The Political and Civic Engagement of Immigrants

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Introduction

In 2000, Robert Putnam published his influential book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,* in which he argued that social capital, civic engagement, and a sense of community have been on the decline in America since the 1960s.[1] Putnam noted that participation in social organizations and associations, which presumably fostered trust, had diminished, and this had serious implications for the strength of democracy and democratic values. As Melissa Marschall stated, Putnam's work addressed the question of "how and why the U.S. metamorphosized from a model of civic virtue and social connectedness to a nation of non-voters and non-joiners."[2]

In the ensuing years, many scholars have debated if not powerfully challenged Putnam's deployment of social capital as well as some of his conclusions and policy recommendations.[3] They have critiqued his approach for its narrow interpretation of the motivations behind associational membership and for the absence of full consideration of diversity within the American population. Yet at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, concerns about low voter turnout and limited political engagement remain. Scholars have begun to explore alternative explanatory factors for these trends while maintaining an interest in the role of organizations and associations as civic spaces. Further, beginning in the mid to late 1990s and continuing to the present, these broad concerns have also resulted in research focused in particular on the political and civic participation of immigrants and their children.

By the 1990s, many undocumented immigrants who had been able to attain legal status as a result of the Immigration Control and Reform Act (IRCA) of 1986 were eligible for citizenship and/or to vote. Individuals who

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1. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

2. Melissa J. Marschall, "Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*: Empirical Foundations, Causal Mechanisms, and Policy Implications," in *The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Public Policy Administration*, ed. Martin Lodge, Edward C. Page, and Steven J. Balla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

3. See Steven N. Durlauf, "Bowling Alone: A Review Essay," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 47 (2002): 259–273; and Dietlind Stolle and Marc Hooghe, "Inaccurate, Exceptional, One-Sided or Irrelevant? The Debate about the Alleged Decline of Social Capital and Civic Engagement in Western Societies," *British Journal of Political Science* 35 (1) (2005): 149–167.

had entered the United States under the 1980 Refugee Act were also quickly eligible for citizenship and the children of both these populations, often born in the United States, were growing to adulthood. Additionally, many individuals who entered the United States on various student and work visas (for example, H-1B visas) were able to adjust their status and gradually move toward legal permanent residence (securing a "green card") and eventually citizenship.[4] In other words, all the demographic stars were aligned to make the civic and political incorporation of immigrants and their children an intriguing research question, not only in the United States[5] but also in Western Europe.[6]

4. Caroline B. Brettell, "Adjustment of Status, Remittances, and Return: Some Observations on 21st Century Migration Processes," *City and Society* 19 (2007): 47–59.

5. Gary Gerstle and John Mollenkopf, eds., *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001); S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, *Democracy in Immigrant America: Changing Demographics and Political Participation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Janelle Wong, *Democracy's Promise: Immigrants and American Civic Institutions* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006); S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Irene Bloemraad, "Introduction: Civic and Political Inequalities," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Irene Bloemraad (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 1–44; Jennifer Hochschild, Jacqueline Chattopadhyay, Claudine Gay, and Michael Jones-Correa, eds., *Outsiders No More: Models of Immigrant Political Incorporation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Mary Waters and Marisa Gerstein Pineau, *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies of Sciences, 2015), chap. 4.

6. Meindert Fennema and Jean Tillie, "Political Participation and Political Trust in Amsterdam: Civic Communities and Ethnic Networks," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 25 (1999): 703–726; Dirk Jacobs, Karen Phalet, and Marc Swyngedouw, "Associational Membership and Political Involvement Among Ethnic Minority Groups in Brussels," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30 (3) (2004): 543–559; Jean Tillie, "Social Capital of Organizations and Their Members: Explaining the Political Integration of Immigrants in Amsterdam," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30 (2004): 529–541; Thomas Huddleston, *Migrant Political Participation: A Review of Policies and Integration Results in the OSCE Region* (Warsaw: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2017), https://www.osce.org/odihr/367936?download=true; and Katia Pilati and Laura Morales, "Civic and Political Engagement by Immigrant-Background Minorities in Traditional and New Destination European Cities," in *The Politics of New Immigrant Destinations—Transatlantic Perspectives*, ed. Stefanie Chambers, Diana Evans, Anthony M. Messina, and Abigail Fisher Williamson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), 277–299.

This research paper offers a review of some of the major findings and conclusions of this literature.[7] Given the diversity of the population of immigrants and their children, this review is by no means exhaustive. This paper does, however, attempt to capture the most significant dimensions of the debates surrounding the political and civic engagement of immigrants. Where appropriate I have introduced some material from two focus groups that I conducted in the Dallas area, one with individuals of Chinese origin and one with individuals of Asian Indian background. The participants in each group, most of whom were over age fifty and had been in the United States for some time, were naturalized citizens, although there was someone in the Indian group who was of the second generation.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the data on rates of participation in the political sphere within the broad categories of Latino and Asian populations, as well as particular barriers to such participation. The second section explores the significance of the process of naturalization. The third section addresses the civic and political participation of the second generation: the children of immigrants who are American citizens by birth and hence do not confront the naturalization barrier. The final section addresses, in particular, the role of voluntary organizations and faith-based institutions in fostering the civic and political integration and engagement of immigrant populations.

Inclusion and Exclusion: Rates of and Barriers to Participation

Of paramount concern in the literature under review is the question of whether the rates of political participation and civic engagement (in the form of volunteerism and other activities within both private and public spheres) among immigrants are lower than those of native-born individuals, and if so, what are the barriers to participation that immigrants, in particular, confront.[8] In general terms, these barriers vary according to stage of immigration and settlement (with factors of age and time of entry being important) as well as by legal and socioeconomic status. As suggested to this author by immigration scholar Nestor Rodrigues,[9] at one end of the continuum are undocumented migrants who are employed in low-income jobs and living in daily fear of deportation. Their primary concern is simply to work and survive; they are hardly focused on issues of civic and political engagement. It is generally left to their children, those who are either born in or who have for the most part grown up in the United States and who have both more familiarity with the system and a command of the English language, to become more engaged. At the other pole of the continuum are those who have entered the country legally, who are highly educated, and who are employed in high-end professional occupations (as engineers, medical doctors, scientists, etc.). They may be involved in professional association activities that lead them to civic/political engagement or they are personally motivated to participate in the public sphere. They have a good understanding of what is at stake, no matter what end of the political spectrum (liberal to conservative) they situate themselves.

Latino Participation and the Latino Vote

In research on questions of inclusion/exclusion in the civic and political spheres, scholars have either focused on Latino populations[10] or on Asian

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8. Loretta E. Bass and Lynne M. Casper, "Differences in Registering and Voting Between Native-Born and Naturalized Americans," *Population Research and Policy Review* 20 (2001): 483–511.

9. Private communication with Nestor Rodrigues.

10. In this paper I use the word Latino rather than Latinx to be consistent with the language that is used in the actual publications being discussed.

populations, although some have made comparisons across or within these broad categories. According to data from the Pew Research Center, 29 million Latinos were eligible to vote in 2016—constituting 12 percent of all eligible voters.[11] However, consistently since 1996 fewer Latinos vote than are eligible to vote—in the 2016 presidential election slightly less than 50 percent voted. In 2018, a higher turnout midterm election for all populations by comparison with midterms of the recent past, voter participation for Latinos rose to 40.4 percent in comparison with 57.5 percent for Whites and 51.4 percent for Blacks. For Latinos this represented an increase of 6.8 million, almost double the number of Latino voters in the 2014 midterms. Further, Latino voters made up 11 percent of all voters across the country, a proportion that corresponded quite closely to their share of the U.S. eligible voter population (U.S. citizens who are eighteen years of age and older).[12]

The cumulated research on Latinos over the past few decades confirms that this population is both less likely to naturalize by comparison with immigrants of Asian and European backgrounds and also less likely to vote than native-born citizens.[13] As Michael Jones-Correa has observed, in studies of the political participation of Latinos, emphasis has been placed on a series of individual characteristics—such as age, education, income, marital status, and linguistic competence.[14] Not unexpectedly, research-

11. Jens M. Krogstad, "Key Facts about the Latino Vote in 2016," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/14/key-facts-about-the-Latino-vote-in-2016/.

12. It is important to note that these are broad rates that do not take variations, such as education and income, into account. A fine-tuned analysis might yield more similarities across populations at similar incomes or educational levels. See Jens Krogstad, Luis Noe-Bustamante, and Antonio Flores, "Historic Highs in 2018 Voter Turnout Extended Across Racial and Ethnic Groups," Pew Research Center, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/01/historic-highs-in-2018-voter-turnout-extended-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups/.

