Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth

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CHAPTER 16

Immigrant Youth in the United States: Coming of Age among Diverse Civic Cultures

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THE NATURE OF the civic and political lives of immigrant youth in the United States is important for a number of reasons. First, immigrant youth constitute a notable proportion of American society. In 2007, children under the age of 18 who were foreign-born (first-generation immigrants) or lived with at least one foreign-born parent (second generation immigrants) accounted for 22% of children in the United States (Mather, 2009). Second, they constitute the fastest growing segment of America's youth. The projection is that by 2020, one-third of children in the United States will be immigrants (Mather, 2009). Immigrant youth, then, constitute a sizeable and growing membership of American civil society.

Immigrant children also contribute to changing American demographics. They form a crucial part of an ongoing ethnic and racial transformation of American society. In 2007, 8 of 10 immigrant children under the age of 18 were ethnic or racial minorities. Thus, only 18% were non-Hispanic White whereas 55% were Latino/Hispanic, 16% were Asian, 7% were Black, and the rest were affiliated with other ethnic or racial groups (Mather, 2009). While projections vary somewhat, the expectation is that the United States will have a majority of children who are of ethnic and racial backgrounds other than non-Hispanic White by about 2030 (Mather, 2009; Yen, 2009). Immigrant youth, then, are rendering American society more diverse. How they are received and included into American civil society, and how they conceptualize and contribute to American communities and the political process will have a substantial impact on American society in the decades to come (Sanjek, 2001).

By virtue of being immigrants, many first- and second-generation immigrant youth and their families also have citizenship statuses that are different from non-immigrant Americans. While almost 80% of immigrant children were U.S. citizens in 2000, nonetheless 53% of all immigrant children lived in mixed-citizenship families where at least one member was a citizen and at least one was not. Also in 2005, it was estimated that 11% of children in immigrant families were undocumented and 18% were born in the United States to an undocumented parent (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008). Again, the distinctive citizenship experiences of immigrant children and youth make it all the more important to pay attention to their role in American civil society.

ORGANIZATION, DEFINITIONS, AND SCOPE

This chapter will first focus on immigrant youth's rates of civic and political participation. This will be followed by a description of their motives for participating, with special attention to the extent to which having a cultural or ethnic identity is a motivator. Then, we will turn to the question of community and societal reactions to the cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds of immigrant youth. Specifically, a number of studies have addressed the impact of discrimination on immigrant youth's identities and their civic and political lives. Next, the chapter will consider how being an immigrant youth may intersect in distinctive ways with the developmental contexts of family, religious institutions, and media in either encouraging or diminishing civic and political engagement. Finally, in the conclusion, we will consider the implications for policy and American civil society of the available research.

Before proceeding, a few definitions and observations about scope are necessary. The present chapter addresses attitudes and behaviors in both the *political* and *civic* realms (e.g., Putnam, 2000). The political realm includes views such as trust in the government and patriotism, and activities such as voting, donating money to political causes, and making contact with public representatives. The civic realm includes attitudes such as social trust, and involvement in school and voluntary associations (e.g., cultural, social, and religious; see Seif, this volume).

As Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss (2002a, 2002b) have argued, youth-focused and developmental science research on citizenship needs to pertain not only to political and legal considerations but also to more general civic involvement with others in the community. A focus on both the political and civic realms is also useful because research with American youth in general has shown considerable disengagement from political activities (Galston, 2001), but high rates of engagement for community activities and

volunteering (Flanagan, 2004; Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Richardson, 2007). Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail, conceptualizing the political and civic realms in broader rather than narrower ways is very apt for immigrant youth.

The term *youth* is used in varied ways within different research traditions. For demographic surveys of immigrant youth included in this chapter, children under 18 years of age were included. For the research described here on immigrant youth's political and civic lives, the participants ranged in age from their early teens to their mid-twenties.

