

## **Race, Immigrant Incorporation and Civic Voluntarism in the United States**

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### **Abstract**

Civic voluntarism is an important topic of study because of its links to political participation and various policy outcomes, as well as its relevance for theories of immigrant incorporation in the United States. This paper uses recent data from the Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement to analyze differences in civic voluntarism across racial groups and immigrant generations. The analysis reveals that immigrant generation bears a strong relationship to civic voluntarism, one that is even stronger than the effects of race. Furthermore, patterns in volunteerism are generally in line with straight-line theories of immigrant assimilation, with a few notable exceptions regarding the positive effects associated with ethnic enclaves; unequal access to information and recruitment efforts among first-generation immigrants; and the persistence of racial differences by the third immigrant generation.

The relationships between race, immigrant incorporation and voting participation in the United States are by now well established. Studies based on state- and national-level datasets have shown that first-generation immigrants are generally less likely to vote in elections than those in higher immigrant generations. Furthermore, factors related to immigration such as length of stay in the United States, English language ability, and country of origin characteristics all bear a significant relationship to voting participation (DeSipio 1996; Tam Cho 1999; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Citrin and Highton 2002). More recently, a few studies have begun to consider the relationships between race, immigrant generation and other forms of political participation such as attending local meetings, writing elected officials, and contributing money to politics (Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2003; Citrin, Pearson and Cohen 2003). So far, the findings indicate that inequalities in these forms of political participation generally mirror those found in the realm of voter turnout. With participation higher among whites and the native-born, the analyses point to a worrisome pattern of compounding inequalities in participation, with activities such as campaign donations and writing to elected officials playing particularly significant roles in dividing those who are active in politics to those who do not participate.

While much is known about the relationship between race, immigration and political participation in the United States, far less is known about the “other half” of civic engagement – those activities relating to volunteerism and civic association. The study of group differences in volunteerism and civic association (hereafter *civic voluntarism*) is important for several reasons. First, participation in civic associations often serve as important conduits to more formal means of political participation, whether

it be through the acquisition of relevant political knowledge and skills (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), or through attempts by political actors to mobilize those who are already involved in the civic life of their communities (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Thus, while the group differences in writing elected officials and contributing money to politics may point to inequalities in political access in the contemporary period, group disparities in civic voluntarism may lead to continued inequalities in political participation over the long term.

Civic voluntarism has other, potentially important, relationships to matters of public policy. As Robert Putnam (1994) has suggested in his study of public administration in the various provinces of Italy, the speed and efficiency of government services is consistently related to the level of civic voluntarism in the region. Places with higher densities of civic association tend to reinforce norms of generalized interpersonal trust, which in turn allow for the provision of important public goods. While Putnam's study focused on the role of local governments in the provision of public goods and other services, policymakers in the United States have also seen civic engagement as a crucial component in the provision of public goods by non-governmental actors. With state and local governments in various regions experiencing severe budget shortfalls, many expect civic associations, religious groups and charities to provide public goods in the absence of government spending (Marimow 2003).

Finally, the study of civic voluntarism also has significant implications for the study of immigrant incorporation. Standard accounts of immigrant assimilation posit that socioeconomic outcomes increase among first-generation immigrants with time spent in the United States, and proceed in a linear fashion from the first generation to each

succeeding immigrant generation. Over the past decade, several studies have challenged the applicability of “straight-line” theories of immigrant adaptation to second-generation children of the post-1965 wave of immigrants (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1997). These studies note that there is no universally linear increase in socioeconomic outcomes from the first generation to higher generations. Instead, they note that different group characteristics and modes of incorporation lead to diverse outcomes that can even include second-generation decline. While considerable attention has been paid in the immigrant adaptation literature to outcomes such as educational attainment, occupational mobility, language use and fertility, very little attention has been paid to civic voluntarism and its implications for the ongoing debate over the relevance of straight-line assimilationist theories to the contemporary wave of immigrants.

