Making the List: The Growth (And Varying Success) of Immigrant-Origin Political Candidates in Western Europe

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Introduction

Understanding immigrant political incorporation, the process by which immigrants and their descendants\(^1\) become a part of the political sphere in the countries that receive them, is crucial to understanding the future of politics in these countries. Incorporation is not always a smooth process, nor is it limited to the kind of assimilation and “becoming like” processes that were central to many earlier models of incorporation. It is not simply a question of the degree to which immigrants adopt the political attitudes and practices of their new country, but also a question of whether they come to be indistinguishable from the majority in their political power and behavior, whether they come to constitute a powerful new interest group, or whether they become citizens by law but continually excluded—and there are reasons to believe that each of these outcomes can be seen in different parts of Europe today. Because of the different types of incorporation that can happen, a wide variety of phenomena are available for—and in need of—empirical

\(^1\) This paper uses the term “immigrant” somewhat loosely, as the exact definition of the population of interest varies slightly from country to country, and it can be a somewhat fuzzy concept as to whom it should apply. The term also implies the second and third generation in Europe much more than in the U.S. For the purposes of this project, it implies primarily the first and second generation that are defined as being “of immigrant origin,” but later research will explore the use of this term in greater detail.
analysis; this research project will attempt to aid in the larger understanding of immigrant political incorporation by examining the multiple potential causes of one particular phenomenon—the inclusion of immigrants and immigrant-background politicians on electoral lists, and their election to parliaments. That is, when do we expect to see successful political candidates coming from an immigration background? The project focuses on the European experience, but also finds that important comparisons can be drawn to “traditional settler” countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia.

Immigration has slowed slightly across the developed world in recent years. Legal immigration to the United States peaked in the years 1990 and 1991, and several studies have indicated that illegal immigration to the U.S. has also been declining since the onset of the global recession in 2007. Immigration to Germany peaked shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-1991, and the guest worker programs that brought the largest mass of foreign workers to Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and other nations were largely over by the mid-1970s. Immigration to the U.K. and Ireland peaked again in the 200s but also appears to be declining again. Nonetheless, between increased naturalization and the coming of age of a native-born second-generation, those of immigrant descent constitute an ever larger share of the population in every Western European country. Alongside that population growth, the share of the electorate coming from an immigration background has also steadily increased.²

² The exact size of this electorate is actually quite difficult to count, and there are few published estimates of the overall immigrant voting population. Most studies in this field (see, for example, Dancygier and Saunders (2006)) simply report the size of the foreign-born population as a proxy for the potential immigrant vote. Following on the initial attempts of Karen Schönwalder (2009) to show the size of the immigrant electorate in Germany—which she indicates will approach 12% by 2020— part of this larger research project will be mapping the numbers and distribution of voting-eligible immigrants.
There has also been an increase in the number of immigrant-origin politicians in these countries, with more first- and second-generation immigrants serving as representatives in parliaments and local councils. Increases in representation have not proceeded as quickly as the growth in the population nor, it would seem, even as quickly as the immigrant share of the electorate. There are also a number of interesting variations within this process; while the Netherlands and the United States have both succeeded relatively well (compared with other nations) in getting first- and second-generation immigrants into the national legislature, Dutch politicians with an immigration background have represented a broad set of political parties while American Hispanics in the last few decades have largely been representatives of the Democratic party.³ In the U.K., local representation has far exceeded representation in the House of Commons, but almost all of these local councilors have been Labour representatives. And yet, within the same country, second-generation Pakistani-Scot Osama Saeed has become one of the most public faces of the separatist Scottish National Party. The departing point of this research is thus: what explains this variation, and what has enabled the success of immigrant-origin politicians where they have been successful?