With respect to the civic and political lives of immigrant youth, Stepick and Stepick noted in 2002, "Few researchers have focused on immigrant youth and even fewer have examined issues of civic engagement for immigrant youth" (p. 247). While new studies have been published since then (e.g., Jensen & Flanagan, 2008a), it nevertheless remains the case that the civic and political lives of immigrant youth have received scant research attention. Thus, this chapter will incorporate relevant research with immigrant youth from a number of different disciplines, including psychology, political science, sociology, and anthropology. Furthermore, the chapter also will draw on some findings from research with adult immigrants when they are of relevance to the experiences of youth. Also, given the paucity of research, each main section in the chapter will end by pointing to questions that remain for future research.

Finally, unless otherwise indicated, the research described here is with immigrants in the United States. However, I wish to be clear that immigrants in the United States are very diverse. They vary, for example, in terms of the circumstances that bring them to the country (e.g., refugee versus voluntary), immigration status (e.g., legal versus undocumented), immigrant generation (e.g., first versus second), socioeconomic and employment conditions, educational resources, family composition, religions, languages, and so forth. In 2000, the parents of immigrant children came from more than 125 countries (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). When describing research in the present chapter, I will therefore aim to describe the backgrounds of the immigrants when available.

RATES OF PARTICIPATION

Surveys of the political and civic participation of immigrant youth have been few. However, they suggest that differences between immigrant and non-immigrant youth who are alike on factors such as SES and education are minor. Furthermore, the differences that do exist suggest that immigrant and non-immigrant youths put their civic and political efforts into somewhat different activities.

Lopez and Marcelo (2008) conducted national Internet and telephone surveys that compared first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants, and native-born residents between 15 and 25 years of age. The surveys included more than 20 different civic and political items. Results from the Internet survey showed almost no significant differences between the three groups. On the telephone survey, first-generation immigrants were less active than native-born residents on a number of political and civic measures when demographic differences (e.g., SES, gender, and region of the country) were left unadjusted. When these differences were adjusted for statistically, few group differences remained.

With respect to the remaining differences, Lopez and Marcelo (2008) found that there were more *electoral specialists* among native-born residents than first-generation immigrants, where a specialist was someone who had engaged in two or more activities within a specific area (such as electoral politics) within the last 12 months. However, there were more *civic specialists* among second-generation immigrants than native-born residents, and second-generation youth also reported a higher total number of activities than native-born youth.

Another survey compared a total of 1,334 immigrant and native-born first-year college students. Results showed high levels of involvement for all students, and few group differences (Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008). Averaged across 23 different political, civic, and social activities, about 80% of the college students reported having been engaged often or very often during their high school years. Among the group differences that did emerge, more native-born residents and second-generation immigrants were registered to vote than first- and one-and-a-half (1.5)-generation immigrants (i.e., persons born abroad who came to the United States prior to 12 years of age). However, native-born residents were lower than some or all of the immigrant groups (first-, 1.5-, and second-generation) on helping non-English speakers, helping a recent immigrant, and helping someone illiterate. This study did not control for demographic differences, but the selection of a college sample probably narrowed potential differences between the immigrant and non-immigrant students.

Huddy and Khatib (2007) also conducted two smaller surveys with students from one college (the sample sizes were 300 and 341). The focus was more on attitudes than behaviors. On seven different measures of patriotism, attention to politics, knowledge of politics, and voting, there were essentially no differences between first-generation, second-generation, and native-born youth.

Taken together, these surveys begin to suggest that on overall rates of political and civic activities, immigrant youth are fairly similar to their native-born peers of comparable demographic characteristics. The surveys