This paper provides a systematic analysis of differences in civic voluntarism across racial groups and immigrant generations in the United States, using recent data from the Current Population Survey. The analysis first addresses the question of whether members of certain groups are over-represented or under-represented in the share of the population that participates in civic voluntarism. The paper then takes up the issue of whether group differences remain significant after controlling for the effects of other demographic factors such as age, education, marital status and homeownership. Next, it considers the effects of various aspects of immigrant incorporation on the likelihood of participation – including duration of stay in the United States, language use, and residential contexts of ethnic concentration. Finally, it addresses the implications of the findings for debates over the continued relevance of straight-line models of immigrant assimilation, and for the future of immigrant politics in the United States.

## **Data**

The primary dataset used in this analysis is the September 2002 Volunteer Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which asks several detailed questions about engagement in civic voluntarism. The CPS is a good dataset for this study of voluntarism across racial groups and immigrant generations for several reasons. First, it is one of the few large datasets on civic voluntarism that contains information about the nativity of respondents and their parents. Other sources, such as the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey do not include measures of nativity or national origin, while those such as the General Social Survey and the 1990 Civic Participation Study lack the sample sizes necessary to make reliable comparisons across racial groups and immigrant generations. The CPS, by contrast, contains 92,357 valid responses among adult residents of the United States to the question on volunteerism, including 71,448 whites, 8,288 blacks, 8,208 Latinos and 3,426 Asians. Even among first-generation immigrants alone, the CPS contains valid responses from 2,769 whites, 682 blacks, 4,293 Latinos and 2,360 Asians. The CPS also has the advantage of being a nationally representative sample with a methodology that is stable from year to year, and that serves as the central source of information regarding labor force and demographic trends. Finally, the Current Population Survey is not primarily a dataset about civic voluntarism or political participation. Consequently, the incidence of over-reporting participation, or of the self-selection of interview completion based on participation is considerably less severe in the CPS than in other surveys geared primarily towards civic engagement and political participation.

Admittedly, there are limitations to the CPS data as well. First, it does not contain detailed information on the organizations in which individuals participate, including membership demographics, organization size and structure, etc. Some surveys such as the Community Benchmark Survey are better in this regard, but they lack crucial information on the nativity of respondents. The CPS also lacks information on social norms, political attitudes and behavior, which makes it difficult to find the links between civic voluntarism, political attitudes and behavior. Other state or cross-regional surveys of particular ethnic groups may be more helpful in this regard, but they lack the CPS's advantage of having the same survey methodology across different groups. Still, the lack of political information in the CPS points to the need for similar studies using other datasets to find out whether the links between civic voluntarism and political behavior are different for some groups than for others.

Finally, the CPS tends to under-report participation in two important respects. First, it focuses on participation in organizations, and thus fails to capture informal activities such as participation in kinship networks. This limitation is found in most surveys of civic engagement, which may understate the true extent of volunteerism among the foreign-born. And yet, participation in organizations is important to study in its own right because of its implications for immigrant adaptation in the United States. Finally, another limitation to the CPS is that its measures of voluntarism are consistently lower when a member of the household responds on behalf of another member of the same household (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Such a pattern leads to an overall reduction in the level of voluntarism reported to the CPS. However, there does not seem to be any significant effect on group differences in participation – tests of the explanatory

models in this analysis using only self-reported responses indicate no appreciable differences in the magnitudes of group differences uncovered in this analysis. Thus, given the various strengths of the data, and ways to overcome some of its limitations, the 2002 CPS Volunteer Supplement is a valuable dataset with which to examine contemporary group differences in civic participation.

## **Results**

Are members of some groups more likely to engage in civic voluntarism than others? Table 1 presents differences in participation by race and immigrant generation on three key measures of civic voluntarism: 1) overall rates of participation, 2) the average number of hours spent doing volunteer work, and 3) the average number of organizations for which people volunteered. These latter two measures are considered in two parts – the first, as the average value for volunteers only, and the other as the average among all respondents. Measuring activity per volunteer is important because it gives a sense of the intensity of participation among those who engage in civic voluntarism. Thus, we can know not only whether members of certain groups are more likely to volunteer, but also whether such volunteers engage in more time-intensive activities than others. The average measure of hours and organizations per respondent is also important because it gives some sense of the bias in the participating memberships of civic organizations. Thus, for instance, if the average number of organizations among all white respondents is greater than the average number for members of other racial groups, then we can surmise that that whites are over-represented in the participating memberships of civic organizations. Thus, we have several ways to measure differences in civic voluntarism across racial groups, citizenship status and immigrant generations.

