



ENGAGING IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: ARE FEDERAL RESIDENCY POLICIES A HINDRANCE, A HELP, OR IRRELEVANT?

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SUMMARY: I. *Introduction*. II. *Theoretical Background*. III. *Research Design and Findings*. IV. *Conclusion*. V. *References*.

I. INTRODUCTION¹

Few political scientists would dispute the claim that government policies and administrative practices do much to shape the contours of mass democratic engagement. To be sure, in a well-established representative system, such regulations are a reflection of public preferences and group pressures. Yet once established, policies alter incentives for political participation and send important signals to the public (Lowi 1969; Mettler and Soss 2004; Schattschneider 1975). Who has standing in a particular political arena? Who counts as a legitimate participant, and whose voices are entitled to be heard in a policymaking process? Such matters are never truly settled in any democracy. In the American context, these boundary questions frequently surface in a number of scholarly literatures. Research on voting registration, for example, shows that the different rules enacted within the fifty states to allow access to the polls can have a profound effect on turnout rates and the mobilization strategies developed by candidates seeking public office. Policies concerning the financing of campaigns, the staging of primaries and caucuses to nominate candidates, and the staffing of polling sites all poten-

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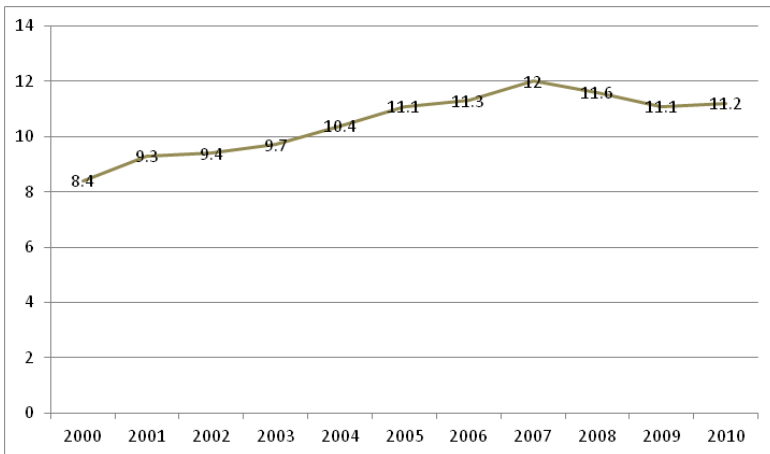
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¹ This chapter extends work we have done in collaboration with Stacey Connaughton. We thank Cristina Escobar for helpful comments.

tially have an impact as well on the scope of participation and the ultimate outcome of elections.²

In this chapter, we investigate how federal migration policies in the United States affect the political involvement of immigrants. At present, the foreign-born population of the U.S. slightly exceeds 40 million, approximately one out of eight residents (Passel and Cohn 2011, 10). This strikingly large percentage is nearly unprecedented in American history. Most of the contemporary foreign-born population emigrated from Latin America, primarily Mexico, or Asia. Demand for immigrant labor in the U.S. rose substantially in the 1990s, far exceeding the number of entry visas permitted under federal administrative statutes. As a consequence of this imbalance, 28 percent of the foreign-born population today is thought to lack U.S. residency authorization. Figure 1 shows the substantial rise in the number of undocumented immigrants between 2000 and 2010, increasing from 8.4 million at the beginning of the decade to 11.2 ten years later. Slightly over one-third of all immigrants today are authorized to live in the United States either permanently or temporarily but do not have citizenship rights. The rest, an estimated 37 percent, have become naturalized U.S. citizens.

Figure 1. Estimated Undocumented Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 2000-2010 (Millions)



Source: Passel and Cohn (2011), accessed November 13, 2011.

² These literatures would fill many shelves at a major university library. See, *e. g.*, Lowi (1985), Polsby (1983), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), Verba and Nie (1972), and Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980).

Does this remarkable variation in federal authorization status affect the level and quality of democratic engagement among the foreign-born? We take up this question below. If we were to focus specifically on voter turnout, little analysis would be needed. Except for a few scattered municipalities around the U.S., only citizens can vote (García Bedolla 2006; Hayduk 2006). Both the undocumented and legal permanent or temporary residents are barred from this form of involvement. But what are the implications of authorization status on other vital forms of engagement, such as discussing American politics informally with family and friends, acquiring knowledge of key governmental actors in the U.S., and participation in both the “immigrant rights” social movement and election campaigns? Is a lack of federal residency papers or a more general lack of citizenship rights a hindrance to democratic inclusion? Or can formal legal marginalization and exclusion propel immigrants towards deeper substantive engagement in American politics – albeit not at the ballot box?