13. See, for example, Rodolfo de la Garza, Louis DeSipio, F. Chris Garcia, John Garcia, and Angelo Falcon, *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Michael Jones-Correa, *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael Jones-Correa, "Institutional and Contextual Factors in Immigrant Naturalization and Voting," *Citizenship Studies* 5 (1) (2001): 41–56; Christine Marie Sierra, Teresa Carrillo, Louis DeSipio, and Michael Jones-Correa, "Latino Immigration and Citizenship," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33 (3) (2000): 535–540; S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Thomas Epenshade, "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States," *International Migration Review* 35 (3) (2001): 870–909; Matt A. Barreto and José A. Muñoz, "Reexamining the 'Politics of In-Between': Political Participation Among Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25 (4) (2003): 427–447; F. Chris Garcia and Gabriel Sanchez, *Hispanics and the U.S. Political System: Moving into the Mainstream* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008); and Lisa García Bedolla, *Latino Politics*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014).

14. Jones-Correa, "Institutional and Contextual Factors in Immigrant Naturalization and Voting."

ers generally find that higher levels of education and income and greater English-language abilities are strongly correlated with naturalization, as is length of stay in the country.[15] However, Jones-Correa equally identifies some contextual factors that create barriers to naturalization and participation—such as the cost and requirements for naturalization and the complex rules for registration and voting that could affect immigrants in disproportionate ways in comparison with native-born populations. Additionally, discrimination and anti-immigrant legislation can suppress participation (individuals are fearful of drawing attention to their families, some of whom might be undocumented) or they can occasionally galvanize and mobilize it,[16] while opportunities for dual nationality (primarily provided by sending countries) can encourage naturalization and by extension participation.

In a personal communication, Roberto Suro also emphasized the role of geography—that Latinos, both immigrants and their descendants, may feel that they only have an impact (i.e., their vote counts) in states where they are a critical mass (California, Texas, New York, Florida), but as the Pew Research Center points out, these are often non-battleground states and hence the impact on presidential elections may be less important.[17] Alternatively, certain state environments are more politically charged than others and therefore may mobilize communities to become engaged.[18] In a study drawing on data from a three-state survey (California, Texas,

15. See also Ramakrishnan and Epenshade, "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States."

16. Deborah J. Schildkraut, "The Rise and Fall of Political Engagement among Latinos: The Role of Identity and Perceptions of Discrimination," *Political Behavior* 27 (3) (2005): 285–312; Adrian D. Pantoja, Cecilia Menjívar, and Lisa Magaña, "The Spring Marches of 2006: Latinos, Immigration and Political Mobilization in the 21st Century," *American Behavioral Scientist* 52 (4) (2008): 499–506; and Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, Louis DeSipio, and Celeste Montoya, "Latino Mobilization in New Immigrant Destinations: The Anti—HR 4437 Protest in Nebraska's Cities," *Urban Affairs Review* 44 (5) (2009): 718–735.

17. Krogstad, "Key Facts about the Latino Vote in 2016." Additionally, some researchers have emphasized city-level differences as an important contextual factor, with some cities being more decentralized and hence offering greater opportunities within their political structures for immigrant participation. See Roger Waldinger, *Still the Promised City? African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). This "city as context" approach—see Caroline B. Brettell, "Bringing the City Back In: Cities as Context for Immigrant Incorporation," in *American Arrivals: Anthropology Engages the New Immigration*, ed. Nancy Foner (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 2003), 163–195—merits further investigation. What, for example, is the impact of being a sanctuary city (positive or negative) or a city that has implemented an "Office of Welcoming Communities" on civic and political engagement?

18. Matt A. Barreto, "Latino Immigrants at the Polls: Foreign-Born Voter Turnout in the 2002 Election," *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (1) (2005): 79–86.

Florida) conducted by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute in 1997 (following the 1996 national election), Adrian Pantoja and coauthors compared the turnout of naturalized and native-born Latino citizens.[19] Their results demonstrated the impact of wedge issues targeting Latino immigrants on political participation. Further, the analysis shows that newly naturalized Latinos turned out to vote at higher rates than other Latino citizens of California, as well as Latinos in Florida or Texas—they are, as the title of the article suggests, "citizens by choice and voters by necessity."

More recent Pew Research Center data confirm these assessments of more than two decades ago,[20] demonstrating that in 2016, among Hispanics as well as Asians, the voter turnout of naturalized citizens was higher than that of the U.S. born, although overall—i.e., across all populations—the U.S. born were more likely to vote.[21] See Table 1.[22]

This difference between the naturalized and the native born held during the 2018 midterms, reflecting some important trends that might be useful to political parties who want to engage these populations further (see Table 2).

According to an article published in *The Los Angeles Times*,[23] many of the undocumented children of immigrants (known as Dreamers) worked hard in 2018 to turn out the vote in the Latino communities around Los Angeles.[24] The article quotes a study conducted by Latino Decisions, a political research firm, indicating that Latino voter turnout was the key factor

19. Adrian D. Pantoja, Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura, "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos," *Political Research Quarterly* 54 (4) (2001): 729–750.

20. Pew Research Center, "Voter Turnout of Naturalized Citizens," 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/12/black-voter-turnout-fell-in-2016-even-as-a-record-number-of-americans-cast-ballots/ft_17-05-10_voter-turnout_naturalized/.

21. The difference in the overall population appears to be consistent with results of two decades ago. Drawing on 1996 data, Loretta Bass and Lynne Casper report that, net of other factors, naturalized citizens are less likely to vote than the U.S.-born. Bass and Casper, "Differences in Registering and Voting Between Native-Born and Naturalized Americans."

22. This form of comparison has been made recently by Ruoxi Li and Bradley Jones, albeit between those who moved to the United States at a young age versus those who moved at an older age. See Ruoxi Li and Bradley M. Jones, "Why Do Immigrants Participate in Politics Less than Native-Born Citizens? A Formative Years Explanation," *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* 4 (3) (2019): 1–30.

23. Jazmine Ulloa, "In the Home of the Dream Act, Young Immigrants Came out in Force on a Personal Quest to Flip Control of the House," *The Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 2019, https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-midterm-elections-dreamers-20190101-story.html.

24. For a similar account in the Houston area, see Elizabeth Trovall, "Unable to Vote, Dreamers Take Immigration Issues to the People Who Can," *Houston Chronicle*, September 13, 2018.

Table 1. Voter Turnout of Naturalized and Native-Born Citizens, 2016

Total Population	Hispanics	Asians
U.S. Born: 62.1%	U.S. Born: 45.5%	U.S. Born: 44.9%
Naturalized: 54.3%	Naturalized: 53.4%	Naturalized: 51.9%

Source: Pew Research Center, Voter Turnout of Naturalized Citizens, 2017, http://www
.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/12/black-voter-turnout-fell-in-2016-even-as-a
-record-number-of-americans-cast-ballots/ft_17-05-10_voter-turnout_naturalized/.

Table 2. Voter Turnout of Naturalized and Native-Born Citizens, 2018

Total Population	Hispanics	Asians
U.S. Born: 54.2%	U.S. Born: 39.0%	U.S. Born: 36.7%
Naturalized: 45.7%	Naturalized: 44.2.4%	Naturalized: 42.7%

Source: Jens Krogstad, Luis Noe-Bustamante, and Antonio Flores, "Historic Highs in 2018
Voter Turnout Extended Across Racial and Ethnic Groups," Pew Research Center, 2019,
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/01/historic-highs-in-2018-voter-turnout
-extended-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups/.

in flipping six GOP-held congressional seats in California. However, re-
search by Lisa García Bedolla and Melissa Michelson shows that while "Get
Out the Vote" initiatives result in higher turnout among U.S.-born Latinos,
it has no measurable effect on Latino naturalized citizens.[25] Curiously, they
found the opposite to be true among Asian Americans.

Among other contextual factors impacting voter participation are state
regulations that impose registration cutoffs before the election or that drop
voters from the rolls for not voting, both of which foster less impetus to
naturalize and vote. Interestingly, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Thom-
as Epenshade found that having ballots in Spanish does not necessarily
ensure higher voting among first-generation Latinos, and that proximity
to co-ethnics has weak effects on voting participation (with the exception
of three or more generations of Asian Americans).[26] They also found that
prior political experience with repressive regimes (in a country of origin)
has no consistent effect on voting participation, although others have ar-
gued to the contrary, noting that country of origin can have an impact on

25. Lisa García Bedolla and Melissa R. Michelson, "Mobilization by Different Means: Nativ-
ity and GOTV in the United States," *International Migration Review* 48 (3) (2014): 710–727.

26. Ramakrishnan and Epenshade, "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation
in the United States."

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citizenship acquisition and voter turnout.[27] For some immigrant populations (those who came as refugees or who are political asylees), exercising a political voice or even stating that they are politically involved still raises fears because of previous homeland experiences.[28]

While most scholars have been examining barriers to participation, there is a small body of scholarship that looks at what might foster engagement—hence the interest alluded to above with ballots in multiple languages. Other variables have also been explored. For example, Gilbert Mireles has found that immigrant farmworkers in Washington State who own their own homes display higher rates of both social and political participation than do those who rent.[29] Homeownership, he argues, "serves to anchor recent immigrants to their host communities and facilitates the integration of these individuals into those communities."[30] Additionally, knowledge of mobilizing factors provides a better understanding of how to enhance greater political participation. Adrian Pantoja and colleagues, focusing on the lessons learned from the 2006 marches, highlight the role of technology, social networks, Spanish language media, families, churches, unions, and advocacy groups.[31] They suggest that protest or "non-traditional" politics should be considered as "key dimensions of how politically marginalized groups can participate in the political arena, and such politics are a central resource for these groups." The open question is whether such activities turn into votes—the outcomes of some races in 2018 suggest that they can, but that mobilizing the vote around particular issues, using all the mechanisms that are available, including Spanish language media, is equally important.