When we consider the most basic metric of volunteerism – whether or not the respondent had done any volunteer work in the previous 12 months – whites have the highest levels of participation. Nearly one third of white respondents report having volunteered, while less than a fifth of Blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans report doing the same. It should be noted that nearly all racial differences in the rates of volunteerism are statistically significant at the 95% level or greater. The only exceptions are differences between Latinos and Asian Americans, which are significant at the 90% level, and black-Asian differences, which are not statistically significant.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

When we measure civic voluntarism as hours spent doing volunteer work, blacks report the highest intensity of activity among those who volunteered in the previous 12 months, followed next by Asian Americans, whites, and Latinos. However, this higher intensity of participation among blacks volunteers is not sufficient to bridge the gap in overall levels of volunteerism with whites. As Table 1 indicates, the average number of hours volunteered among all respondents is still considerably higher among whites than blacks. Still, the higher intensity of participation among blacks is sufficient to raise the overall hours volunteered closer to the white average, and above the average reported by Asian Americans. The intensity of participation among Asian American volunteers is similar to those among whites, and so, differences in the average time spent volunteering are largely reflective of differences in the proportion of respondents who volunteer. Finally, the lower intensity of participation among Latino volunteers, when combined

with the fact that Latinos have lowest rates of participation, leads to the lowest number of hours volunteered among all respondents.

Next, we turn to the average number of organizations in which respondents of different racial groups participated. The results indicate that volunteers who are white participate, on average, in more organizations than volunteers who are black, Latino or Asian American. The mean number of organizations among white volunteers is 10% greater than the number among black volunteers, and is nearly 20% greater than the number for Latino and Asian volunteers. This disparity, when combined with initial disparities in the overall rates of volunteerism, produce a situation where whites make up a disproportionately large share of the participating memberships of civic organizations. Thus, the average number of organizations in which whites participate is two-thirds greater than the similar number among blacks, and more than twice as high as the number among Asian Americans and Latinos. Thus, regardless of the metric used to gauge racial disparities in participation, they all point to an over-representation of whites among the civically engaged population.

Next, we consider differences in the rates and intensity of volunteerism by citizenship status and across immigrant generations. As indicated earlier, theories of straight-line assimilation would predict higher levels of participation among naturalized citizens than non-citizens, and progressively higher levels of participation from the first generation to higher immigrant generations. Results from Table 2 support these expectations with regard to the proportion of respondents who reported volunteering in the previous 12 months. The highest rates of participation are among those respondents in the third immigrant generation and higher, while the lowest rates of participation are

found among first-generation immigrants who are not citizens of the United States. Interestingly enough, among those who report to have volunteered, the total number of hours volunteered is considerably higher for naturalized citizens than for any other group, including third-generation immigrants. Just as in the case of blacks, however, this higher intensity of participation among naturalized citizens is not sufficient to bridge the gap in participation with those in higher immigrant generations, although it does serve to widen the gap associated with U.S. citizenship. Finally, differences in the organizations per capita among volunteers also conform to the predictions of a straight-line theory of immigrant assimilation, with participation lowest among non-citizens, and highest among those in the third generation and higher.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