Drawing from original survey data on the Mexican-born population that we collected during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign and a Pew Hispanic Center survey of Latinos in 2007, we address this question. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to analyze the impact of federal residency status on the political involvement of immigrants using the kinds of survey tools and methods that have been applied so fruitfully over the last sixty years to the study of public opinion and participation within the conventional American electorate. Some previous work has assessed whether noncitizens participate to the same degree as citizens in non-electoral political activities (*e. g.*, Barreto and Muñoz 2003; Leal 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Uhlaner 1996), but no authors have yet delved systematically into the question of whether undocumented noncitizens in particular behave any differently.

We find that formal legal exclusion from the electorate can be a barrier to democratic engagement for the Latino foreign-born in some respects, but might actually increase participation in groups and social movements that address the concerns of immigrants. However, these effects fade in the face of multivariate controls, a finding which suggests that the impediments to civic inclusion or inducements for action within this population are not primarily administrative. In the section below, we discuss the limited academic literature in this area, identifying ways that federal migration status could affect orientations towards American politics. We then present the statistical results from the 2008 and 2007 surveys of immigrants. A final concluding section assesses the larger implications of these findings.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

For individuals who were raised in the United States, the desire to participate in politics likely began to develop early in life, well before being legally eligible to vote. Indeed, classic studies of political socialization indicate that children as young as eight or nine acquire an easy familiarity with the principal actors in and around government (Almond and Verba 1963; Lane and Sears 1964). Most of the immigrants in the United States today settled after these formative childhood years (Rumbaut 2004). Many therefore approach American politics with a large measure of uncertainty and ambivalence (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Wong 2006). Surveys of the foreign-born suggest that as immigrants are exposed to American civic life over many years, their interest in party politics, campaigns, and policy issues deepens (Cain and Doherty 2006; Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; DeSipio 2006; McCann, Cornelius, and Leal 2009). In general, however, persons who were raised outside of the United States and had only limited contact with the country prior to settling as an adult may never feel fully included and “at home” (Jones-Correa 1998; Massey and Sánchez 2010; Nishikawa, McCann, and Connaughton 2011).

Federal administrative policies concerning migration could exacerbate these feelings of estrangement for many of the foreign-born. As described in the historian Mae Ngai’s (2004) *Impossible Subjects*, the American public since before the constitutional founding has wrestled with thorny issues of inclusion, race, and ethnicity. Concerns that immigrants threaten U.S. political culture, social cohesion, and the standard of living have surfaced with each wave of settlement. The first federal restrictions on entry into the United States were enacted in 1875 when Congress banned persons convicted of “crimes involving moral turpitude”. The criteria for legal exclusion expanded in the years that followed and were applied selectively to undesirable ethnic groups. In 1882, the federal government stopped all Chinese settlement in response to public pressure. Yet it was not until the 1920s that the concept of an “illegal alien” who was subject to deportation emerged in public discourse. The Immigration Act of 1924 eliminated the statute of limitations on deportation for unauthorized entry and sanctioned the expulsion of any person who did not possess an appropriate visa. Five years later, another federal law made entry into the U.S. without formal inspection by border authorities a criminal as well as civil offense.

As observers of American politics would well recognize, the practice of dividing the foreign-born into “authorized” *versus* “unauthorized” populations (the former including naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents

for whom naturalization is an option, temporary workers, refugees, and asylum-seekers) remains quite current. Being subject to deportation and without the option of naturalizing, undocumented immigrants seemingly have an incentive to keep a low profile. Andersen (2005, 14) posits that “undocumented immigrants can’t participate in ‘public actions’ because bringing attention to themselves could get them deported” (see also Aranda and Vaquera 2011; Gonzales 2011; Fennelly and Jones-Correa 2009). Those public actions would include all manner of collective activities, e.g., passing out campaign literature, circulating petitions, and protesting. The prospects of remaining forever on the margins of society might also keep unauthorized immigrants from learning about American politics in the first place, or even discussing it openly with others.

On the other hand, immigrants who were authorized to enter the United States and opted to naturalize may evidence significantly higher levels of engagement in American democracy. Not only are naturalized citizens not at risk of deportation, but the process of becoming a citizen is likely to reinforce connections to others who are attuned to civic life. Such contact could well foster a richer understanding of political institutions and opportunities to become involved (Bloemraad 2006). In short, then, one perspective on the impact of federal residency and naturalization policies on the political behavior of the foreign-born can be labeled the *estrangement* hypothesis. Administrative regulations create a system of formal legal stratification, with naturalized citizens possessing rights, civic recognition, and power that noncitizens, and especially undocumented noncitizens, lack. These categories are reflected in the day-to-day practice of politics: legal exclusion breeds a more general estrangement from public affairs in the United States.