also hint that native-born residents may be more involved with electoral politics. At least this may be the case for the kinds of conventional political activities included in the surveys by Lopez and Marcelo (2008), such as displaying a campaign button or sign, and being a member of a political group. Furthermore, the surveys hint that immigrant youth may be more involved with issues of relevance to immigrants (e.g., translation), or that they have encountered among immigrants but that also apply to others (e.g., literacy).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The available findings give direction to future surveys of immigrant youth's civic and political participation. Clearly, future surveys would benefit from broad definitions of the topic at hand (see also Jensen & Flanagan, 2008b). If surveys do not include items that capture the kinds of behaviors that immigrant youth find meaningful and engaging, some of the contributions of immigrant youth will go underreported (Barreto & Munoz, 2003; Junn, 1999). Stepick and his colleagues (2008) have observed that immigrant youth's bilingual and bicultural skills constitute an important resource to the broader community that often is overlooked. In order to arrive at more detailed insights into immigrant youth's civic and political participation, future surveys might also fruitfully differentiate groups not only in terms of immigrant generation but along other lines as well. For example, we know from research on voting among adult immigrants that factors such as ethnicity or race and country of origin matter. Focusing on ethnicity and race, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) found that among Latinos, the first generation of immigrants was most likely to vote. Among Whites, voting peaked in the second generation of immigrants. For Asians and Blacks, voting was highest among native-born residents. The authors speculated that immigrants' political participation in the United States, in part, is influenced by diverse experiences with inclusion, exclusion, and acculturation.

Focusing on the country of origin, Bass and Casper (2001) found that among adult naturalized immigrants of Asian background, those from India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea were more likely to vote than those from China. Among naturalized Latinos, Cubans, Guatemalans, and Dominicans reported higher voting participation than Mexicans and Salvadorans. The authors noted that immigrants' political experiences from their country of origin may influence their participation in the United States, where some countries such as India and the Philippines have established histories of holding democratic elections (cf. Rice & Feldman, 1997). While these lines of research focus specifically on adults' voting behavior, they nevertheless highlight diversity among immigrants that future surveys of immigrant youth's civic and political participation might usefully consider.

MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING

Clearly, immigrant youth are engaged in a number of civic and political activities. What are their motives for participating? Next, I turn to a discussion of immigrants' cultural motives for political and civic participation, as well as other important motives.

CULTURAL IDENTITY MOTIVES

Historically, the question of how immigrants' incorporation into civil society is influenced by the cultural values they bring with them has been revisited again and again. In the late 1770s, Benjamin Franklin worried about German immigrants' identities and culture. Why, he asked, should "Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of us Anglifying them?" (quoted in Degler, 1970, p. 50). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at the height of immigrant arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe, scholars and the public vigorously debated assimilation, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism (e.g., Bourne, 1916; Kallen, 1956; Zangwill, 1975). In an *Atlantic Monthly* article in 1916, for example, Randolph Bourne warned against nationalistic sentiments akin to European ones, and he argued that American civil society would benefit from immigrants contributing their cultural values to a pluralistic mix.

Almost 100 years later, at a time when immigrants are now mostly arriving from Asia and Latin America, Huntington (2004) has been at the forefront of the view that immigrants who maintain a cultural and immigrant sense of self represent a threat to the coherence of American civil society. In his book, "Who Are We? The challenges to America's national identity," Huntington (2004) expressed concern about fragmentation of the national identity due to immigration. Partly echoing Franklin, Huntington worried about the loss of what he termed America's "Anglo-Protestant" culture. Furthermore, Huntington argued that immigrants who have multicultural affiliations will see their loyalties and time divided and hence will put less effort and energy into civic associations, public life, and politics in the United States. "Ampersands"—a term he repeated often—raise the specter of the "erosion of citizenship" and threaten "societal security" (Chap. 8). According to Huntington, immigrants who maintain a cultural identity will pull away from engagement in American civic life.

Interestingly, recent research with immigrant youth (and some work with adults) suggests that having a cultural identity is more of a conduit than an encumbrance to civic and political engagement. Furthermore, immigrant youth's cultural identities are complex, and they find civic expressions that

seem considerably more multifaceted and intricate than what commonly is captured by the historical debate.