So far, we have examined tabulated differences in civic voluntarism across racial groups and immigrant generations. These bivariate differences are important to ascertain the extent to which there is a bias in participation among members of particular racial groups or immigrant generations. In order to explain these disparities, however, we need to analyze the effects of race and immigrant generation in a multivariate context that controls for other factors such as age, education, gender, marital status, homeownership, and the presence of children under 18. Furthermore, we need to consider the joint influence of race and immigrant generation by interacting the two variables. A more detailed listing of the regressions coefficients can be found in the Appendix Table A.1, which indicate that age, education, homeownership, and having children at home are all

associated with greater participation among respondents of different immigrant generations. Here, however, we focus attention on differences in the rates of participation across racial groups and immigrant generations after controlling for these various other factors. Figure 1 presents racial differences in participation within each immigrant generation, with predicted values from multivariate regressions for each generational sub-sample.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

There are several interesting results to note from the multivariate results. First, differences in participation are stronger across citizenship status and immigrant generation than across racial groups. For instance, when comparing the participation of second-generation immigrants with first-generation U.S. citizens, the strongest differences are found, not across racial lines within each group, but between the two generational groups. At the same time, it should be noted that racial differences remain statistically significant within each immigrant generation and even among immigrant non-citizens. Similar results – of stronger generational differences than racial differences in volunteerism – hold in all of the other generational-group comparisons. The only exception is for comparisons between second-generation respondents and those in the third generation and higher, where racial differences are more prominent than generational differences. This exception aside, however, citizenship status and immigrant generation play a more prominent role than race in differentiating between those who volunteer and those who do not.

Another significant finding from the results in Figure 1 is that the straight-line pattern of immigrant assimilation applies across immigrant generations for whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans. For all three groups, participation increases in the first generation between non-citizens and citizens. The likelihood of volunteering increases even more between the first and second generations, before reaching a plateau by the third generation. For black respondents, by contrast, intergenerational differences in participation follow an inverse U-shape pattern, with the highest level of participation among second-generation immigrants. This drop in participation after the second generation leads to a black-white gap in participation in the third generation that is not found among second-generation respondents.

There may be several explanations as to why civic voluntarism among blacks decreases after the second generation, some of which center on the fact that blacks characterized as “third generation and higher” are overwhelmingly the descendants of slaves in the United States. With a gulf many generations wide between second-generation black immigrants and those in the third generation and higher, we may expect social institutions, customs and practices to vary considerably between the two groups. Still, it is surprising to note that civic voluntarism is low among third-and-higher-generation blacks, when evidence from studies of voting participation indicate that these respondents consistently display the highest levels of political participation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). The Current Population Survey does not contain sufficient measures of social norms, attitudes and practices to provide a deeper investigation as to why civic voluntarism among blacks declines after the second generation, and fails to mirror patterns found for political participation. However, we can

say for certain from our models that these patterns are not due to differences in factors such as age, education, marital status or homeownership.

There are other aspects of immigrant incorporation that we need to consider in our analysis of group differences in participation, including duration of stay in the United States, language use, and residential contexts of ethnic concentration. As previous studies of political participation among immigrants have shown, those who live longer in the United States are more likely to be informed of domestic politics, develop stronger party attachments, vote in elections, and gain experience in dealing with government agencies (Cain et al. 1991; Wong 2000; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). We may expect a similar dynamic to be operative in the realm of civic voluntarism, with immigrants learning more about their communities, gaining more information about opportunities, and feeling a greater sense of efficacy regarding their attempts to serve in a voluntary capacity. Results from the CPS indicate that those immigrants who have in the United States for a long time (20 years or more) are significantly more likely to have volunteered than those who have lived in the country for the short to medium terms (Table 3). Indeed, the predicted probability of participation more than doubles between those living in the U.S. for less than ten years and those who are long-term residents of the country. It is also important to note that these increases associated with length of stay in the United States remain statistically significant even after controlling for citizenship status. Finally, while the results in Table 3 are presented for all foreign-born respondents, similar results hold true when the model is applied to each racial group separately. Thus, we find strong support for theories of immigrant assimilation that predict higher rates of civic participation with increasing length of stay in the United

States, with findings that remain consistently significant across racial groups and among non-citizens as well as citizens.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Another important aspect of immigrant incorporation that may be related to civic voluntarism is English language use. The ability of immigrants to communicate effectively in English is often a prerequisite to participate in civic and political life in the United States. English proficiency among first-generation immigrants is a function of many factors, including the age at which people entered the United States and the number of years they have lived in the country (Espenshade and Fu 1997). Indeed, the fact that English language use increases over time is one of the reasons why political knowledge and participation among immigrants increases with time spent in the United States. At the same time, English language use is not synonymous with duration of stay in the United States, with other factors such as national origin, residential segregation and sociopolitical attitudes also playing important roles.