If federal policies affect immigrant involvement in this fashion, troubling normative concerns could be raised. In principle, elected officials in the U.S. represent citizens and noncitizens alike (Schildkraut 2011). The Census Bureau periodically counts all inhabitants of the country, and this tally serves as the basis for apportionment and the drawing of congressional districts. In practice, of course, government officials are more inclined to respond to the concerns of reliable voters. Yet the voice of residents who are excluded from the franchise could still be heard through social movements, campaign activity, and other channels – provided these nonvoters are attentive to the ebb and flow of American politics and are open to participation in some way.

While the *estrangement* hypothesis is quite plausible, it is also theoretically possible that immigrants without documentation who are at risk of deportation or detention could become *more* rather than less attentive and active. Research on the effects of emotions on political attitudes and be-

havior shows that thoughts of fear can cause individuals to seek out information about anxiety-producing objects or events. Such emotions further prompt one to act in new ways to respond to these threats (Brader 2005; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000). Expanding these findings to political engagement among the foreign-born, immigrants without papers who live under the threat of deportation and other sanctions may become more deeply aware of news reports, more inclined to discuss political issues, and more readily mobilized into political activity – especially collective actions that are dedicated to advancing the rights and security of the undocumented. We label this the *mobilization* hypothesis: immigrants without residency authorization are more likely than those with papers and the naturalized to be engaged in U.S. politics by virtue of their precarious position within American society.³

We examine both the *estrangement* and *mobilization* hypotheses below specifically with respect to the Mexican immigrant community. Focusing on this group is appropriate for several reasons. First, the Mexican-born constitute by a wide margin the largest bloc of immigrants in the United States today. Approximately one-third of the foreign-born emigrated from Mexico (Passel and Cohn 2009). Second, Mexicans make up the majority of the undocumented population (60 percent); therefore, this is the natural population from which to sample to probe the effects of authorization status. Third, some scholars of immigrant incorporation single out the Mexican-born as a particularly challenging group to integrate into American politics and society given the vast historic differences between the United States and Mexico. The statistical models presented in the following section will allow us to assess whether federal immigration statutes contribute to civic alienation, or whether a lack of legal authorization is instead a force for political organizing.

When making such inferences, it is important to control for a number of demographic, social, and economic factors that are widely linked to immigrant involvement in American politics (e.g., DeSipio 2006; Lien 1994; Ramakrishnan 2005; Wong 2006): socioeconomic status, as indicated by education level, household affluence, gender, and age; place of settlement, that is, whether an immigrant lives in a traditional destination or one of the new destination sites in the Midwest or Southeast that became popular in the 1990s (Andersen 2010; Massey 2008); involvement in religious organizations; and the amount of time that an immigrant has lived in the United States.

³ Some case studies of activism among immigrants support the notion that being undocumented can be an impetus for substantive political engagement. See Flores (2003), Gonzales (2008), and Varsanyi (2005).

All other things equal, individuals with greater socioeconomic resources are more inclined to follow politics and take part. This is true for immigrants and the U.S.-born alike. The same could be said for Mexicans who reside in traditional settlement areas, such as the cities along the border and Chicago, where there is a wide array of bicultural organizations to orient immigrants towards American politics (Wong 2006). Church organizations are particularly relevant in the lives of Latino immigrants, often serving as the center for family and cultural activities. Through interactions with fellow church members, immigrants are likely to be exposed to a variety of political signals, and are more easily pulled into civic life (see, *e. g.*, DeSipio 2007; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). The number of years that Mexicans have lived in the United States is a proxy variable for overall exposure to American politics and society. With such exposure comes enhanced engagement in civic life.

Many of these factors have been found to correlate with federal residency status. Given the length of time it takes to become naturalized—five or more years—there is a considerable amount of overlap between exposure to U.S. politics and being an American citizen. Social and economic variables such as education and affluence similarly overlap with civic status, with undocumented immigrants typically falling at the lower rungs of the SES continuum. Noncitizens are more inclined to be found in newer settlement sites, where other barriers besides a lack of citizenship rights may undermine participation in American politics. We proceed in the analysis below with these multivariate considerations in mind. After controlling for these many background factors, what is the unique effect of federal legal stratification on an immigrant's attention to U.S. politics and involvement?

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND FINDINGS

The potential effects of naturalization and documentation status on the engagement of Mexican immigrants in American politics are examined through two surveys, a two-wave panel study that bracketed the historic 2008 presidential campaign, and a single-wave survey conducted one year earlier on the eve of the Democratic and Republican presidential primary elections.