Testing Huntington's (2004) claim that immigrants who maintain a cultural identity will pull away from American civic life, a mixed-methods study examined the extent to which Asian Indian and Salvadoran immigrant adolescents and their parents spoke of *cultural motives* to account for their involvement or lack thereof in political and civic activities (Jensen, 2008a). Cultural motives included references both to the immigrants' cultures of origin (e.g., Indian and Latino) and self-identification as immigrants (e.g., "being people of different countries"). Findings showed that cultural motives were twice as likely to be mentioned as sources of engagement than disengagement. In fact, cultural motives rarely accounted for lack of participation.

Based on a qualitative theme analysis, the research also differentiated seven different cultural motives of engagement. Of note is that only two of these themes centered on immigrants bonding within their own community—which even by Huntington's standards is not the equivalent of pulling away from civil society. One of the two bonding themes, *Cultural Remembrance*, involved immigrants' desire to remember and maintain values and customs of their culture. The other bonding theme, *the Welfare of the Immigrant or Cultural Communities*, was where immigrants worked politically or civically to ensure or enhance the well-being of their fellow immigrants or compatriots.

Apart from the two bonding themes, the other five themes involved various ways of bridging between the immigrants' cultures and American society. For example, immigrant youth and their parents spoke of being active in American civil society because of *Traditions of Service* taught by their religion or culture. Also, they spoke of their *Appreciation for American Democracy*. This theme often sprung from a comparison of conditions in the United States with those of the country of origin or the world more generally. For example, a second-generation Asian Indian adolescent stated:

> What makes America different from a lot of countries is that the freedom of speech grants people the right to say what they want on any issue, which is good. Definitely good—because it alerts people in things that they might not have been able to break down or able to notice. (Jensen, 2008a, p. 81)

Also, in some cases immigrant youth and their parents spoke not only of acting upon American ideals in the United States, but also of exporting those ideals back to their country of origin. For example, in an effort to enhance gender equality in India, one Asian Indian family had started a scholarship fund for girls in Indian high schools.

Still another theme centered on engagement as a means of *Bridging Communities*—of coming to know others in the United States and them coming

to know you. An adolescent immigrant, who passionately prescribed participation in school clubs and extracurricular events, exemplified this theme:

> [Immigrants] should be involved in school! If you're new to the culture, new to life in America, you experience how things are in America, ... because not only are there Americans in these organizations, there's Asians, there's German, there're so many different cultures in these organizations. You see things from many perspectives! (Jensen, 2008a, p. 80)

Taken together, the themes of bonding and bridging show that immigrant youth's cultural identities are multifaceted, and accordingly they form the basis for multiple kinds of engagement with American civil society.

Other research, too, has noted that immigrant youth's cultural identities are a conduit to political and civic involvement. Based on ethnographic work with Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani Muslim immigrant high-school students, Maira (2004) used the terms *polycultural citizenship* and *flexible citizenship* to describe the intersection of their cultural identities and civic involvement. She observed that immigrant youth drew on their multiple cultural identities—religious, nation of origin, panethnic, and so forth—to explain their participation in American civil society. Furthermore, they combined these diverse cultural identities in flexible or changing ways depending upon the specific nature of the civic participation at hand.

As observed by Stepick and his colleagues (2008), immigrant youth's civic participation draws on their bilingual and bicultural skills. The present research, furthermore, indicates that immigrant youth's bicultural (or polycultural) consciousness and experience also are conduits for many kinds of civic and political engagement. (See Jensen [2003] and Jensen, Arnett, and McKenzie [2009] for additional work on multicultural identities, and Leal [2002] for research with adult Latino immigrants on ethnic identity and political behaviors.)

AUTONOMY AND COMMUNITY MOTIVES

While immigrants have cultural motives for political and civic participation, they are likely to have other important motives as well. What are those? Research has begun to indicate that those motives involve consideration both of the self and the broader community. Excerpts that Stepick and his colleagues (2008) presented from their qualitative work with immigrant youth invoke these dual considerations. For example, a first-generation Haitian adolescent explained that she was doing volunteer service because "[it] is helping people in a way and helping yourself in another way" (p. 63). Along similar lines, an interview study found that African immigrant youth discussed the importance of voting both as an individual right and a duty

of democratic citizenship (this study was conducted in Canada; Chareka & Sears, 2006).