Asian American Participation and the Asian American Vote

In recent years, studies of Asian immigration and of Asian American voter participation have expanded significantly, indicating that scholars have recognized that this is one of the fastest growing segments of the electorate

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27. See Catherine S. Bueker, "Political Incorporation among Immigrants from Ten Areas of Origin: The Persistence of Source Country Effects," *International Migration Review* 39 (1) (2005): 103–140.

28. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this paper for drawing this point to my attention.

29. Gilbert F. Mireles, "The Effects of Homeownership on Civic Participation among Immigrant Farmworkers in Washington State," *Rural Sociology* 82 (1) (2017): 129–148.

30. Ibid., 145.

31. Pantoja, Menjívar, and Magaña, "The Spring Marches of 2006: Latinos, Immigration and Political Mobilization in the 21st Century," 504.

and a segment that is very highly educated with high incomes.[32] Pei-te Lien and Janelle Wong are two of the most prolific scholars writing about the political participation of Asian Americans.[33] Their research demonstrates that the rate of naturalization for Asian immigrants is higher than for most other groups (Cubans are an exception) and that Asian voter turnout has been higher in comparison to that of Latinos, similar to that of non-Hispanic Whites in midterm elections, and lower than that of non-Hispanic Whites in presidential election years.[34] In general, the voter turnout among Asian Americans in 2016 was 49 percent compared with 64 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and 66 percent for African Americans.

However, as the 2018 Asian American Voter Survey indicates,[35] on average the number of Asian American registered voters has increased by 850,000 every four years since 2000, and the voter turnout rate in the 2018 midterm election increased to approximately 40 percent of all eligible Asian American voters—almost a 13 percent increase from the 2014 midterms.[36] One news report has described this as a "coming of age" for this population[37]—a population that comprises 6 percent of the total U.S. population (15 percent in California) according to the U.S. Census, and a population that estimates indicate will comprise a little over 5 percent of

32. Jane Junn, Taeku Lee, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Janelle Wong, *Asian Americans and the 2008 Election*, National Asian American Survey, October 6, 2008.

33. See Pei-te Lien, "Ethnicity and Political Participation: A Comparison between Asian and Mexican Americans," *Political Behavior* 16 (2) (1994): 237–264; Pei-te Lien, Christian Collet, Janelle Wong, and S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, "Asian Pacific-American Public Opinion and Political Participation," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34 (3) (2001): 625–630; Pei-te Lien, M. Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong, *The Politics of Asian Americans: Diversity and Community* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Wong, *Democracy's Promise: Immigrants and American Civic Institutions*; Janelle Wong, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, Taeku Lee, and Jane Junn, *Asian American Political Participation: Emerging Constituents and Their Political Identities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011); and Tritia Toyota, *Envisioning America: New Chinese Americans and the Politics of Belonging* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

34. Lien, Collet, Wong, and Ramakrishnan, "Asian Pacific-American Public Opinion and Political Participation," 625.

35. Civic Leadership USA, "2018 Asian American Voter Survey," 2018, http://aapidata.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-AA-Voter-Survey-report-Oct9.pdf.

36. Krogstad, Noe-Bustamante, and Flores, "Historic Highs in 2018 Voter Turnout Extended Across Racial and Ethnic Groups."

37. Mythili Sampathkumar, "Midterms 2018: How Asian American voters are 'coming of age' this election cycle, especially in 'red' states," *The Independent*, November 5, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/midterms-2018-us-midterm-elections-asian-american-voters-polls-democrats-republican-vote-states-a8619171.html.

the 2020 electorate.[38] Like Latinos, Asian Americans were mobilized by the highly charged anti-immigrant tone of 2018. Adam Nagourney and Robert Gebeloff reported on the impact of immigrants in flipping four Republican congressional seats in Orange County, California.[39] A young Vietnamese woman is quoted as saying, "There are so many of us here and that is what is contributing to these changes." The Vietnamese population was galvanized by the Trump administration's attempt to deport Vietnam War refugees. Not only are these districts more diverse, they also have become better educated and have higher household incomes. Voter turnout increased and many second-generation Asians, unlike their parents, tended to vote Democratic in relation to critical issues of immigration, education, and health care.

There are, of course, important variations within the "Asian" category, with Vietnamese and Koreans demonstrating lower rates of registration and voting than, for example, Japanese Americans, who have the highest rate. Further, Vietnamese and Chinese individuals tend to identify more with the Republican Party than do other Asian groups. Jun Xu, drawing on Current Population Survey (CPS) data between 1994 and 2000, explores some of the "intra-Asian" differences, finding, for example, that socioeconomic explanations do not help in understanding differences in participation of Whites and Asians.[40] Xu also found that the positive effect of education on voting is more limited for Asian Americans than for Whites. He focuses on registration issues as a powerful hurdle and explanation for different patterns of participation between Asian Americans and Whites. "In general, immigrants are much less likely to register and thereby to vote than native-born individuals do."[41] Others, seeing a great deal of potential in this population, link low voter turnout not only to language barriers (which makes navigating the election process challenging) but also to the fact that politicians make little effort at outreach to Asian groups.[42] This

38. David Byler, "Politicians Often Overlook Asian American Voters. They Shouldn't Especially in 2020," *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/07/10/politicians-often-overlook-asian-american-voters-they-shouldnt-especially/.

39. Adam Nagourney and Robert Gebeloff, "Cultural Shifts Sweep Away a California Bastion of Conservatism," *The New York Times*, December 31, 2018, A1, A15.

40. Jun Xu, "Why Do Minorities Participate Less? The Effects of Immigration, Education and Electoral Process on Asian American Voter Registration and Turnout," *Social Science Research* 34 (2005): 682–702.

41. Ibid., 697.

42. Caitlin Kim, "Why Asian Americans Don't Vote," *New America Weekly*, September 7, 2017, https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-175/why-asian-americans-dont-vote/.

was one of the important suggestions made by some of the participants in the two Asian-origin population focus groups that were conducted in connection with the preparation of this research paper: that candidates should come to speak to them on their own turf, under the auspices of the ethnic community organizations in which they feel comfortable.

Pei-te Lien and colleagues also note some differences in how Asian populations engage with the political process, being more likely to contact the media and other officials or to focus on solving community problems than to donate to campaigns—again with variations within the broad "Asian" category.[43] While the variables that explain rates of participation for other groups (for example, socioeconomic factors, language skills, length of stay in the United States, etc.) are also important to consider in relation to Asians, those who study Asian Americans also point to contextual factors such as ethnic group concentration; thus, there is greater voter turnout in states with higher numbers of elected officials from ethnic groups (Hawaii, California).[44] Jane Junn and colleagues note that for the Asian American electorate, the ethnic language media is an important source of information, although as mentioned above, they are contacted less by political parties than by other groups.[45] These researchers also found that participation in home country politics does not deter involvement in politics in the United States, and that those who were involved in homeland politics are slightly more likely to vote than those who are not.

The impact of these transnational connections is also taken up by the authors who contributed to Christian Collet and Pei-te Lien's edited volume on Asian American politics.[46] The volume offers a very useful overview of the changing patterns of political participation by this population since the 1980s. While I have more to say below about the significance of transnational social fields to the civic and political engagement of immigrants, it is important to emphasize here that, as the twenty-first century unfolds, we are witnessing increased political engagement for both Asian and Latino populations in the United States (of naturalized citizens as well as their American-born children who are progressively becoming eligible to vote).

43. Lien, Conway, and Wong, *The Politics of Asian Americans: Diversity and Community*.

44. Lien, Collet, Wong, and Ramakrishnan, "Asian Pacific-American Public Opinion and Political Participation," 628.

45. Junn, Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Wong, *Asian Americans and the 2008 Election.*

46. Christian Collet and Pei-te Lien, eds., *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

The Importance of Naturalization

Clearly, at the heart of many of these discussions of the civic and political engagement of immigrants is the issue of naturalization, not only in terms of access to the political sphere but also in encouraging or emboldening people to use the voice that citizenship affords them. The cost and length of time that characterize the naturalization process can act as a barrier for low-income applicants,[47] while the fear of passing the language and civic knowledge exam is perceived as an obstacle for those with low education or limited language proficiency. Figuring out how to register to vote is also a problem. While some scholars argue that one can be involved in politics without being a citizen,[48] or that involving non-citizen immigrants in public debates about local issues (a citizenship of practice rather than just judicial status) is an important foundation for political incorporation in the future,[49] others argue forcefully that naturalization/citizenship is vital to full participation—i.e., that this should be the primary end goal. Irene Bloemraad and Alicia Sheares conclude that empirical evidence, albeit limited, "suggests that naturalized immigrants are more politically active than noncitizen immigrants, and that foreign-born citizens participate

47. Jens Hainmueller, Duncan Lawrence, Justin Gest, Michael Hotard, Rey Koslowski, and David D. Laitin, "A Randomized Controlled Design Reveals Barriers to Citizenship for Low-Income Immigrants," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (5) (2018): 939–944.