Study 1

The data for this study are drawn from a large survey of Mexican-born immigrants residing either in San Antonio, Texas, or north-central Indi-

ana, including Indianapolis but excluding the Chicago region. Rather than sample nationally, these two regions were chosen to maximize variations in the social and civic profile of immigrants (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, Chapter 4). The San Antonio area is a traditional destination for Mexican settlers and has become a leading center for Mexican-American life in the United States. A multitude of bicultural social, civic, and economic organizations can be found within the city. In 2007, nearly one million Hispanics lived in the metropolitan region, the vast majority having Mexican roots. This constitutes nearly 60 percent of the total population in that area (Batalova and Terrazas 2010; Pew Hispanic Center 2010). Mexicans in San Antonio have long been recognized for their high level of engagement in public affairs. One study reports for example that in the 1964 presidential election, Mexican-Americans in this city voted at a higher rate than the local general population (Buehler 1977).

In contrast, north-central Indiana is typical of “new” settlement destinations for Mexicans and other immigrant groups. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of Indiana-based Mexicans rose by approximately 60,000. Out of all metropolitan areas in the United States, Indianapolis had the fifth-highest rate of Latino population growth during this period (Sagamore Institute for Policy Research 2006). While the number of Mexicans currently living in Indiana is much smaller than in Texas and other states along the U.S.-Mexico border, the rapid expansion of immigrant communities is unprecedented in the Hoosier State.

In early-September of 2008, immediately following the major party nominating conventions, and continuing through the first week in October, 633 Mexican immigrants in San Antonio and 590 in north-central Indiana were recruited for the study. Surveys were administered by telephone, with respondents randomly selected through records obtained from a well-established marketing research firm specializing in the Latino community.⁴

⁴ Funding for these surveys was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Russell Sage Foundation. We alone are responsible for the findings and interpretations presented here. Interviewing Services of America (Van Nuys, CA), a firm with a long track-record of academic survey research on Latinos, administered the interviews. Since no ready-to-use listings of migrant settlers are available in the two regional sites, random samples of “Mexican heritage” households were obtained from Geoscape International (Miami, FL). Up to fifteen attempts were made to reach a respondent. Because the telephone records contained both U.S.-born Mexican-Americans and immigrants in unknown proportions, and many lines were out of service, there is no straightforward way to calculate a rate of response. If we define “response rate” as the ratio of completed interviews / attempted interviews of subjects known to fit the study protocol, *i. e.*, RR5 in American Association for Public Opinion Research (2006), the estimated rate is 84 percent. This figure matches

Nearly all interviews were in Spanish and averaged approximately 23 minutes. As is common with surveys of this length, some study participants were not able to complete the interview; the final N is 1,023, or 92 percent of the original respondent pool. Immediately after the November 4 election, as many immigrants as possible from the initial survey were relocated and interviewed again. In total, 486 respondents took part in this second wave, 238 in Indiana and 248 in Texas.⁵

Several distinct forms of democratic engagement were covered during these surveys. The first that we investigate are simple conversations about American politics with family and friends. These sorts of discussions are an integral part of civic life and can provide individuals with much needed news about political issues (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Parker, Parker, and McCann 2008). In the September wave of the survey, respondents stated whether they discussed politics *daily* (coded 5), *weekly* (4), *monthly* (3), *once in a while* (2), or *never* (1). Most of the Mexicans in our sample, 82 percent, reported at least occasional conversations. The average score on this five-point scale was 2.9, indicating that the typical respondent engaged in discussions about U.S. politics approximately once a month, a level of attention that would fall below that for the general American public (Dalton 2006).

Another essential facet of democratic engagement is knowledge of the partisan leanings of government officials and representative institutions. Is President George W. Bush a Republican or Democrat? Which party holds majority control in the U.S. House of Representatives? Without basic information such as this, it is difficult to imagine that individuals living in the

that of another recent telephone survey of Mexican immigrants (McCann, Cornelius, and Leal 2009). It is worth noting, that with respect to key background variables such as gender, age, and level of education, study participants are similar to the Mexican-born respondents in other large-scale surveys (*e. g.*, Camp 2003; Moreno 2005; McCann, Cornelius and Leal 2009; Pew Hispanic Center 2006).

⁵ A re-contact rate of 48 percent is lower than what is typically obtained in two-wave election-year panel surveys of the U.S. electorate (*e.g.*, the American National Election Study). We should note, however, that this is a very atypical sampling population. Approximately one-fifth of the respondents dropped out of the study because they were no longer reachable at the telephone line that had been used just two months earlier. Another 26 percent of the first-wave respondents apparently still used the same telephone number, but could not be reached after more than 15 attempts. Only three percent of the survey participants in the first wave declined to take part in the second interview when successfully contacted again. Panel attrition was not significantly correlated with most socioeconomic and demographic traits: gender, place of residence, level of affluence, citizenship and documentation status, education level, time spent in the United States, and language use at home. There was, however, a slight (but statistically significant) tendency for younger respondents from the first-wave to drop out.