While language may be an important determinant of participation in mainstream politics for first-generation immigrants, it is not clear whether it plays a similarly important role in civic voluntarism. As Milton Gordon (1964) noted several decades ago, immigrants can create and participate in their own social and cultural institutions long before they gain acceptance and incorporation into mainstream institutions. Thus, immigrants can engage in civic voluntarism through organizations such as churches, athletic clubs, national-origin, home-town and home-region associations without needing

to have significant proficiency in English. While the CPS lacks detailed questions about English proficiency, we can still test for the effects of language use by using language of interview as a proxy measure.<sup>1</sup> Table 4 presents the effects of English language use on civic voluntarism among Latinos after controlling for factors such as age, education, gender, homeownership, etc. In the case of first-generation immigrants, we also control for the effects of citizenship and duration of stay in the United States.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

The results indicate that English language use is positively associated with greater civic voluntarism for all immigrant generations. For first-generation Latino immigrants, English language use is associated with a 28% increase in the predicted probability of participation. While the effects among second-generation immigrants are not statistically significant, they are particularly strong among those in the third generation and higher, with nearly a doubling in the rate of civic voluntarism. The surprisingly strong results among third-generation Latinos suggest that there may be other factors that lead both to lower English language use as well as to lower civic participation. In particular, the enclaves in Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere in which third- and higher-generation Latinos can continue to rely on Spanish may also be areas with high levels of poverty. Thus, the negative relationship between Spanish language use and volunteerism may be less a reflection of the ability of immigrants to participate in the civic voluntarism, than of the lack of community infrastructures and resources necessary to sustain such activities. We can test for this possibility by controlling for the level of poverty in the

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<sup>1</sup> The CPS is conducted either in English or Spanish.

county, and also creating an interaction variable of county-level poverty and individual language use. Doing so causes the pure effects of language use to disappear, indicating that the negative effects associated with Spanish language use is indeed largely related to the level of residential poverty in the county. Still, the interaction of the two factors is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that those who lack English proficiency in poor areas are still less likely to participate than those who are proficient in English.

Finally, language use is also related to another aspect of immigrant incorporation that may have a significant bearing on civic voluntarism – the extent to which people live in areas with high concentrations of co-ethnics. Living in areas with high concentrations of co-ethnics may serve as a spur to greater participation for several reasons. First, respondents may feel a greater sense of stake in their communities that prompt them to initiate or sustain their volunteerism efforts. They may also have the strength of numbers to create ethnic-specific civic associations. Finally, mainstream civic organizations may engage in more recruitment efforts in communities that represent a large share of the local population. Studies of political participation among immigrants generally show that higher levels of ethnic concentration usually do not lead to higher voter turnout (DeSipio 1996; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Ramakrishnan 2002). Some suggest that this is because political organizations refrain from mobilizing in areas with high proportions of immigrant ethnics because such areas also tend to have higher levels of residential poverty and non-citizenship. While non-citizenship is less of a barrier for participation in civic voluntarism than for voting, contexts of high poverty may still serve to nullify the positive effects of ethnic concentration on volunteerism among the foreign-born.