Also, another study analyzed immigrant youth's motives for political and civic involvement or lack thereof in terms of three kinds of ethics: Autonomy, Community, and Divinity (Jensen, 2009). Briefly, *Ethic of Autonomy* motives included references to an individual's rights, interests, and well-being. *Ethic of Community* motives pertained to a person's obligations to others, promoting the interests of groups, and interpersonal virtues. *Ethic of Divinity* motives included references to spiritual virtues, and divine authority, lessons, and examples (cf. Jensen, 2008b; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Findings showed that politically involved youth used more Ethic of Community motives and fewer Ethic of Autonomy motives, compared to politically uninvolved youth. Civically involved and uninvolved youth did not differ on Ethic of Autonomy motives. However, civically involved youth used more Ethic of Community and more Ethic of Divinity motives, compared to civically uninvolved youth. It should be noted, though, that Ethic of Divinity motives were infrequent.

Future Directions

For immigrant youth, then, motives that center on communal and social group considerations seem to be very important to their political and civic engagement. Whether such motives are more important to immigrant youth—who often come from cultures oriented to interdependence—than to American youth more generally, remains for future research to examine. Additionally, immigrant youth are motivated by considerations pertaining to the self and autonomy, and this may especially be the case for civic activities. But again, we need future research to investigate the extent to which immigrant and non-immigrant youth resemble each other in this regard. Finally, for immigrant youth (as for non-immigrant youth) we need additional research to examine the motivational processes of moving from being uninvolved, to becoming involved, to then either staying involved or discontinuing involvement in civic and political activities (Fredricks et al., 2002; Patrick et al., 1999; Pearce & Larsen, 2006).

DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Scholars who address the factors that account for migration sometimes differentiate between the *pull* of the receiving country (such as labor recruitment and family unification) and the *push* of the country of origin (such as unemployment and war) (Martin & Zurcher, 2008). While a receiving country may exert a pull on immigrants, there may nevertheless also be a push once

immigrants arrive where they are met with misgivings and discomfort, or outright discrimination and social exclusion. Social science scholars have been concerned with the consequences of such discrimination and exclusion on immigrants' understanding of civil society and their place within it (e.g., Rumbaut, 2008; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002).

Moreover, such concerns may be particularly apt in regard to immigrant youth who developmentally are in the process of forming their identities. Thus, adolescence is a key time where persons go through the process of identifying with some social groups but not others, and for immigrant youth the extent to which they feel included or excluded in their receiving country is likely to be important to their political and civic sense of self. Furthermore, immigrant youth also constitute the coming generation of adult societal members, and hence their commitment to and engagement with American society will matter.

Research has begun to indicate that immigrant youth who experience discrimination also hold more ambivalent or negative attitudes toward American society, compared to youth who do not report discrimination. In a study of more than 5,000 second-generation immigrant adolescents, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found that negative responses to the statement "There is no better country to live in than the United States" were highest among youth who reported experiences with discrimination. Such responses were especially notable among youth from Haiti, Jamaica, and the West Indies, whom Rumbaut (2008) noted may be most likely to experience racial discrimination.

Also, Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, and Flanagan (2008) examined the relation between social exclusion and trust in the U.S. government among Arab American immigrant youth. They found that 61% of the immigrant youth identified Arabs, Muslims, or Middle Easterners as perceived "enemies" of the United States on an open-ended question stating, "Movies and television programs sometimes show certain countries or groups of people as enemies of America ... These days what groups do you think are shown as enemies of America?" (p. 87). Furthermore, these youth were less likely to believe that the U.S. government is responsive to everyone, compared to immigrant Arab youth who did not identify their own cultural, religious, or national group in enemy terms. Wray-Lake and her colleagues concluded that "Exclusion can make the ties that bind individuals to their nation tenuous" (p. 91).