United States could effectively hold leaders accountable for their positions (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). The immigrants in our survey offered responses to both of these items in the September wave. Forty percent were not able to answer either question; only 17 percent responded correctly to each. This fairly lopsided distribution points to a wide gap in political understanding among the Mexican-born, a gap that comports with the findings reported in Abrahano and Alvarez (2010) and Hajnal and Lee (2011), among others.

When exploring democratic engagement, it is important to examine not only awareness of U.S. politics, but also actual participation. We focus here on two very different modes of involvement, actions within the immigrant rights movement and participation in election campaigns. When asked in September if they had taken part in marches, protests, or rallies in support of immigrants, one out of five respondents stated that they had—a rather large minority that speaks to the enduring significance of this social movement—. Following the election, respondents in the second wave noted whether they had gotten involved in electoral politics by discussing particular candidates with family and friends, encouraging others who were eligible to vote to turn out in the elections, attending rallies and other public events on behalf of a candidate, or posting campaign advertisements in parks and other locations. Only 21 percent had been completely inactive during these elections. Thirty percent reported one activity, and 49 percent were involved in two or more ways.

To what extent did federal residency status shape engagement in American politics? This question can be addressed only if survey respondents are willing to disclose whether their papers are in order. When interviewing subjects, every effort was made to establish rapport.⁶ These efforts paid off. During both the September and November interviews, immigrants reported whether they were naturalized citizens. There was very little missing data for this item. Later during these interviews, respondents who stated that they were not citizens were asked whether they had “working papers” or not.⁷ Thirty-five percent in both survey waves stated that they did not or refused to answer the question entirely.⁸ We classify these respondents as “undocumented”.

⁶ All interviewers were native speakers of Spanish with many years of experience in survey research.

⁷ This was also the method Camp (2003) used in a survey of immigrants to determine who was documented.

⁸ Fewer than 15 percent of the respondents who were queried about “working papers” opted not to answer the question.

Table 1 shows the distributions of formal legal status for each time period. Overall, there is a high degree of consistency in reporting. This does not completely authenticate the measurement of legal status—it is possible that some respondents accidentally or intentionally misreported their status in one installment of the survey, and then misreported it in the same way a second time—but the consistency in distributions is reassuring. As noted at the bottom of this table, the continuity coefficient for responses is .837. This coefficient is analogous to a test-retest correlation; it indicates a high degree of reliability in individual responses (Agresti 1996). To reduce any random measurement errors in response, we average the scores for these two items. Immigrants who stated in both waves that they lacked working papers were coded 1 for the variable indicating “undocumented” status, those who stated once but not twice that they did not have papers were scored as .5, and the rest were coded 0. Comparable coding rules were used to identify “non-citizens with papers”.

Table 1
Self-Reported Documentation Status
of Mexican Immigrants in the 2008 Panel Survey

	<i>September</i>	<i>November</i>
Naturalized U.S. Citizen	34%	30%
Has Working Papers	31%	35%
Without Papers	35%	35%

Source: Authors' surveys of the Mexican-born population in north-central Indiana and San Antonio, TX. $N = 486$. The continuity coefficient for these identifications from the September to the November survey wave (Pearson's C , adjusted for the dimensions of this table) is .837. This statistic is analogous to test-retest reliability correlations (Agresti 1996).

With federal authorization status coded in this way, we turn to the substantive findings in Table 2. Regression analyses allow us to estimate the impact of being an authorized noncitizen versus being undocumented on four measures of political engagement, with naturalized citizens serving as a baseline for comparisons. In the case of political discussions (Model 1), the coding of the variable could be taken as continuous, so that ordinary least squares regression is appropriate. The three-point measures of political knowledge (no correct answers, one correct item, both items correct) and involvement in electoral politics (no activity, one action, two or more actions) are examined via ordered logistic regression. Since participation in

meetings or events on behalf of immigrant rights is coded dichotomously, binomial logistic regression is used.

Table 2
The Effect of Federal Authorization Status
on Political Engagement in the U.S., 2008

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Discuss U.S.</i> <i>Politics</i>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Knowledge</i> <i>of U.S. Politics</i>	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Involvement in Immigrant</i> <i>Rights Movement</i>	<i>Model 4</i> <i>Involvement in Electoral</i> <i>Campaigns</i>
Noncitizen, Papers	-0.005 (.167)	-.256 (.232)	.446 (.329)	-.029 (.239)
Noncitizen, Undocumented	-.203 (.165)	-.862 (.234)**	.594 (.321)#	-.790 (.233)**
Constant	2.999 (.115)**	-.792 (.168)**	-1.786 (.242)**	-1.624 (.185)**
Adjusted- R^2	.00			
Pseudo- R^2		.030	.080	.030
N	461	472	470	469