While the CPS does not contain information on the racial and ethnic composition of neighborhoods, we can still utilize measures of ethnic concentration at the county and MSA levels to see if these have any effects on the likelihood of civic voluntarism among immigrants.<sup>2</sup> In most cases, ethnic concentration does not bear a significant relationship to the likelihood of participation among members of different racial groups and immigrant generations. There are, however, two important exceptions. Among first-generation Latinos, those living in areas with high proportions of co-ethnics have a greater likelihood of engaging in civic voluntarism. Furthermore, the positive effects associated with higher ethnic concentration remain significant even after controlling for the level of poverty in the area. Finally, for first-generation Asian immigrants, living in ethnic enclaves is associated with lower levels of civic voluntarism. However, once controls for residential poverty are introduced, the coefficient for ethnic concentration becomes positive and statistically significant. So, the results indicate that, while the lack of English proficiency may hinder civic voluntarism among immigrants, living in areas with high proportions of co-ethnics does lead to greater participation among first-generation immigrants.

So far, we have seen that patterns of volunteerism are largely in keeping with the expectations of straight-line theories of immigrant assimilation, with English-language use, duration of stay in the United States, and higher immigrant generations all associated with a higher likelihood of civic participation. There are, however, two important qualifications to the story: first, that racial differences in participation remain significant

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<sup>2</sup> In a future version of this paper, I will consider using measures of racial heterogeneity as substitutes for the measures of ethnic concentration used in this analysis.

even among second- and third-generation immigrants, and that ethnic enclaves seem to aid civic voluntarism among first-generation Asian and Latino immigrants. Questions still remain, however, as to the sociological processes that underlie these differences across immigrant generations. One can conceive of several reasons why first-generation immigrants may be less likely to volunteer than those in higher immigrant generations. First, they may face greater demands on their time as they seek to secure an economic foothold in the United States? Or, they may lack sufficient information regarding opportunities and organizations through which to volunteer. Immigrants may also be less likely to be part of social networks that serve as venues for recruitment into civic organizations. The CPS data allow us to test for these various possibilities through basic questions regarding the contexts in which people first became volunteers, as well as factors that would encourage non-participants to volunteer.

First, we address the issue of whether lower participation among immigrants is a question of free time. The survey asked the following open-ended question of respondents: “There are many good reasons why people don’t volunteer. What would encourage (you/name of respondent) to volunteer?” More time was the most common answer given by respondents, followed by “nothing,” “health,” and “better information about volunteering opportunities.”<sup>3</sup> If free time were more scarce among first-generation immigrants, then we would expect the foreign-born to be the ones most likely to mention the importance of having more time to volunteer. However, as analyses of the CPS data indicate, first-generation immigrants are not more likely than others to mention “more

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<sup>3</sup> Respondents could name one factor or several factors, each of which would get coded by the interviewer. The Appendix contains a list of the various coded responses to this question.

time” as a solution to greater participation.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, after controlling for factors such as age and education, foreign-born whites, Latinos and Asians are actually less likely to mention the issue of time than third-generation whites. Even for Latinos with low levels of English proficiency, the importance of free time is less salient than it is for third-generation whites. Another reason why many respondents report not volunteering is their health, with about 13% of non-participants mentioning concerns about the issue. However, health is less of a concern among first-generation immigrants, even after controlling for the fact that first-generation respondents have a younger age distribution than those in higher immigrant generations.

One issue that does receive a higher response among first-generation immigrants is the need for better information regarding volunteering opportunities. First-generation Latinos, blacks and Asians are all significantly more likely than native-born whites and blacks to mention the need for better information.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, the same need is not felt as strongly among first-generation whites. This disparity between foreign-born whites and immigrants of color may point to differences in the social incorporation of first-generation immigrants into networks that provide information about opportunities for civic voluntarism. Indeed, when volunteers are asked how they first became involved, first-generation blacks and Asians are less likely than native-born whites and blacks to say that they were recruited into participation. The same does not hold true for white immigrant volunteers, who are just as likely to be asked to participate as their

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<sup>4</sup> The only exception is for comparisons between first-generation blacks and blacks in the third generation and higher, where the former are more likely to mention “more time” than the latter.