For some immigrant youth, the issue may be further complicated by the fact that they also experience separation or exclusion from their country of origin. For example, Maira (2004), who studied South Asian Muslim immigrant youth at the time of 9/11, observed that critiques of the anti-Muslim backlash were common among the immigrant youth and often coupled with critiques of U.S. nationalism and state powers. Not long after, however,

a state-condoned massacre of Muslims took place in Gujarat, India, from which a substantial number of Maira's interviewees and their families originated. Maira thus observed that for these immigrant youth and their families, "there are expressions of the vulnerability that Muslim immigrants have felt, both in the U.S. and 'at home'" (p. 227). Here, then, is the painful downside for immigrants who *bridge* communities, and who sometimes find that their ties across those communities become fragile at both ends.

While experiences with discrimination clearly seem to leave some immigrant youth with diminished social and political trust and uncertainty about where they belong, experiences with discrimination may simultaneously spur political and civic behaviors. In other words, as immigrants feel pushed away, they push back. There are several fairly recent national examples of this phenomenon (see also Waters, 2008). For example, Proposition 187 in California in 1994 seems to have mobilized Latinos (Schildkraut, 2005). The proposition aimed to restrict social services to undocumented immigrants and their children. It passed but was subsequently ruled unconstitutional. Reports indicate that many Latinos regarded the proposition as a direct attack against Latinos in general (Seif, this volume). The Tomas Rivera Center reported that Latino turnout in California in 1994 was 34% higher than in 1990, the previous midterm election. Also, the Field Institute, a public policy research organization in California, reported that nearly half of Latino registered voters in California in 2000 registered after 1994 and that the post-1994 registrants were more likely to be foreign-born than the pre-1994 registrants. These patterns suggest that Proposition 187 promoted a sense of group identification among Latino immigrants (and Latinos more generally) that spurred political mobilization. Similarly, a bill aimed at undocumented foreigners in early 2006 led to demonstrations in cities around the country and student rallies at schools, culminating in a May 1, 2006, "day without immigrants" protest (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008; Martin & Midley, 2006). Again what was perceived as an anti-immigrant bill seems to have rallied immigrants to political action.

Some research with youth also supports this counter-push hypothesis that immigrants engage in civic and political activities as a reaction against discrimination and, more broadly, what they see as injustices. In her ethnographic work, Maira (2004) found that some Muslim immigrant youth took action after 9/11 to counter anti-Muslim sentiments and stereotypes. For example, one Asian Indian immigrant youth wrote the words "INDIA + MUSLIM" on her bag. To her this was a way of signaling that she was Muslim, that Muslims are diverse, and that Muslims are a visible and legitimate part of American society. This youth said, "Just because one Muslim did it in New York, you can't involve everybody in there" (Maira, 2004, p. 226).

Based on their longitudinal work in Miami, Stepick and his colleagues (2008) also reported that previously politically disengaged Cuban immigrant youth became politically active at the time of the Elian Gonzales case. The case took place in 2000 to 2001 when a six-year-old Cuban boy, Elian, survived a raft trip from Cuba to Miami while his mother drowned. His American relatives and the Miami Cuban community wanted Elian to stay in the United States, whereas his father who had remained in Cuba and the Cuban government demanded that he be returned. Elian, in fact, was returned after the U.S. government forcibly seized him from his Miami relatives. According to Stepick and his colleagues (2008), some Cuban immigrant youth explained that they became politically engaged because Cubans were being portrayed negatively and unfairly in national media. As explained by a second-generation Cuban youth:

> All it would show in the news was people, you know, setting trash cans on fire, getting in fights with cops. When you see stuff like that . . . you realize that, you know, they wanted to make us look like angry Cubans. Right? To make everybody hate us. (p. 61)

This youth joined other Latino youth, Cuban and non-Cuban, in keeping daily vigils at the house where Elian stayed.