Note: # = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. The dependent variables are: a five-point scale ranging from “never discuss U.S. politics” (1) to “discuss politics U.S. politics daily” (5), measured in the September survey wave; the number of informational items on American party politics that the respondent answered correctly (0, 1, or 2, measured in September); involvement over the last year in marches, protests, or public rallies to support immigrants in the United States (dummy coded, measured in September); and the number of campaign activities in which the respondent participated, based on a list that included talking about a candidate with family or friends, encouraging someone who could vote to turn out in the elections, wearing a campaign button or displaying a bumper sticker or lawn sign, and posting information about candidates in parks or other public places (coded as a three-point scale, “no activities,” “one activity,” or “more than one activity,” measured in the November survey wave). Regression coefficients were estimated via ordinary least squares (Model 1), ordered logistic regression (Models 2 and 4), and binomial logistic regression (Model 3); standard errors are in parentheses. “Noncitizen, Papers” and “Noncitizen, Undocumented” are coded on 0-1 scales (0=did not designate oneself in this way in either survey wave, .5=designated oneself in this way in one of the waves, 1=designated oneself in this way consistently in both survey waves).

In the first model, we observe that formal legal civic status is associated with discussions of American politics, with both noncitizens with papers and those without engaging in fewer conversations relative to U.S. citizens.

These differences, however, do not rise to the level of statistical significance. But immigrants without papers were much less likely to be knowledgeable about party politics in the United States. The ordered logit coefficient of $-.862$ ($p < .01$) implies that undocumented immigrants had only an 11 percent chance of answering both informational items correctly, but a 53 percent probability of knowing neither fact.⁹ In marked contrast, the probability of knowing that George W. Bush is a Republican and the Democrats (at the time of the surveys) controlled the U.S. House of Representatives was 23 percent for naturalized citizens, and the probability of getting both questions wrong among this group was only 31 percent. This pattern is in keeping with the *estrangement* hypothesis. Becoming informed about American politics is an investment that undocumented Mexican immigrants are apparently much less inclined to make.

Turning to political participation, an important distinction emerges. Noncitizens with papers and those without were more likely to report activity in the fledgling immigrant rights movement. Mass mobilization on behalf of the foreign-born began in the spring of 2006 in response to the failure of comprehensive immigration policy reform legislation and the rise of nativist measures in the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives (Bada, Fox, and Selee 2006). Activism within this movement continues to this day, and our surveys demonstrate that Mexicans without papers are particularly inclined to heed to call compared to immigrants who have naturalized ($p < .01$). At the same time, the fourth model in this table indicates that immigrants without papers are less likely to take part in electoral politics, a finding that falls in line with Andersen's (2005) research. The ordinal logistic regression estimates in this model imply that Mexicans without papers would have only a 30 percent chance of not being involved in the elections of 2008; for naturalized citizens this probability is cut nearly in half, to 16 percent.

On the whole, the regression models of Table 2 show that migration policies of the federal government have the potential to pull noncitizens, and particularly immigrants without residency authorization, away from engagement in conventional party politics, but stimulate involvement in oppositional protest movements seeking to restore dignity to the foreign-born and represent their material interests. That is, there is preliminary evidence

⁹ These probability expectations are based on respondents who consistently identified themselves as undocumented residents in each survey wave. See King (1989) and Long (1995) for a discussion of how to calculate these probabilities from logistic regression coefficients.

for both the *estrangement* and *mobilization* hypotheses, depending on the context of activity.

The more expansive models in Table 3 place these bureaucratic designations alongside other forces of inclusion or exclusion among immigrants. Within the general public, participation is heavily conditioned by socioeconomic status (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Americans who are highly educated, more affluent, or have had more life experiences are more inclined to take part. For the foreign-born, it is reasonable to expect a similar divide, which could carry even more weight in statistical models of engagement. In our sample, approximately one-third reported no more than a primary-level education, while 14 percent had been to college, a truly wide degree of diversity. Household affluence, measured through a count of items that the respondent owned or could use also varied markedly. Thirty-seven percent stated that in their place of residence they had access to a washing machine, an oven with a stove, a computer, and a car or truck to use; on the other end of the scale, one out of five reported two or fewer possessions. With regard to life experience, the Mexicans in this study tended to be young, with most being under forty. With this population, we might further expect a bias with respect to gender (cf. Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

Table 3
The Effect of Federal Authorization Status on Political
Engagement in the U.S., 2008: Multivariate Models