48. Barreto and Muñoz, "Reexamining the 'Politics of In-Between': Political Participation Among Mexican Immigrants in the United States." Clearly the best example we have is the Dreamer population, who have become politically active and put themselves at risk because they are undocumented. Many of these young people only discovered their status as they graduated from high school. See Roberto G. Gonzales and Leo R. Chavez, "Awakening to a Nightmare: Abjectivity and Illegality in the Lives of Undocumented 1.5-Generation Latino Immigrants in the United States," *Current Anthropology* 53 (3) (2012): 255–281.

49. Lisa García Bedolla, "Noncitizen Voting and Immigrant Political Engagement in the United States," in *Transforming Politics, Transforming America: The Political and Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States*, ed. Taeku Lee, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Ricardo Ramirez (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 51–70.

somewhat less or about the same as native-born citizens, with variation by country of origin and country of residence."[50]

It is worth noting that the work of political sociologist Irene Bloemraad on this topic is both insightful and innovative. In her book *Becoming a Citizen*, she compares the acquisition of citizenship and well as rates of political participation in the United States and Canada, focusing on populations of Vietnamese and Portuguese origins.[51] She argues that Canada's official policy of multiculturalism and integration facilitates greater immigrant political incorporation. She also examines the role of community organizations in facilitating the political and civic visibility and influence of immigrants, an issue I return to below. Bloemraad offers a comprehensive model of structured mobilization, arguing that political incorporation is a social process of mobilization by family, friends, local leaders, and community organizations. This process is embedded in "an institutional context shaped by government policies of diversity and newcomer settlement."[52] This suggests that reforms aimed at achieving greater participation should work from both the bottom up and the top down and that truly comprehensive immigration reform should include community-level projects of integration and incorporation into civic and political life.[53]

Above all, the importance of naturalization and citizenship to civic and political inclusion has led U.S. scholars to reaffirm (in what is today a contested issue) the significance of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution to supporting birthright citizenship. But as Mary Waters and Marisa Pineau observe, from a comparative perspective,

> naturalization rates in the United States lag behind other countries that receive substantial numbers of immigrants. The overall level of citizenship among working age immigrants (15–64 years old) who have been living in the United States for at least 10 years is 50 percent. After adjustments to account for the undocumented population in the United States, a group that is barred by law

50. Irene Bloemraad and Alicia Sheares, "Understanding Membership in a World of Global Migration: (How) Does Citizenship Matter?" *International Migration Review* 51 (4) (2017): 848.

51. Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Irene Bloemraad, "Becoming a Citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured Mobilization and Immigrant Political Incorporation," *Social Forces* 85 (2) (2006): 667–695.

52. Bloemraad, "Becoming a Citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured Mobilization and Immigrant Political Incorporation," 667.

53. See also Els de Graauw and Irene Bloemraad, "Working Together: Building Successful Policy and Program Partnerships for Immigrant Integration," *Journal of Migration and Human Security* 5 (1) (2017): 105–123.

from citizenship, the naturalization rate among U.S. immigrants rises slightly but is still well below many European countries and far lower than other traditional receiving countries such as Australia and Canada. This is surprising since the vast majority of immigrants, when surveyed, report a strong desire to become a U.S. citizen.[54]

The authors argue that the greatest barrier to higher naturalization rates is less an absence of interest or the challenges of bureaucracy than "the process by which individuals translate their motivation to naturalize into action." In general, scholars are troubled by the dearth of clear explanations for low naturalization rates although they acknowledge, as Roberto Suro did,[55] that those who have travelled farther to come to the United States have higher rates than those who come from neighboring countries (such as Mexico and Canada) and who may remain involved in the civic and political life of their home countries as an alternative.

Donald Kerwin and Robert Warren provide a recent entry into this debate.[56] They demonstrate a powerful connection between naturalization and the integration and success of immigrants. They outline numerous efforts on the part of the Trump administration to make access to naturalization more difficult, and they suggest that eliminating birthright citizenship would "create a permanent class of U.S.-born denizens in the future."[57] In other words, increasing barriers to political and civic belonging is harmful to the country in the long run. Thus, they recommend that the administration "devise policies that help rather than harm immigrant families, and that reflect the American values of fairness, generosity, and inclusion."[58]

Newcomers are integrated into American civil and political society through naturalization. Indeed, an important point made by participants in the two Asian population focus groups was that they perhaps knew more about the U.S. Constitution and the structures and institutions of the government than the native-born population precisely because they

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54. Waters and Pineau, *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*, 10–11.

55. Personal communication with Roberto Suro.

56. Donald Kerwin and Robert Warren, "Putting American First: A Statistical Case for Encouraging Rather than Impeding and Devaluing U.S. Citizenship," *Journal of Migration and Human Security* 7 (4) (2019): 1–15.

57. Ibid., 1. As recently as November 2019, the Trump administration proposed raising the fees for citizenship by more than 80 percent. This is just one action taken by the Trump administration to make the naturalization process more difficult.

58. Kerwin and Warren, "Putting American First: A Statistical Case for Encouraging Rather than Impeding and Devaluing U.S. Citizenship," 10.

had studied to become citizens. These individuals articulated clearly their responsibilities as citizens, including the obligation to vote, to obey the law, and to "give back." Their comments alone help to explain the higher participation rates for naturalized citizens by comparison with the native born. The focus group participants also stressed the importance of more civic education in school, education that would give young people the same training they had as they studied to pass the citizenship test.

The Second Generation

If naturalization is one of the most challenging barriers to political partic-
ipation for the immigrant generation, what about the children of immi-
grants—the so-called second generation who are born U.S. citizens?[59] By
the late 1990s, migration scholars began to turn their attention to this pop-
ulation, and particularly to the dimensions of their integration.[60] However,
only a small portion of this work has focused on issues of second-generation
civic and political engagement, often linking these processes with issues of
identity[61] and exploring variations according to race, class, and/or ethnic
background.[62] A good deal of this research is based on data that are now a
decade or more old and certainly should be updated to reflect the changing
composition of the millennial generation who are now of voting age.

59. The term 1.5 generation refers to the children of immigrants who were born elsewhere
but entered the United States at a young age; most "Dreamers" belong to this category.

60. See Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Sec-
ond Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press; New York: Russell Sage Foun-
dation, 2001); Rubén G. Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes, eds., *Ethnicities: Children of
Immigrants in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press; New York: Russell Sage
Foundation, 2001); Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, *The Changing Face of Home: The
Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002);
Philip Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkopf, and Mary C. Waters, eds., *Becoming New Yorkers: Eth-
nographies of the New Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); Philip
Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway, *Inheriting the City:
The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; New
York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008); Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, *Asian American Youth*
(New York and London: Routledge, 2004); C. Suárez-Orozco, M. G. Hernández, and S. Ca-
sanova, "'It's Sort of My Calling': The Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility of Latino
Immigrant-Origin Young Adults," *Research in Human Development* 12 (1–2) (2015): 84–99;
Hinda Seif, "The Civic Education and Engagement of Latina/o Youth: Challenging Bound-
aries and Creating Safe Spaces," Paper Series on Latino Immigrant Civic Participation, no.
5, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2009; Richard Alba and Mary C. Waters, eds., *The Next Gener-
ation: Immigrant Youth in a Comparative Perspective* (New York: New York University Press,
2011); and Faith G. Nibbs and Caroline B. Brettell, eds., *Identity and the Second Generation:
How Children of Immigrants Find their Space* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016).

61. Alex Stepick and Carol Dutton Stepick, "Becoming American, Constructing Ethnici-
ty: Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement," *Applied Developmental Science* 6 (4) (2002):
246–257; and Lene Arnett Jensen, "Immigrants' Cultural Identities as Sources of Civic En-
gagement," *Applied Developmental Science* 12 (2) (2008): 74–83.

62. John Mollenkopf, Jennifer Holdaway, Philip Kasinitz, and Mary Waters, "Politics
Among Young Adults in New York: The Immigrant Second Generation," in *Transforming
Politics, Transforming America: The Political and Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the
United States*, ed. Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Ramirez, 175–193.

Some of the research focus on the civic engagement of the second generation explores the impact of participation in particular school-based or community-based youth organizations, reflecting broader and more generalized concerns about the impact of K-12 civic education programs. For example, drawing on an ethnographic study of a program for Vietnamese youth in Philadelphia, Rand Quinn and Chi Nguyen show how a particular organization (referred to as "Homeward Bound") closes the civic empowerment gap by preparing these young people to navigate the political dynamics of their local communities and to work cooperatively and productively across different communities.[63] Similarly, John Mollenkopf and colleagues found that for the second generation being "involved in institutions that tie the individual to the larger society around them promotes political engagement."[64]

In a study of Asian American youth, Laura Wray-Lake and colleagues find that Asian American students who are stereotypically portrayed as too involved in academics to be civically and/or politically engaged are in fact highly engaged civically in a way that is often linked to what they are studying.[65] Parissa Ballard and colleagues reveal that there are more similarities than differences in what motivates Asian and Latino youth across immigrant backgrounds to become involved in political and non-political volunteerism.[66] They suggest that this may be because the developmental similarities in civic motivation are more powerful than the demographic differences. Context, including the educational context, seems to matter.