In interview studies with Salvadoran second-generation youth, Jensen (2008a) also found that some youth were politically and civically engaged as a way to counteract negative reactions to their community, culture, or ethnicity. Explaining why he tutored, one youth said: "because I want more Hispanic people to do better in school and do good. You know, so we won't be stereotyped" (p. 79). In this study as in the ones above, immigrant youth were motivated to be involved in activities such as tutoring, organizing rallies, and demonstrating out of concern with the needs and accomplishments of their immigrant and cultural communities, as well as with the representation and respect afforded these communities within the larger polity.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

At this time, then, research suggests that experiences with stereotypes, discrimination, and social exclusion are linked to diminished social trust and confidence in the state. At the same time, research also indicates that such negative experiences mobilize some immigrant youth to become engaged in civic and political activities. Future research, however, needs to replicate these findings to establish their robustness and generalizability.

Future studies might also usefully differentiate among different experiences with discrimination. For example, research on discrimination has established a consistent phenomenon known as the *personal-group discrepancy,*

where more people report that their ethnic or racial group is a target of discrimination than people who report that they personally have experienced discrimination (e.g., Kessler, Mummendey, & Leisse, 2000). This personal-group discrepancy appears to have implications for immigrants' civic and political lives. In a study with adult Latino immigrants, Schildkraut (2005) found that perceptions of both personal and group discrimination were linked to diminished trust that politicians care about Latino issues, but only personal discrimination was linked to lower trust in the government. More research in this area would be helpful, not only with adults but also with immigrant youth.

Furthermore, future research might examine in more detail the relations between experiences with discrimination, cultural or ethnic identity, and immigrant youth's civic and political lives. Thus in her study with adult Latino immigrants, Schildkraut (2005) also found that immigrants who had experiences with personal discrimination and who self-identified as American were less likely to register and to vote, as compared to immigrants who also reported personal discrimination but self-identified as either Latino or in terms of their national original. On the basis of these results, Schildkraut speculated that ethnic group identifications can assist people in coping with individual discrimination and maintaining connection to the political process.

For immigrant youth, too, cultural identities may be sources of both positive self- and group-regard (e.g., Junn & Masuoka, 2008) that help to push back against discrimination and enter into the civic and political arena. But perhaps, too, cultural identities have a potential downside along the lines of what Rumbaut (1994, 2008) has described as "reactive ethnicity" and "oppositional identities," where in the face of discrimination and exclusion some immigrant youth move away from society as a whole. Such moving away can take the form of psychological and social disengagement from the broader society. In more rare circumstances, it also literally can take the form of moving away from the United States. (For example, see Elliott [2009] for an account of Somali immigrant youth who repatriated, apparently in response to religious, social, and race barriers experienced in the United States, along with a desire to join resistance to the 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia).

Finally, we need future research on the intersections of discrimination, identity, and civic and political participation that gives consideration to the diversity among immigrant youth. Research among adults points to this as an important line of future research. For example, a survey study of adult Mexican Americans and Asian Americans residing in California found that perceptions of discrimination against one's group was a predictor of political engagement for Mexican Americans, but not for Asian Americans (Lien, 1994).

DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXTS

There is very little research available on developmental contexts of immigrant youth's civic and political lives. Here, then, I will touch on three contexts: family, religious institutions, and media. Family and religious institutions have traditionally been key contexts in the lives of American immigrants. Media are an important context in the lives of most contemporary American youth (Bennett et al., this volume). Rather than reiterating the need for future research in the discussion of each context below, let it simply be stated now that the field seems wide open for studies on how being an immigrant youth intersects with developmental contexts in encouraging or diminishing civic and political involvement.

Given the often high commitment to family that immigrant youth evince (e.g., Stepick et al., 2008), there might be reason to think that these commitments could supersede engagement with civic and political life (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). However, the relation between the family and civic realms may be more complex for immigrant youth. In a study of high-school students, Bogard and Sherrod (2008) found that immigrant youth who felt a strong allegiance to their family also strongly agreed with a measure of civic orientation, which included items prescribing community service, staying informed, and helping the needy.

