foster inclusivity.

v. **Post-Independence Integration and Citizenship:** Regions integrated into Nigeria post-independence, such as Dikwa North and the Bakassi Peninsula, present unique challenges in defining citizenship. The inhabitants of these areas, connected by ethnic languages and cultures, often find themselves in a legal limbo, where their citizenship status is not clearly defined. The case of the Bakassi Peninsula, ceded to Cameroon, further complicates this issue, as individuals with cultural ties to Nigeria may be seen as indigenes, while others are

labeled settlers. This ambiguity in citizenship status not only affects individual rights but also poses challenges to national unity and identity.

In summary, the interrogation of literature on Nigerian citizenship reveals a complex interplay of legal definitions, cultural ties, and historical legacies. The framework of citizenship in Nigeria, particularly the emphasis on indigeneity and the challenges of dual citizenship, necessitates a critical reevaluation. Addressing these issues requires an inclusive approach that recognizes the diverse cultural and historical contexts of Nigerian communities, both within and across its borders. By adopting such an approach, Nigeria can work towards a more equitable and cohesive society, where citizenship rights are clearly defined and uniformly applied.

Navigating the Citizenship and Indigene-Settler Conundrum in Nigeria: Interrogating the Landscape of Citizenship in the United States

The landscape of citizenship in the United States is a complex interplay of belonging, rights, and identity within its political community. This section critically examines the dynamics of American citizenship, contrasting it with the Nigerian context, and explores the theoretical and conceptual implications of these differences.

i. ***Birthright Citizenship in the United States:***Bellamy (2008) highlights the foundational principle of birthright citizenship in the United States, enshrined in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. This principle confers citizenship on individuals born within the country's territorial boundaries, irrespective of their parents' citizenship status. This approach, known as jus soli, contrasts sharply with the *jus sanguinis* principle prevalent in countries like Britain, which bases citizenship on descent (Shachar et al., 2017).The American model therefore, promotes inclusivity by emphasizing birthplace over lineage, which differs fundamentally from Nigeria's descent-based approach. This model reduces ambiguity and potential discrimination by ensuring that anyone born in the U.S. has an unequivocal right to citizenship. This inclusivity contrasts with the Nigerian system, where citizenship is heavily influenced by the birthplace of one's father or grandfather, often leading to complexities and exclusions for those without clear ancestral ties to specific regions.

ii. ***Dual Citizenship and Political Implications:*** Bosniak (2006) discusses how the U.S. approach to birthright citizenship can lead to dual citizenship scenarios, where individuals hold citizenship in the U.S. and their parents' country of origin. This contrasts with Britain's descent-based model, which can complicate the status of individuals born in the country to non-citizen parents. Ibrahim (2004) points out that in Nigeria, citizenship can be manipulated for political purposes, with influential families distributing citizenship to maximize political impact.The flexibility of the U.S. model accommodates diverse demographics and migration complexities, promoting a sense of belonging regardless of lineage. This contrasts with Nigeria's politically influenced citizenship distribution, which can undermine the principle of equality and inclusivity. The U.S. model's clarity in citizenship rights highlights the potential for reducing ethnic and political divisions through a more inclusive framework.

iii. **Inclusivity and the Indigene-Settler Question:** Comaroff & Comaroff (2009) argue that the U.S. citizenship framework's flexibility supports diverse demographic integration. The principle of birthright citizenship fosters inclusivity by recognizing individuals born within the country regardless of their parents' origins. Modood (2019) suggests that an inclusive approach amalgamating elements from the American model could be beneficial for contemporary societies. The inclusive nature of U.S. citizenship policy offers a valuable perspective for addressing the indigene-settler dichotomy in Nigeria. By adopting a model that considers both birthplace and lineage, Nigeria could mitigate the exclusionary practices currently affecting non-indigenous citizens. This approach could enhance national cohesion by fostering a shared sense of belonging among all citizens, regardless of their ancestral origins.

iv. **Practical Benefits of U.S. Citizenship:** Albanna (2014) highlights the practical advantages of U.S. citizenship, such as protection from deportation and the

security of residency. McNamara (2018) adds that citizenship ensures equal rights to live and work in the U.S. and provides protection against deportation following criminal accusations. Barnes (2019) notes the significant benefit of holding a U.S. passport, which allows visa-free travel to many countries and access to embassy assistance.These practical benefits underscore the multifaceted nature of U.S. citizenship, which extends beyond legal status to include tangible improvements in security, mobility, and opportunities. This comprehensive approach to citizenship highlights the potential for a more holistic framework in Nigeria, where citizenship could be linked with broader social and economic rights, enhancing the quality of life for all citizens.

v. **The Role of Citizenship in Family Reunification and Civic Participation:** Bloemraad (2017) discusses how U.S. citizenship facilitates family reunification by allowing citizens to sponsor family members for green cards. Malkki (2015) notes that children born to U.S. citizens abroad automatically gain citizenship. Calavita (2014) emphasizes the right to vote and eligibility for elected offices as fundamental aspects of citizenship, enabling active participation in shaping the nation's leadership. These aspects of U.S. citizenship demonstrate the profound impact of inclusive policies on individual and family stability, as well as civic engagement. By facilitating family reunification and civic participation, the U.S. model strengthens community ties and democratic participation. Implementing similar policies in Nigeria could address the social and political exclusion of non-indigenous citizens, fostering a more inclusive and participatory democracy.

In summary, the interrogation of U.S. citizenship practices reveals a model that balances inclusivity, legal clarity, and practical benefits, contrasting with the more restrictive and lineage-based approach in Nigeria. By drawing lessons from the American model, Nigeria can re-evaluate its citizenship policies to promote inclusivity, reduce ethnic and political divisions, and enhance the rights and opportunities of all its citizens. This critical analysis highlights the potential for adopting a more inclusive and equitable citizenship framework, fostering national cohesion and stability.