<sup>5</sup> The lack of relevant information is not related to language use, with Spanish-interview respondents actually less likely to mention the need for better information than English-language respondents. These results indicate that the barrier to participation among Spanish-speaking immigrants is not due to the lack of knowledge or information regarding volunteering opportunities, but perhaps to other factors such as a lower sense of internal or external efficacy regarding volunteerism.

native-born counterparts. So, we have some further evidence here of processes of segmented assimilation operating within the first generation, with white immigrants more connected to sources of information about civic opportunities and attempts to recruit volunteers.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has provided several findings regarding the relationship between race, immigrant incorporation and civic voluntarism in the United States. In general, the results are in line with the expectations of assimilationist theories that predict straight-line patterns in immigrant adaptation. The likelihood of engaging in civic voluntarism increases among first-generation immigrants with duration of stay in the United States, and with the acquisition of U.S. citizenship. Furthermore, participation increases from the first generation to higher immigrant generations, and is higher among those immigrants who are proficient in English. There is, however, some limited support for theories of segmented assimilation. Immigrant whites are more likely than Latinos, blacks and Asians to receive information about volunteering opportunities and are more likely to have joined organizations through the process of recruitment. Furthermore, ethnic enclaves have a modest effect of raising the level of participation among first-generation Latinos and Asian Americans. Finally, there is no convergence in participation across racial groups, even by the third immigrant generation.

What are the implications of these results for politics and policy? First, they indicate that, barring any changes in contemporary policies and behavior, it will take many decades for immigrants to reach parity in participation with their native-born co-

ethnics. Thus, to the extent that the provision of public goods in local communities depends on the volunteerism of residents, places with high proportions of immigrants will have greater difficulties in providing such goods in the context of cuts in government spending. Furthermore, gaps in civic voluntarism will likely mean a continuation of the racial gaps in participation for activities such as writing letters to elected officials, working on political campaigns, and serving on boards and commissions. It is difficult to discern from cross-sectional data the speed with which political activities follow civic voluntarism, or the extent to which the latter gets activated by the former. If political mobilization by parties, candidates and labor unions can help to increase civic voluntarism among immigrants, such efforts may lay a solid foundation on which future increases in political participation may rest.

Table 1. Differences in civic voluntarism by race

	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Volunteered	31%	19%	15%	18%
Hours volunteered per capita				
- All participants	144	157	132	146
- All respondents	43	29	19	24
Organizations per capita				
- All participants	1.53	1.38	1.28	1.29
- All respondents	0.48	0.27	0.20	0.23

Table 2. Differences in civic voluntarism by citizenship status and immigrant generation

	1st Gen, non-citizen	1st Gen, US citizen	2nd Generation	3rd Generation
Volunteered	11%	17%	27%	30%
Hours volunteered per capita				
- All participants	110	168	151	144
- All respondents	12	27	40	41
Organizations per capita				
- All participants	1.18	1.28	1.50	1.52
- All respondents	0.13	0.22	0.41	0.45

Table 3. Predicted probabilities of participation among first-generation immigrants, by length of stay in the United States

	All respondents	Citizens	Non-citizens
0-10 years	8.2%	8.8%	8.0%
10-20 years	13.0%	13.6%	12.5%
20+ years	17.2%	17.6%	16.2%

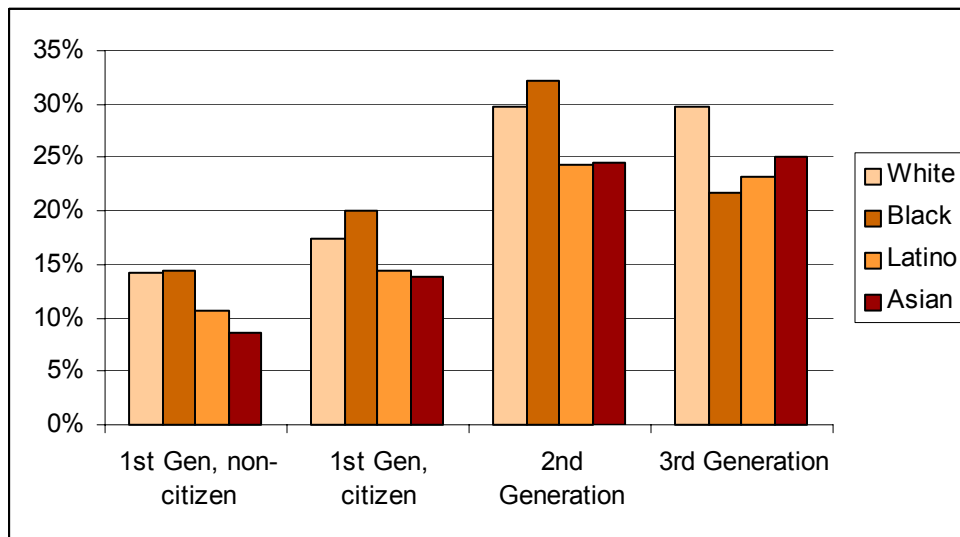
Note: all differences are statistically significant at the .01 level