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Discuss U.S.</i> <i>Politics</i>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Knowledge of</i> <i>U.S. Politics</i>	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Involvement in Immigrant</i> <i>Rights Movement</i>	<i>Model 4</i> <i>Involvement in</i> <i>Electoral Campaigns</i>
Noncitizen, Papers	.237 (.189)	.194 (.287)	.121 (.395)	.400 (.294)
Noncitizen, Undocumented	.161 (.214)	-.118 (.327)	.042 (.432)	-.245 (.331)
Church Attendance	.074 (.054)	.039 (.083)	.274 (.114)*	.134 (.082)
Gender (Female)	-.288 (.128)*	-.835 (.199)**	-.249 (.255)	.270 (.196)
Affluence	.167 (.074)*	.359 (.117)*	.084 (.155)	.404 (.113)**
Education	.163 (.031)**	.303 (.050)**	.034 (.064)	.169 (.049)**
Age	-.9.298 ⁻⁵ (.005)	.018 (.008)*	-.023 (.012)*	.012 (.008)
Time in the U.S.	.006 (.007)	.012 (.011)	-.008 (.016)	.014 (.011)
Region (Indiana)	-.145 (.151)	-.087 (.232)	.012 (.294)	.573 (.235)*
Constant	1.373 (.468)*	2.628 (.735)**	-1.566 (.969)	2.236 (.735)*
Adjusted- <i>R</i> ²	.104			
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²		.199	.050	.122
<i>N</i>	422	428	427	425

Note: # = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. The dependent variables and authorization status are coded as in Table 2. Church attendance is measured on a five-point scale ranging from “never attend” (1) to “attend more than once a week” (5). Affluence is a count of the number of household items that the respondent possessed (washing machine, oven with stove, computer, and a car or truck). Education is measured through a nine-point scale ranging from no schooling (1) to post-graduate education (9). Age and time in the United States are both measured in years. Sampling region and gender are dummy-coded.

The sampling design further permits us to explore regional effects on political engagement, and how these effects compare to socioeconomic biases and the impact of federal authorization categories. Respondents also indicated how frequently they attended religious services, a variable that could be a particularly important trigger for civic involvement. Fifty-six percent mentioned going to church at least weekly, a rather high level of attendance, while one-quarter reported never attending or going to a service only “once in a while”.

When these many factors plus the number of years that respondent has lived in the U.S. are added to the analysis, how are the regression coefficients for federal administrative status changed? As shown in Table 3, these effects are diminished to the point of statistical insignificance. The impact of lacking papers on political knowledge is dramatically reduced in the multivariate model; the negative relationship persists, but the size of the effect is

lessened from $-.826$ to $-.118$. The same can be said for involvement in election campaigns (Model 4). In this follow-up specification, federal migration status is shown to have no more than trivial partial effects.

The coefficients for the control variables underscore the much more significant divide over socioeconomic variables (cf. Seif 2008). Level of education, household affluence, age, and gender play a larger role in determining who discusses American politics, becomes informed about political actors and institutions, and participates in election campaigns. It also appears that church attendance is far more significant than residency status in prompting activity in the immigrant rights movement (Model 3). In this multivariate specification, the logistic regression effect for attending rallies and demonstrations becomes $.042$, with a standard error of $.432$, a far cry from the coefficient in Table 2. The general array of results across the four multivariate models reflects the distinctions that one would expect when assessing democratic engagement within the conventional electorate: resources and social group affiliations do much to shape orientations towards American politics.

Study 2

Data drawn from the *Pew Hispanic Center 2007 National Survey of Latinos* offers the opportunity to generalize these findings. Between October 3 and November 9, 2007, two-thousand self-identified Hispanic or Latino adults across the United States were interviewed by telephone. This sample included 1,312 foreign-born respondents. The questionnaire did not include instrumentation on conversations about American politics, political knowledge or participation in protest movements or campaigns, but general interest in the approaching 2008 campaigns was gauged through a four-point scale. The virtue of this study is that we can expand our inferences beyond the Mexican-born population in two regional sampling areas. The design of the Pew survey also permits us to examine levels of political engagement for U.S.-born Latinos as well as immigrants.

Within this sample, 15 percent reported following the campaigns “very” closely, 33 percent followed “somewhat” closely, 26 percent “not very closely,” and 25 percent “not at all”. Early in the interviews, respondents noted whether they were born abroad and if so, whether they had naturalized. Immigrants who had not become U.S. citizens were asked later in the survey whether they possessed a green card (the authorization document for permanent residents), or were in the process of applying for this. Survey participants who did not have and were not securing such a card were then queried on whether they possessed a photo identification that was issued by

a government agency in the United States. We code as “undocumented” those respondents who either did not have this form of identification or chose not to answer.

The first column of findings in Table 4 presents the impact of federal civic status on interest in the campaigns. As was seen in the case of Mexican immigrants, noncitizens in this simpler specification without multivariable controls were less attentive to politics than the U.S.-born, who made up the excluded dummy category. This is particularly true for the undocumented. Naturalized Latino immigrants evidenced essentially no difference on average in their level of political interest relative to native-born citizens.