Conclusion

The exploration of citizenship dynamics and the indigene-settler question in Nigeria, contrasted with the American model, reveals significant insights into fostering national integration. This study underscores the interplay between indigeneity, settler identities, and citizenship, emphasizing the core aspects of belonging, rights, and inclusivity within a political community.

The American model of birthright citizenship, which grants citizenship based on birthplace rather than lineage, promotes inclusivity by acknowledging individuals regardless of their parents' origins. This model contrasts with the descent-based citizenship prevalent in Nigeria, which can complicate the status of individuals born to non-citizen parents. In Nigeria, citizenship practices influenced by political considerations and lineage can undermine equality and inclusivity. The study suggests that adopting a more inclusive approach, similar to the U.S. model, could enhance national integration by fostering a sense of belonging among diverse communities.The flexibility and clarity of American citizenship rights provide a benchmark for Nigeria, advocating for comprehensive and inclusive policies. This flexibility helps manage migration complexities and encourages a sense of belonging irrespective of birthplace or lineage. In Nigeria, the manipulation of citizenship for political gain by influential families can exacerbate ethnic and political divisions. A more inclusive citizenship framework could reduce these tensions and promote a more unified national identity.

The American model's emphasis on birthright citizenship supports inclusivity and mitigates exclusionary tendencies. This approach helps cultivate a sense of belonging and unity among diverse populations, providing valuable lessons for Nigeria. Nigeria's descent-based citizenship approach sometimes complicates the status of individuals, particularly those born to non-citizen parents. Adopting elements from the American model could address these challenges, fostering a more cohesive society.

Lessons from the U.S. citizenship model highlight the importance of embracing diversity and implementing inclusive policies that respect various identities. This theoretical

understanding can inform Nigerian strategies for national integration, promoting social cohesion and unity. Addressing Nigeria's unique challenges requires a nuanced approach that considers both birthplace and lineage in citizenship attribution. Efforts to de-emphasize tribal, ethnic, and religious differences are crucial for fostering a unified national identity.Nigeria should consider prioritizing birthright citizenship to reduce exclusionary tendencies and enhance national integration. Flexible citizenship policies, akin to those in the U.S., can alleviate tensions from migration complexities and promote inclusivity. Emphasizing national symbols and mandatory teaching of Nigerian history can instill appreciation for national unity. Programs like the National Youth Service Corps should be revamped to treat all graduates as locals, fostering integration. Implementing true federalism and equitable resource control can ensure fair distribution and governance, boosting confidence and unity among diverse regions.

This study differs from previous research by providing a comparative analysis between the American and Nigerian citizenship models, highlighting practical and theoretical implications for national integration in Nigeria. Unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on the challenges within Nigeria, this research offers a broader perspective by incorporating lessons from the U.S. model, suggesting a path towards a more inclusive and cohesive Nigerian society.

In summary, adopting inclusive citizenship practices and promoting a sense of belonging among diverse communities will enable Nigeria to navigate the complexities of the indigene-settler question. By leveraging lessons from the American citizenship model, Nigeria can progress towards a more cohesive nation that celebrates diversity while fostering a unified national identity. De-emphasizing tribal, ethnic, and religious differences, alongside implementing educational, social, and political reforms, will be crucial in achieving this goal.

Recommendations

To address citizenship and indigenous challenges in Nigeria while drawing insights from the United States, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. *In-depth Comparative Analysis:* Conduct a comprehensive study of the historical backgrounds, legal frameworks, socio-political dynamics, and cultural nuances shaping indigenous experiences and citizenship rights in Nigeria and the U.S. This will highlight similarities and differences, enabling mutual learning.

ii. *Utilize Case Studies and Empirical Evidence:* Use case studies and empirical evidence to illustrate effective strategies and policies. Focus on initiatives that have positively impacted indigenous communities, such as community-driven development projects, legal advancements in land rights, and culturally sensitive programs. Include testimonies from indigenous individuals and community leaders to enrich the analysis.

iii. *Examine Legal and Policy Frameworks:* Thoroughly review the legal and policy frameworks governing citizenship and indigenous rights in Nigeria and the U.S. Assess constitutional provisions, legislative acts, international conventions, and judicial decisions. This evaluation will help identify areas for improvement and inform legal and policy reform recommendations.

iv. *Engage Stakeholders:* Involve stakeholders through a participatory approach. Engage indigenous communities, government agencies, NGOs, academia, and international bodies to ensure diverse perspectives are considered. Create platforms for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration to foster mutual learning and empower indigenous voices in policy formulation and implementation.

v. *Identify Best Practices:* Identify best practices and lessons from the U.S. to inform policy recommendations for Nigeria. This includes innovative tribal governance structures, culturally responsive education initiatives, and inclusive policy frameworks. Tailor these insights to address specific challenges while respecting cultural diversity in Nigeria.

vi. *Translate Insights into Actionable Strategies:* Develop actionable strategies focusing on policy reform, institutional

strengthening, and community empowerment. Advocate for intersectional approaches that address citizenship, indigenous rights, gender equality, environmental justice, and socio-economic development. Prioritize inclusivity, social justice, and respect for all Nigerians, particularly marginalized indigenous communities.

vii. *Facilitate Capacity-Building and Collaboration:* Organize workshops, training sessions, and academic exchanges to enhance expertise in indigenous studies, human rights law, and community development. Build partnerships between Nigerian and U.S. stakeholders to foster knowledge-sharing, resource mobilization, and collective advocacy for indigenous rights.

viii. Implementing these recommendations can help Nigeria gain valuable insights from U.S. practices, advancing social justice, cultural diversity, and inclusive citizenship, especially for marginalized indigenous communities.

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