A similar question about variations in volunteerism (civic engagement) by race and ethnicity has also been explored by Hiromi Ishizawa using the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study.[67] His results show that first- and second-generation Hispanic youth are less likely to volunteer than third or more generation Whites and that the differences are

63. Rand Quinn and Chi Nguyen, "Immigrant Youth Organizing as Civic Preparation," *American Educational Research Journal* 54 (5) (2017): 972–1005.

64. Mollenkopf, Holdaway, Kasinitz, and Waters, "Politics Among Young Adults in New York: The Immigrant Second Generation," 190.

65. Laura Wray-Lake, Julia Tang, and Christine Victorino, "Are They Political? Examining Asian American College Students' Civic Engagement," *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 8 (1) (2017): 31–42. See also Laura Wray-Lake, Wendy M. Rote, Taveesha Gupta, Erin Godfrey, and Selcuk Sirin, "Examining Correlates of Civic Engagement among Immigrant Adolescents in the United States," *Research in Human Development* 12 (12) (2015): 10–27.

66. Parissa J. Ballard, Heather Malin, Tenelle J. Porter, Anne Colby, and William Damon, "Motivations for Civic Participation Among Diverse Youth: More Similarities than Differences," *Research in Human Development* 12 (1–2) (2015): 63–83.

67. Hiromi Ishizawa, "Civic Participation through Volunteerism among Youth across Immigrant Generations," *Sociological Perspectives* 58 (2) (2015): 264–285.

accounted for by lower family socioeconomic status, the degree of parents' civic participation, involvement in extracurricular activities, and enrollment in postsecondary institutions. Interestingly, higher volunteerism is associated with having non-English-language speaking parents. And finally, there is an immigrant advantage for first-generation Hispanic youth and a second-generation advantage among Asian youth, suggesting that different dynamics are at play for each of these populations.

What is apparent examining this body of research is that there is significant variation in the second-generation population and that more work must be done to sort out important sociological and cultural differences behind rates of civic engagement. Few have examined how civic engagement may translate into or correlate with political engagement. What is undeniable, however, is the significance of this population as a "barometer for the future of democracy."[68] Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine point out that a spring 2006 national survey (conducted when major protests were being organized against anti-immigrant legislation in many cities across the United States) showed that 23 percent of immigrant youth and 18 percent of the children of immigrant parents indicated that they had been involved in a protest in the previous year as compared with the children of native-born parents, who reported a protest rate of just 10 percent.[69] Mark Lopez and Karlo Marcelo, utilizing a 2006 Civic and Political Health National Survey, demonstrate that on most measures young immigrants report lower levels of civic engagement in comparison with natives.[70] But many of the differences are eliminated after controlling for demographic factors. By contrast, the children of immigrant parents report levels of civic engagement that either match or exceed those of natives.

68. Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood," *The Future of Children* 20 (1) (2010): 159. A recent study on the "millennial generation"—see William Frey, *The Millennial Generation: A Demographic Bridge to America's Diverse Future* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2018)—reinforces this point about the "barometer of future democracy" by noting that this is the most diverse generation in U.S. history. Clearly immigration has contributed to this diversity. Among this group may be those of the 1.5 generation who have managed to become legal: either as dependents of parents who entered legally and have naturalized, or they have been able to gain legal status in other ways. For an analysis of immigrant youth and civic engagement, see Seif, "The Civic Education and Engagement of Latina/o Youth."

69. Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood," 164; see also Pantoja, Menjívar, and Magaña, "The Spring Marches of 2006: Latinos, Immigration and Political Mobilization in the 21st Century."

70. Mark Hugo Lopez and Karlo Barrios Marcelo, "The Civic Engagement of Immigrant Youth: New Evidence from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation Survey," *Applied Development Science* 12 (2) (2008): 66–73.

Mobilization around a cause is as important to the children of immigrants as it is to the native born—as seen by the engagement of young people around gun control after the shootings at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Based on research among immigrant youth in Miami, Florida, Alex Stepick and colleagues have observed that the children of immigrant backgrounds focus their civic engagement activities on helping other immigrants, something for which they can draw on their bilingual skills.[71] Further, and like native minorities, these youth also become actively involved in politics in response to discrimination. Carola Suárez-Orozco and colleagues identify awareness of unfair treatment, along with social responsibility and the desire to create social change as three drivers for the engagement of Latino immigrant-origin young adults in the civic sphere. As a young Dominican woman who came to the United States at age thirteen indicated to these researchers, she is motivated by "Things that I care for. They're . . . something personal to me in one way or another where I feel some sort of attachment. It is not an obligation but more like I want to do [these things] . . . [They make] me feel better. . . . It's sort of my calling."[72] As Flanagan and Levine have observed,

> Immigrant youth engage in a wide array of civic activities, working in faith-based groups and using their bilingual skills to assist fellow immigrants as translators and tutors. Comparisons of nationally representative studies of foreign-born, second-generation, and native-born seventh through twelfth graders reveal that new immigrants are just as likely as any of their contemporaries to embrace core American political values and to engage in volunteerism. Further, once socioeconomic differences are taken into account, immigrant youth are as likely, or almost as likely, as their native-born peers to be engaged in most conventional forms of civic participation.[73]

71. Alex Stepick, Carol Dutton Stepick, and Yvan Labissiere, "South Florida's Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement: Major Engagement, Minor Differences," *Applied Development Science* 12 (2) (2008): 57–65.

72. Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, and Casanova, "'It's Sort of My Calling': The Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility of Latino Immigrant-Origin Young Adults," 90.

73. Flanagan and Levine, "Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood," 164.

From Civic to Political Engagement: The Role of Associations and Organizations

The organizational or associational context may be as important for the immigrant generation as it is for their children. In research that has drawn both a good deal of attention as well as critical debate, Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady argued more than twenty years ago that participation in community organizations as well as civic volunteerism can serve as an important foundation for a form of "good citizenship" that can then be extended into broader political participation and incorporation.[74] The basis of this argument is in Robert Putnam's work, revolving around ideas that involvement in associations fosters habits of solidarity, public-spiritedness, empathy for and trust of others, and the ability to cooperate with others.[75]

This emphasis on the significance of civic engagement is also discussed by Cliff Zukin and colleagues, who identify "a subtle but important remixing of the ways in which U.S. citizens participate in public life. This new mix," they argue, "has privileged civic engagement over more traditional forms of political engagement such as voting, and focuses on civil and corporate organizations rather than government institutions as the central arenas for public action." The future of democratic citizenship in the United States, they assert, is "likely to be more civic than political."[76]

74. Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); see also Hui Li and Jiasheng Zhang, "How Do Civic Associations Foster Political Participation? The Role of Scope and Intensity of Organizational Involvement," *Non-Profit Political Forum* 8 (1) (2017): 3–24.

75. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

76. Cliff Zukin, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini, *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

These authors go on to ask if engagement in civic life is politics by other means and whether engagement in civic activities leads to more traditional political engagement.[77] Based on a survey they conducted, they come to the conclusion that for most, civic engagement is neither a pathway to nor a substitute for political engagement. This is a commentary on the U.S. population writ large. But what about the immigrant population, in particular, the new Americans?

One of the earliest projects to raise the question of how civic and political engagement is connected within immigrant communities emerged from the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants in a report titled *Lessons Learned About Civic Participation Among Immigrants*.[78] The report argues that restricting the focus of attention on voter registration and citizenship (in its legal sense) can be limiting because engaging legal permanent residents may be equally as important. Further it suggests that restricting the definition of civic participation to political activity diminishes the importance of involvement in more local issues and activities, which may be critical dimensions of civic education. The report identified myriad ways in which civic participation among immigrants was happening, often within their own organizations rather than within mainstream organizations and institutions. Within immigrant community organizations information is shared, social support is delivered, and contributions are made to the larger society. Further, the social networks that are built within these organizations can provide the foundation for processes of mobilization around issues of interest. The primary conclusion of this report is that we should be looking at participation at different levels and over time, depending on the degree of integration of one population or another.

In the ensuing years since this early study, the transition from civic to political engagement, and particularly the role of associations in this process, has increasingly captured the attention of migration scholars.[79] They ask whether the engagements with nonpolitical institutions that one finds

77. Ibid., 193.

78. Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (and the Association for the Study and Development of Community), *2002 Lessons Learned About Civic Participation Among Immigrants,* September 2002, http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/washingtonarea.pdf.