Table 4
The Effect of Federal Authorization Status
on Interest in U.S. Campaigns, 2007

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Noncitizen, Papers	-.424 (.057)**	-.049 (.097)
Noncitizen, Undocumented	-.683 (.078)**	-.204 (.121)#
Naturalized Citizen	-.060 (.061)	.086 (.086)
Gender (Female)		-.139 (.049)**
Affluence		.021 (.004)**
Education		.055 (.014)**
Age		.004 (.003)
Time in the U.S.		.010 (.003)**
Born in Mexico		-.103 (.061)
Born in Central America		.049 (.097)
Born in Cuba		.217 (.126)#
Constant	2.561 (.037)**	1.752 (.114)**
Adjusted- R^2	.056	.146
Weighted N	1,880	1,551

Note: # = $p < .10$; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. The dependent variable is a four-point scale ranging from “following the presidential race not at all” (1) to “following the race very closely” (4). Foreign-born respondents were asked early in the interview whether they had naturalized. Documentation status for noncitizens is measured through two items, whether the respondent has a green card or has been approved for one, and, if not, whether he or she has some other photo identification issued by a government agency in the U.S. Respondents who lacked such identification are coded as undocumented. Gender and country of birth are also dummy-coded. Age and time in the United States are measured in years; for U.S.-born respondents, these variables overlap. Affluence is measured based on a twenty-point scale of annual household income, ranging from less than \$5,000 to \$200,000 or more. Education is gauged on an eight-point scale ranging from less than high school to post-graduate. Source: *Pew Hispanic Center 2007 National Survey of Latinos*.

It is not possible to replicate the multivariate specification from Table 3 with these data, but we can come close. The Pew questionnaire included items on education level, household income, age, gender, and, for immigrants, the number of years spent in the U.S. The foreign-born also reported their native country. In Model 2, these additional predictors are incorporated. Doing this greatly diminishes the effects of civic status, so much so that noncitizens with papers no longer differ significantly from the American-born, and the undocumented are just marginally less attentive on average. As in the preceding table, education and affluence exert powerful positive effects on attentiveness, while women reported significantly less engagement than men. Time spent in the United States is associated with greater interest in the 2008 campaigns, and respondents born in Cuba were significantly more interested as well. Both of these latter results echo what has been found in earlier studies of immigrant incorporation.

IV. CONCLUSION

In a 1967 commentary on democratic representation and governance, Sidney Verba noted that “for any particular type of participation, we can ask how many take part... And, more important, we can ask about the equality with which such acts of participation are distributed among the population” (62). Over the last several decades, much of the scholarly literature on democratic involvement in the U.S. has focused on the extent to which the far-from-equal distributions of economic and social resources are reflected in the scope of political action. In principle, democratic policymaking rests on the assumption of an open airing of views from all corners of the public and, during elections, robust participation. In practice, any number of barriers can impede such engagement.

The foreign-born in particular may face special challenges – e.g., uncertainty about how government institutions in the U.S. function, the burdens of learning a new language, or day-to-day struggles to find work and get access to public services in the face of ethnic discrimination. In this chapter, we have concentrated on one potential barrier that has received rather little scrutiny in the scholarly literature, federal policies that sort immigrants into distinct categories: citizens, noncitizens with formal legal recognition, and the unauthorized. Noncitizens are barred from voting and cannot receive many of the social welfare benefits that citizens can acquire. Undocumented immigrants further face the threat of detention and deportation if discovered. Do these forms of formal exclusion from civic life stifle substantive

political engagement? At first glance, they do, at least with respect to interest in elections, knowledge of partisan politics, and involvement in electoral campaigns. Yet bureaucratic exclusion can also be a mobilization force for protest activity.

The fact that these effects are not resilient when multivariate controls are taken into account implies that the more pressing impediments to immigrant incorporation into American politics are not administrative but economic and social. Undocumented immigrants are less inclined to take part in political campaigns not because of their special status under federal law—and the hardships that this designation imposes—but because, among other things, they lack the socioeconomic status that facilitate participation. This finding could bode well for the future democratic inclusion of immigrants. While the prospects for comprehensive immigration policy reform in the United States look dim at present, it is certainly possible that policymakers seeking the support of emerging Latino or Asian constituencies will devise a plan to “legalize” in some fashion the millions of immigrants who currently lack authorization. If these individuals are more formally brought into the system and eventually gain voting rights and more participatory opportunities, the findings presented here suggest that their earlier status under federal law will not have left them less able to participate effectively.

However, the fact that low socioeconomic status is a powerful impediment to political engagement for this population reinforces the lessons from much earlier research in political science. Persons with fewer resources are likely to be underrepresented in American politics, regardless of their identity as a citizen, a green card holder, or an undocumented immigrant (Verba and Nie 1972). Ameliorating these biases would undoubtedly be vastly more difficult than reforming federal immigration and naturalization regulations.

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