Table 4. Predicted probabilities of participation among Latinos, by language use

	1st Generation	2nd Generation <sup>a</sup>	3rd Generation
English	9.6%	19.9%	19.0%
Spanish	7.5%	16.7%	8.8%

<sup>a</sup> - Differences are not statistically significant. Other differences are significant at the .10 level

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of participation by race, citizenship status and immigrant generation<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> The predicted values vary from the group means presented in Table 1 because all other variables (such as age, education, homeownership, etc.) are held at the same value – the mean for the overall adult population

## Appendix

Table A. 1. Participation in civic voluntarism by immigrant generation, adult respondents

	1st Generation		2nd Generation		3rd Generation	
	$\beta$	s.e.	$\beta$	s.e.	$\beta$	s.e.
Black	0.111	0.116	0.112	0.200	-0.427***	0.032
Latino	-0.289***	0.081	-0.276***	0.086	-0.336***	0.051
Asian	-0.396***	0.079	-0.280**	0.114	-0.238***	0.097
Age	0.037***	0.012	0.048***	0.010	0.018***	0.003
Age-squared	0.000***	0.000	0.000***	0.000	0.000***	0.000
High School grad	0.469***	0.087	0.667***	0.097	0.850***	0.035
Some college	0.960***	0.131	0.735***	0.136	1.206***	0.043
College and beyond	1.209***	0.092	1.391***	0.105	1.737***	0.037
Female	0.382***	0.060	0.425***	0.056	0.422***	0.017
Married	0.009	0.073	0.117*	0.064	0.293***	0.020
Owns House	0.301***	0.064	0.299***	0.072	0.290***	0.022
Children	0.409***	0.071	0.651***	0.076	0.541***	0.020
constant	-3.551***	0.273	-3.447***	0.247	-3.061***	0.075
N	10,135		7,346		74,876	
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.060		0.076		0.085	

\* p < .10, \*\* p < .05, \*\*\* p < .01

Source: Current Population Survey, September 2002 Volunteerism Supplement

Select questions from the September 2002 Volunteer Supplement survey instrument (original emphasis):

This month, we are interested in volunteer activities, that is activities for which people **are not paid**, except perhaps expenses. We only want you to include volunteer activities that you did **through or for an organization**, even if you only did them once in a while.

1. Since **September 1<sup>st</sup> of last year**, (have you/has NAME) done any volunteer activities **through or for an organization**?

2. Sometimes people don't think of activities they do **infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations** as volunteer activities. **Since September 1st of last year**, (have you/has NAME) done any of these types of volunteer activities?

3. How many different organizations (have you/has NAME) volunteered through or for in the last year, that is, since September 1, 2001?

12. There are many good reasons why people do not volunteer. What would encourage (you/NAME) to volunteer?

DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT.  
MARK ALL THAT APPLY. ENTER <N> FOR NO MORE.

- <1> Better information about opportunities
- <2> Child care
- <3> Employer has a program that promotes volunteering
- <4> Good match between skills/interests and volunteer activity
- <5> Health
- <6> More time
- <7> Paid expenses, like meals
- <8> Transportation
- <9> Nothing/not interested
- <10> Other/specify

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