79. Wong, *Democracy's Promise: Immigrants and American Civic Institutions*; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, eds., *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*; Garcia and Sanchez, *Hispanics and the U.S. Political System: Moving into the Mainstream*; S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Celia Viramontes, "Civic Spaces: Mexican Hometown Associations and Immigrant Participation," *Journal of Social Issues* 66 (1) (2010): 155–173; and Kathleen M. Coll, *Remaking Citizenship: Latina Immigrants and New American Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

within immigrant communities can have consequences for activism and politics.[80] Conversely, can we attribute the low levels of political participation among foreign-born Latinos to their lack of involvement in community associations, in which civic skills can be developed or are other items, which are discussed earlier in this paper, much stronger explanatory factors? As Ramakrishnan has asked, do "group disparities in civic voluntarism . . . lead to continued inequalities in political participation over the long term"?[81]

One of the most important volumes on this topic in recent years emerged from a conference sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation. The book, *Civic Hopes and Political Realities*,[82] evaluates the potential for immigrant community organizations to have political impact at the local level. Conceptually, the authors in the book draw on measures of political visibility (are public officials aware of these immigrant organizations) and political weight (is there any recognition of the political significance of these organizations and are their interests considered). Visibility and weight can be impacted by particular places (what is the size of the host city and of the immigrant populations, is there an immigrant business sector, are there local political representatives of immigrant background), the national origins of the immigrant population that has developed the organization, and the kind of organization it is—a religious institution, a cultural group, a nonprofit, etc. In places where there is an active business sector, immigrant organizations have greater visibility; the same is true in places where local and state-level policies are hostile to immigrants, thereby galvanizing some immigrant populations to act (protest, resist, etc.) in the context of the organizations they have formed. Certainly some of the authors argue that these organizations as civic spaces with political potential have more impact at the local level than at the national level, but this may depend on the type of organization and whether it fosters, for example, bonding or bridging social capital.[83]

80. Hochschild, Gay, and Jones-Correa, eds., *Outsiders No More: Models of Immigrant Political Incorporation*, 15.

81. S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, "Race, Immigrant Incorporation, and Civic Voluntarism in the United States," in *Transforming Politics, Transforming America: The Political and Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States*, ed. Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Ramirez, 243.

82. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, eds., *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*.

83. Caroline B. Brettell, "Voluntary Organizations, Social Capital, and the Social Incorporation of Asian Indian Immigrants in the Dallas–Fort Worth Metroplex," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (2005): 821–851.

It is impossible to do justice to the contributions that this volume makes as it explores whether "the civic paths of immigrant participants lead to greater visibility and influence in politics or whether such hopes dissipate in the face of political stratification."[84] Not only does it offer a useful analytical framework but it also provides a host of case studies that emphasize different dimensions of the relationship between civic and political engagement. For example, Kristi Anderson argues in her chapter, based on an analysis of organizations in six different cities in the United States, that immigrant community organizations are not a good substitute for the political parties of the past in mobilizing immigrants to participate in politics.[85] In another chapter, based on research among Indian and Chinese immigrants in Edison, New Jersey, Sofya Aptekar argues that immigrants are largely ignored by a deeply entrenched Democratic political machine, despite their high human capital.[86] By contrast, and somewhat surprisingly, Laurencio Sanguino, based on research among Latinos in Chicago, shows that this population has a stronger political presence than Indians or Poles, which can be explained by the depth of their presence in the city and their early institution-building.[87] Els de Graauw offers an analysis of the role of 501(c) (3) nonprofit organizations in the process of immigrant political incorporation. She argues that these organizations "not only facilitate the political participation of individual immigrants . . . but also function as independent actors in local politics advancing the collective interests of the immigrant community. Immigrants' political skills and resources foster immigrants' political interest, and mobilize immigrants' civic and political participation."[88]

While the outcome evidence presented in this volume is varied, the editors emphasize that organizations do matter, that they can fill a space that political parties have tended to ignore (and presumably should not ignore moving forward), and that they can play a role in the process of political

84. Ibid., 3.

85. Kristi Andersen, "Parties, Organizations, and Political Incorporation: Immigrants in Six U.S. Cities," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 77–106.

86. Sofya Aptekar, "Highly Skilled but Unwelcome in Politics: Asian Indians and Chinese in a New Jersey Suburb," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 222–243.

87. Laurencio Sanguino, "Selective Service: Indians, Poles, and Mexicans in Chicago," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 244.

88. Els de Graauw, "Nonprofit Organizations: Agents of Immigrant Political Incorporation in Urban America," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 324.

incorporation, although that is sometimes a role that is constrained. As they assert, "immigrant civic organizations have the potential to be vehicles of political engagement, but that much of that power depends on their ability to build wide-ranging coalitions with mainstream and ethnic organizations, to draw on assistance from government and private sources, to create federated structures to harness the positive returns to homeland participation, and to take advantage of political events that facilitate organizing."[89]

In a somewhat different approach, Caroline Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahay, based on ethnographic research with Asian Indian and Vietnamese immigrants in the Dallas–Fort Worth metropolitan area, highlight a community of practice model, arguing that this model focuses attention on processes by which, and the contexts within which, immigrant newcomers learn civic skills that can then eventually extend into the political sphere.[90] They argue that conceptualizing the civic sphere in terms of communities of practice offers a more dynamic approach to the development of participatory citizenship than does the social capital approach to civic engagement.[91] Their approach is, of course, predicated on a more expansive definition of citizenship. Their book includes an analysis of a range of communities of practice, ethnic associations, religious assemblies, cultural festivals and pan-Asian banquets, as well as the pathways to more formal participation. As they participate in these activities, immigrant newcomers gain greater civic and political visibility and can draw the attention of political candidates who speak at their community events.

The focus on religious assemblies in particular as arenas for developing skills of civic participation has attracted the attention of a host of other

89. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, 35.

90. Caroline B. Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Indian and Vietnamese Immigrants* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

91. Ibid., 9.

researchers.[92] Much of this research finds a positive correlation between participation in religious assemblies and greater civic engagement (expressions of good citizenship in perhaps a different way from the responsibilities of voting, etc.) although the link to broader political engagement is not always established.

While there is some concern that religious institutions promote ethnic particularism and hence are not places that foster greater social and political incorporation, recent research has argued that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. For example, Michael Foley and Dean Hoge demonstrate that religious congregations not only provide services but also foster community involvement, and they nurture civic skills that are transferable to other contexts.[93] This is precisely what Christina Mora finds in her study of a Mexican immigrant Catholic parish that offers pathways to greater civic participation.[94] The parish creates spaces (in the form of formalized prayer groups) where individuals acquire not only new skills and resources but also build social networks and develop "cultural scripts" about civic engagement and volunteerism.[95] In addition, the parish offers connections to other secular organizations that help participants to become more aware of broader civic debates as well as provide them with opportunities for volunteering and political participation.

In a somewhat different approach, Itay Greenspan and colleagues identify several different motivations among first-generation immigrants

92. Fred Kniss and Paul D. Numrich, *Sacred Assemblies and Civic Engagement: How Religion Matters for America's Newest Immigrants* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Wendy Cadge and Elaine Howard Ecklund, "Immigration and Religion," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 359–379; Elaine H. Ecklund and Jerry Z. Park, "Religious Diversity and Community Volunteerism among Asian Americans," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (2) (2007): 233–244; Michael W. Foley and Dean R. Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Shape Our Newest Citizens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Peggy Levitt, "Religion as a Path to Civic Engagement," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31 (4) (2008): 766–791; Janelle Wong, Kathy Rim, and Haven Perez, "Protestant Churches and Conservative Politics: Latinos and Asians in the United States," in *Civic Hopes and Political Realities: Immigrants, Community Organizations and Political Engagement*, ed. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 271–299; Alex Stepick, Terry Rey, and Sarah J. Mahler, *Churches and Charity in the Immigrant City: Religion, Immigration and Civic Engagement in Miami* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009); and Brettell and Reed-Danahay, *Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Indian and Vietnamese Immigrants*.

93. Foley and Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Shape Our Newest Citizens*.

94. G. Christina Mora, "Religion and the Organizational Context of Immigrant Civic Engagement: Mexican Catholicism in the USA," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (11) (2013): 1647–1665.

95. Ibid., 1648.

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within religious congregations for volunteerism and civic engagement: religious beliefs, social influence, and the benefits of enhanced human and social capital.[96] They found that the first motivation ranked highest and enhanced human capital the least. They also found marked differences between recent and established immigrants, with the former group emphasizing social capital and influence more than the latter group.

Other studies have identified forms of religio-political activism within immigrant faith-based organizations. In their study of a religious congregation, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, and a community-organizing network, the Salvadoran American National Association, in Los Angeles, Stephanie Kotin and colleagues show how religion promotes and sustains political engagement not only on behalf of but also with immigrants who are primarily of Latino origin.[97] The authors suggest that more attention should be paid within these contexts to enhance the naturalization of immigrants and the participation rates of new citizens. Marion Coddou explores the role of faith-based institutions in mobilizing Latinos for the 2006 immigrant rights protests.[98] She sees these organizations as a powerful structural mechanism impacting the political involvement of immigrants, particularly those who are disadvantaged economically. Prema Kurien focuses her attention on how the differences between immigrants and their children shape processes of civic engagement in Indian Christian congregations.[99] These two generations hold quite distinct understandings not only of Christian worship, but also of evangelism, social outreach, and the interrelationships among them.