Adding to the complexity, another study with immigrant adolescents and parents found that the parents were about equally divided in invoking duty to their children as a motive for civic involvement and lack of involvement (Jensen, 2009). On the one hand, some parents spoke of their civic involvement as a way to help their children, set a good example, and stay informed about their children's lives. On the other hand, some parents stated that their responsibilities to their children and families left them without time for civic involvement. What immigrant parents are conveying to their children about the balance between commitments to family and civil society merits further research, as does the question of how immigrant youth themselves view and act on their commitments to these two realms.

Religious institutions have been and continue to be an important context in the social and civic lives of immigrants (Foley & Hoge, 2007). One study with immigrant youth and adults found that half of all study participants' civic activities occurred in the context of religious organizations (Jensen, 2008c). Parenthetically, it might be worth noting that this number is similar to what Putnam (2000) noted for the general American population. Furthermore, the study showed that religious organizations pulled participants evenly across age groups as well as national and religious backgrounds, unlike other institutions such as school, social service groups, and cultural and political organizations.

While the religious context was important for immigrants' civic involvement, findings also showed that few immigrants spoke of religious or spiritual motives when explaining their own civic involvement or why such involvement is important more generally. Only 12% of immigrant adults spoke of religious or spiritual motives, and for youth the comparable number was a mere 3% (Jensen, 2008c). These findings suggest that immigrant youth's (and adults') individual motives for civic involvement might not simply echo those of their developmental contexts, at least not for religious ones.

Media also may impact immigrant youth's civic and political lives. For example, as described above, Wray-Lake and her colleagues (2008) noted how Arab immigrant youth who regarded media portrayals of their culture and religion in a negative light also were more distrustful of the government. Maira (2004) noted how some South Asian Muslim immigrant youth paid close attention to media images of Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, and then sought in their everyday actions to counter stereotypic images. Stepick and his colleagues (2008) found that media attention to the Elian Gonzales case mobilized Cuban immigrant youth to political action.

Additional research addressing how immigrant youth are influenced by media and how they use media for civic and political action would be very welcome. As an article in the *Economist* (February 7, 2009) addressing the impact of globalization and worldwide electronic media on youth asked: "Will they try to change the world, or simply settle for enjoying themselves?" Certainly, adolescents have more of an interest in media than children or adults (Dasen, 2000; Schlegel, 2001), and perhaps media with their worldwide reach might have particular appeal to immigrant youth whose identities also often cross boundaries (Bennett et al., this volume).

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND POLITY

The research described above on immigrant youth's civic and political lives has implications for policy and for the questions of identity that we face as a nation. The research shows that immigrant youth are different from non-immigrant youth in some respects. Immigrant youth have distinctive civic and political behaviors and motives, and developmental contexts such as family, religion, and media may play distinctive roles in their civic and political lives. Consequently, civics education programs and public policies aimed at promoting youth engagement are likely to be more effective if they go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach (cf. Jensen, forthcoming). In regard to immigrant youth, programs are likely to do be more successful if they to some extent accommodate to the youth's distinctive motives, interests, and behaviors. Furthermore, programs might also take into account that

immigrant youth often have strong allegiances to their families, and that immigrant parents potentially may come to see involvement in civil society as part of their parental duty. Thus, civics programs that aim to jointly involve immigrant youth and their families are likely to resonate well.

Also, on the positive side, the research shows that immigrant youth are motivated to bridge between their culture of origin and their new country, and to contribute to civil society. On the negative side, the research indicates that immigrant youth who experience stereotypes and discrimination may come to feel alienated, even oppositional. Consequently, immigrant youth's role in American civil society rests not simply with them, but with the nation as a whole. Levine (2008) has stated that civic and political engagement is sensible when considered from the perspective of *we*. The question that invariably arises in regard to the civic and political incorporation of immigrants into society is the one Huntington asked and that Benjamin Franklin and many others have debated, namely: "Who are *we*?" If current immigrant youth are to both feel and be full members of the polity, they will need to meet with an America of a capacious national identity.

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