It is important to note that not all the findings in this broad body of research on community organizations and religious assemblies are consistent, leaving the answer to the question of whether civic engagement leads to political engagement an open one. For example, Carol Zabin and Luis

96. Itay Greenspan, Jill Witmer Sinha, and Femida Handy, "The Road to Volunteering is Paved with Good Intentions: Volunteering in Immigrant Congregations as a Response to Religious, Social and Instrumental Motivations," *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* 28 (2) (2011): 1–17; and Jill Witmer Sinha, Itay Greenspan, and Femida Handy, "Volunteering and Civic Participation Among Immigrant Members of Ethnic Congregations: Complementary NOT Competitive," *Journal of Civil Society* 7 (1) (2011): 23–40.

97. Stephanie Kotin, Grace R. Dyrness, and Clara Irazábal, "Immigration and Integration: Religious and Political Activism for/with Immigrants in Los Angeles," *Progress in Development Studies* 11 (4) (2011): 263–284.

98. Marion Coddou, "An Institutional Approach to Collective Action: Evidence from Faith-Based Latino Mobilization in the 2006 Immigrant Rights Protests," *Social Problems* 63 (2016): 127–150.

99. Prema Kurien, "Religion, Social Incorporation, and Civic Engagement: Second-Generation Indian American Christians," *Review of Religious Research* 55 (2013): 81–104.

Escala, examining the participation of Mexican immigrants in metropolitan Los Angeles in Hometown Associations (HTAs), argue that despite the galvanization of members of these organizations in the face of Proposition 187, for the most part HTAs remain primarily circumscribed to Mexican spheres, offering social support in the United States and fostering philanthropic work in Mexico rather than serving as fertile ground for political activity.[100] They do note, however, that HTAs have the potential to be important locations for immigrant political empowerment.

Zabin and Escala's work draws attention to a much larger corpus of literature on Hometown Associations and other immigrant community organizations that engage in transnational work. Samuel Huntington saw such organizations as a threat to American civil society because they perpetuated the identification of immigrants with their homelands rather than with the United States.[101] Thus, scholars who have taken up this issue pose the empirical question of whether transnational practices within organizations hinder or enhance the political integration of immigrants in the United States.

In an early exploration of this question, Anna Karpathakis, based on research among Greek immigrants in New York City, argued that home country issues can become a rallying point for involvement in the political process and institutions of the United States.[102] A similar conclusion was drawn by Louis De Sipio and colleagues based on research among Dominicans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Puerto Ricans:

> The expanding opportunities for migrants to be involved in the electoral politics of their sending countries does appear to have an independent effect on their perceptions of long-term connection to the United States and, in more cases than not, speeds it. Involvement in these activities reduces respondents' evaluations of the likelihood of their staying in the United States permanently. At the same time, this one form of home country engagement is balanced by perceptions of influence. Migrants who perceive they have equal or more influence in the United States see their futures

100. Carol Zabin and Luis Escala, "From Civic Association to Political Participation: Mexican Hometown Associations and Mexican Immigrant Political Empowerment in Los Angeles," *Frontera Norte* 14 (27) (2002): 7–42.

101. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

102. Anna Karpathakis, "Home Society Politics and Immigrant Political Incorporation: The Case of Greek Immigrants in New York City," *International Migration Review* 33 (1) (1999): 55–78.

here unlike those who perceive that their influence is primarily in the sending country.[103]

Alejandro Portes and colleagues have explored this question among Mexican, Dominican, and Colombian migrants and their research reveals that there is little conflict between political incorporation and transnational activism.[104] In fact, they found that most of the organizations within these immigrant communities have mixed activities, some of them domestic and some of them transnational. A particularly intriguing finding is that those organizations with both more educated and a better-established membership were more likely to be pro-integration and to be involved in both civic and political activities. Furthermore, they found variations among the three groups, with Dominicans and Mexicans being more involved than Colombians, which they attribute to a process of depoliticization in their home country for the latter group. Here the issue of what kind of political culture immigrants bring with them is important. And in a different twist, Adrian Pantoja, in research on Dominicans in New York City, found that while transnational ties may encourage political participation other than voting, they may either depress or have no impact on naturalization.[105] Pantoja suggests that the greatest impact of transnational ties may be on those political activities that have "no eligibility requirement" (citizenship or registration). But this too suggests that building on such activities and then redirecting them toward completing eligibility—naturalizing, registering to vote, and voting—may have positive outcomes for greater political participation. Such positive outcomes are identified by Judith Boruchoff and colleagues in their research on Latinos in Chicago.[106] It is in the context of Hometown Associations and other community organizations that individuals become aware of political issues and develop their own sense of agency as activists in both sending and host societies. These authors conclude that, "Viewed from a transnational perspective,

103. Louis De Sipio, "Transnational Politics and Civic Engagement: Do Home Country Political Ties Limit Latino Immigrant Pursuit of U.S. Civic Engagement and Citizenship?" in *Transforming Politics, Transforming America: The Political and Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States,* ed. Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Ramirez, 123–124.

104. Alejandro Portes, Cristina Escobar, and Renelinda Arana, "Bridging the Gap: Transnational and Ethnic Organizations in the Political Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31 (6) (2008): 1056–1090.

105. Adrian D. Pantoja, "Transnational Ties and Immigrant Political Incorporation: The Case of Dominicans in Washington Heights, New York," *International Migration Review* 43 (4) (2005): 140.

106. Judith Boruchoff et al., *Latino Immigrants in the Windy City: New Trends in Civic Engagement*, Reports on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement, no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2010).

migrants' continued participation in civic and political processes in their native land is not at odds with integration in their destination country; in fact, engagement in one of these arenas may enhance participants' efficacy in the other."[107]

The role of transnational associations in fostering civic and political engagement has been equally of interest to scholars of Asian American civic and political engagement.[108] Jane Junn and colleagues found that among Asian Americans, those who were involved in homeland politics were in fact slightly more likely to vote than those who were not (73–67 percent), and that in general involvement in homeland politics did not deter or detract from involvement in U.S. politics.[109] Hiroko Furuya and Christian Collet have explored the emergence of Saigon nationalism in the United States.[110] They describe social and fraternal groups, "such as the Vietnamese Community of Southern California (VCSC), who provided support services to newly arriving Vietnamese. Frequently, however, they would organize activities and rituals (such as festivals commemorating Tet, the lunar new year) that in one way or another turned political—invoking memories of the lost nation of South Vietnam and fostering anger toward the CPV."[111] These authors observe that few Vietnamese during the early years of their presence in the United States became citizens or registered to vote; they viewed focusing on the liberation of Vietnam as their primary duty so that they could return home to a democratic Vietnam. But when President Clinton opened Vietnam, the attention of the Vietnamese community in the United States turned to U.S. political engagement; in 1992, Tony Lam, of Vietnamese origin, won a seat on the City Council of Westminster, California. As the authors trace the history of these changes,

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107. Ibid., 80.

108. Collet and Lien, eds., *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans.*

109. Junn, Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Wong, *Asian Americans and the 2008 Election.*

110. Hiroko Furuya and Christian Collet, "Vietnam and the Emergence of Saigon Nationalism in the United States," in *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans,* ed. Collet and Lien, 56–73; and Brettell and Reed-Danahay, *Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Indian and Vietnamese Immigrants.*

111. Furuya and Collet, "Vietnam and the Emergence of Saigon Nationalism in the United States," 63.

they suggest that forms of transnational mobilization can become building blocks for forms of domestic mobilization.[112]

At this juncture, it is important to introduce the more theoretical and critical arguments offered by Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and John Hibbing.[113] They provide three reasons for why they do not think that belonging to a voluntary association is a foundation for "good citizenship": first, because people join groups that are more homogenous rather than heterogeneous; second, because civic participation does not necessarily lead to and may even "turn people off politics"; and third, because democratic values are not necessarily promoted by all groups. As they state: "Good citizens need to learn that democracy is messy, inefficient, and conflict-ridden. Voluntary associations do not teach these lessons."[114] In other words, they question the conclusion that civic participation through voluntary associations enhances political behavior and participation and strengthens democracy, although they do acknowledge that the relationship between civic and political engagement holds for some populations or for some individuals who by nature are more active than others.

Despite this cautionary note, it is my view that forms of civic engagement can indeed lay the foundation for enhanced political engagement, not only for legal immigrants but also for the undocumented.[115] It is wise to be mindful of the distinctions that authors like Hui Li and Jiasheng Zhang draw between different modes of political participation (voting, formal, and informal) as well as "the mechanisms under which civic associations

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112. A cautionary and insightful perspective is offered by Lien based on research among Chinese populations in Southern California. See Pei-te Lien, "Transnational Homeland Concerns and Participation in U.S. Politics: A Comparison among Immigrants from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 2 (1) (2006): 56–78. She draws a distinction between regime-influencing (e.g., campaign contributions) and regime-supporting (e.g., voter registration) activities and how these are impacted by transnational politics. If homeland issues reflect U.S. ideology and are in the U.S. national interest (e.g., expanding democracy) then, she argues, it will have a positive impact on participation in U.S. politics. See also Sangay Mishra, "The Limits of Transnational Mobilization: Indian American Lobby Groups and the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Deal," in *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans,* ed. Collet and Lien, 107–118; and Pei-te Lien and Janelle Wong, "Like Latinos? Explaining the Transnational Political Behavior of Asian Americans," in *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans,* ed. Collet and Lien, 137–152.

113. Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and John R. Hibbing, "Citizenship and Civic Engagement," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (2005): 228.

114. Ibid., 227.

115. Melanie Jones Gast and Dina G. Okamoto, "Moral or Civic Ties? Deservingness and Engagement Among Undocumented Latinas in Non-Profit Organizations," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (12) (2016): 2013–2030; and Rachel Meyer and Janice Fine, "Grassroots Citizenship at Multiple Scales: Rethinking Immigrant Civic Participation," *International Journal of Political Culture* 30 (2017): 323–348.

influence political participation."[116] They distinguish particularly between the scope of civic organizational involvement (number of affiliations and the fostering of bridging social ties) and the intensity (depth of involvement in which associations foster trust, cohesion, and bonding social ties), arguing that the latter has a more substantial impact on formal political participation. As they note, based on analysis of data drawn from the 2006 U.S. Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Survey, "participation in politics rises with participation in voluntary associations, even when these associations are quite apolitical . . . [and] the more involved one is in the active associations, the more political activities one will engage in."[117]

A further interesting finding of their research is that while classic socioeconomic status models are better at explaining individualized political behavior such as voting, mobilization is better at explaining formal and informal political behaviors.[118] Portes and colleagues come to a similar conclusion: "Individual immigrants seldom enter American politics on their own account. Instead they do so collectively in response to mobilizations organized by activists within their own communities or external ones seeking to address wrongs or achieve various goals."[119] Such collective behaviors often happen within the context of civic associations, making them fundamental to the process of political incorporation. Civic associations, as communities of practice, offer spaces where civic skills can be learned, where information can be disseminated, where confidence can develop, and where social networks can expand. All are vital to the engagement in the broader public sphere of politics.

116. Li and Zhang, "How Do Civic Associations Foster Political Participation? The Role of Scope and Intensity of Organizational Involvement," 5.

117. Ibid., 19.

118. Ibid., 20.

119. Portes, Escobar, and Arana, "Bridging the Gap: Transnational and Ethnic Organizations in the Political Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States," 1057.

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Conclusion: Solutions and Best Practices

In an article written for the Brookings Institution, Steven Schier notes that in the 1890s, within a few weeks of disembarking from ships at Ellis Island, immigrants often received a visit from a Tammany Hall ward heeler or they were introduced to other politicians at the local precinct hall. "Long before many of those newcomers fully understood what it was to be American, they knew quite well what it meant to be a Democrat or a Republican."[120] He suggests that the immigrants of today, by contrast, are closer to the fringes of American politics and voter turnout, which a century ago was more than 80 percent in presidential elections and 70 percent in off-year congressional elections. "The centripetal forces drawing immigrants into electoral politics in 1900 have been succeeded," Schier suggests, "by a set of strong and persistent centrifugal forces that discourage the full electoral participation and political assimilation that earlier generations of immigrants enjoyed."[121] He argues that there are three changes that have characterized American politics that have led to the exclusion of immigrants: the diminishing role of political parties, the emergence of new forms of campaigning, and, oddly enough, efforts to get more minorities involved in government (through, for example, the creation of noncompetitive electoral districts, which discourages outreach).

Schier's solution to this problem is twofold. He calls for incentives that will induce parties, candidates, and interest groups to seek every possible voter through mechanisms such as automatic national voter registration. He also calls for efforts to encourage more voting and to simplify ballots (including shortening them).

Other ideas about the political and civic engagement of immigrant newcomers and of new citizens have emerged from the discussion in this paper as well as from the larger body of materials assembled and reviewed by the Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship as it worked

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120. Steven E. Schier, "From Melting Pot to Centrifuge: Immigrants and American Politics," Brookings Institution, 2002, http://www.brookings.edu/articles/from-melting-pot-to-centrifuge-immigrants-and-american-politics.

121. Ibid.

toward formulating its final recommendations. I list several of them here by way of a conclusion.

- Approach or reach out to immigrant communities through their own institutions—such as ethnic media, voluntary organizations, community events, etc. The ethnic media can provide greater access to election materials and information. And through these organizations people can be organized or mobilized around issues that not only provide training in civic skills of how to get things done and create change, but also how to interact with the structures of government: local, statewide, and national.

- Take advantage of public libraries and bridging civic spaces[122] as places not only to reach unengaged populations but also to bring people of diverse backgrounds together and to educate populations about the process of naturalization, voter registration, how to learn about candidates, etc. Every element of the voting process needs to be explained. This might also be included in citizenship classes. As Jamie Johnston and Ragnar Audunson have argued, based on research in Norway, "conversation-based programming in public libraries shows great potential for supporting immigrants' political integration and bringing their voices into the public sphere by fostering linguistic competence, expanding social networks, promoting information exchange, and providing space for 'messy conversation.'"[123]

- Confront the language barriers and other barriers (including those related to the process of naturalization) that immigrants, particularly first-generation immigrants, face. As Waters and Pineau observe, the barriers to and inequalities in civic and political integration can be mitigated by partnerships among the voluntary sector, civil society, community-based organizations, the business sector, and government.[124]

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122. Eric Klinenberg refers to these as elements of "social infrastructure." He argues that "if states and societies do not recognize social infrastructure and how it works, they will fail to see a powerful way to promote civic engagement and social interaction, both within communities and across group lines." Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization and the Decline of Civic Culture* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2018), 16.

123. Jamie Johnston and Ragnar Audunson, "Supporting Immigrants' Political Integration through Discussion and Debate in Public Libraries," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* (2017): 21, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0961000617709056.

124. Waters and Pineau, *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*, 160.

- More cities should establish an Office of Welcoming Communities that focuses not just on economic integration, but also on social and political integration and that serves as a meeting place and umbrella framework for community-level organization.[125] Additionally, more studies of the Civic Health of Cities should be carried out and plans of action developed.[126] And more individuals from these communities, particularly the second-generation, should be encouraged to run for office.[127]

Above all, there need to be mechanisms to capture what Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee identified almost a decade ago as the "growing clout" of racial minorities, including both naturalized citizens and the children of immigrants.[128] These authors argue that these minorities do not naturally gravitate to partisanship and that they must be cultivated in myriad ways. This cultivation, I would argue, must take place on their own turf, in spaces where they feel comfortable. Efforts of inclusion and incorporation must replace those of exclusion and marginalization if we are to reinvigorate our democracy and create a civil society that is active and engaged.

125. Some examples include: https://www.cityofjerseycity.com/community/diversity/office_of_welcoming_communities; https://dallascityhall.com/departments/wcia/Pages/default.aspx; and https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/06/30/bright-spots-welcoming-and-integration.

126. See, for example, Houston Endowment, 2018 Houston Civic Health Index, https://www.ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-Houston-CHI-Draft.pdf.

127. For a discussion of new Americans who are running for office, see Sayu Bhojwani, *People Like Us: The New Wave of Candidates Knocking at Democracy's Door* (New York: The New Press, 2018). There are several such initiatives across the country: https://www.ilrc.org/inspiring-leadership-immigrant-communities; https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/11/how-nashville-is-training-a-new-generation-immigrant-leaders/508598/; https://generocity.org/philly/2017/09/26/welcoming-center-new-pennsylvanians-immigrant-leadership-institute/; and https://www.nyic.org/membership/member-benefits/leadership-development/.

128. Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party: Race, Immigration and the Failure (of Political Parties) to Engage the Electorate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2.

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Caroline B. Brettell is University Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and the Founding Director of the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute at Southern Methodist University. She has spent her career studying the immigrant populations in Europe, Canada, and the United States. Her particular interests are in the gendered aspects of migration, issues of identity and citizenship, and the relationship between immigrants and cities. In addition to over one hundred journal articles and book chapters, she is the author, co-author, or editor/co-editor of nineteen books. Her most recent books are *Gender and Migration* (2016); *Identity and the Second Generation: How Children of Immigrants Find Their Space* (co-edited with Faith Nibbs, 2016); *Following Father Chiniquy: Immigration, Religious Schism and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Illinois* (2015); *Anthropological Conversations: Talking Culture Across Disciplines* (2014); and *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines* (3rd edition, co-edited with James F. Hollifield, 2015). Brettell has served as Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Southern Methodist University (1994–2004 and 2019–2022), Dean-ad-Interim of Dedman College (2006–2008), Co-Director of the Health and Society Program at Southern Methodist University (2016–2018), President of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe (1996–1998), and President of the Social Science History Association (2000–2001). She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2017 and is a member of the Academy's Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship.

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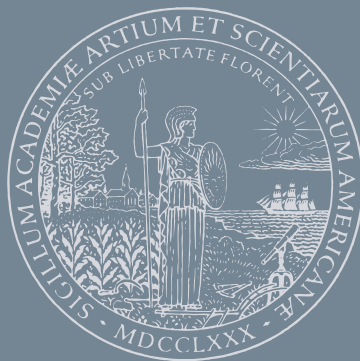**Selected Publications of the American Academy**

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