This paper starts by reviewing the literature that has grown up around immigrant incorporation and the level of minority representation. It then examines the two overarching types of factors which are likely to have an effect on the likelihood that immigrant-background politicians will be included in party lists. The first of these are

³ Largely but not exclusively, and five new Hispanic congressmen and congresswomen were elected to the 112th congress as Republicans in 2010.
electoral opportunities, which can include institutional factors such as the way in which parliamentary seats are elected and laws regarding who can be nominated and how. It can also include more structural/informal factors such as the nature of party competition. The second type of factor which may have an effect is the nature of social capital in the immigrant community and in the larger polity. While this research is in an early stage and cross-national data is as yet underdeveloped for these phenomena, this paper will also lay out specific hypotheses that are (at least potentially) observable, which will guide the further development of this research project.

**Background**

In American politics and sociology, a large literature has shown the efforts taken by political parties to recruit immigrant voters. While the strategies have varied over time, such efforts have been documented historically (Gamm 1989, Erie 1990) as well as in the present day (DeSipio 1996, Ramakrishnan 2005). These efforts by parties to win voter loyalty have facilitated much of the political incorporation of immigrants. Where political parties have put less effort into immigrant outreach, incorporation has generally also faltered (Wong 2006). With this rise in political party recruitment came a rise in the number of “ethnic politicians,” or political leaders who had risen from within the immigrant communities. The success of these leaders varied. In some cases, single ethnic groups came to dominate politics to the exclusion of other groups. In other cases, groups formed coalitions against the native-born “WASPs,” and in yet other places immigrants struggled for years to gain a foothold in politics. Robert Dahl (1961) viewed this as process that took several generations to accomplish, and which went hand-in-hand with
other forms of incorporation. Later authors have explained variations in the success of these groups, either across cities or across ethnic groups, in terms of political opportunity structure and have pointed to the importance of political machines (Erie 1990). In either case, the fact that politicians are themselves a part of the community was seen as improving their ability to represent the community and, crucially, made it easier for them to build an ethnic political coalition.

Any political leader who could help members of an ethnic group to overcome the handicaps and humiliations associated with their identity...automatically had an effective strategy for earning support and loyalty...Probably no other political strategy has quite so much promise of capturing the loyalties of citizens for party coalitions. (Dahl 1961, 33)

Political parties realized this, and thus the immigrant ethnic groups became powerful interest groups whom parties not only chose to court, but needed to court in order to win urban elections (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; cf. Alba and Nee 2003, 156). These ethnic coalitions within political machines were built into the fabric of most major American cities by the end of the 19th century, and though there would be variations in their composition and power over time, they remained a powerful force in politics even after new arrivals were restricted by the 1921 and 1924 Immigration Acts and well into the middle decades of the 20th century. Furthermore, while these machines did not perfectly represent immigrants and were capable of excluding some groups at the same time they excluded others—winning elections, not furthering incorporation was their primary goal, after all—they became an important mediating point between sectors of the immigrant community and the political institutions of American society (Erie 1990, Stone 1996, Wong 2006).

The European historical experience has been drastically different, however. European countries were largely immigrant-sending nations rather than immigrant-
receiving nations when suffrage was expanded around the turn of the last century, when American immigrants were being won over to politics and to the political parties. While some migration to and within Europe did take place at this time, these countries find themselves in the modern era largely without extensive histories of immigration and certainly without a long historical view of themselves as “nations of immigration” (Brubaker 1992, Lucassen 2005). The concept of immigrants as a new electorate is not wholly new in Europe, but the idea does not figure as prominently as in the United States, either in academic writing or in the popular political press (Schain 2008).

There is no country in North America or Western Europe where the level of non-native minority representation in the national legislature matches the level of immigrant or non-native minority. The share of parliament in these countries made up of either minorities or immigrants varies from a low of less than one-half of one percent in Italy to more than 15 percent in the United States (Brouard and Tiberj 2010). But the countries where these groups are the best represented are also the countries where these groups make up the largest part of the population—thus while minorities in the U.S., Canada, and the Netherlands had achieved parliamentary representation of around 15, 8, and 8 percent, respectively, these must be compared to respective minority populations of approximately 34, 16.2, and 13.5 percent. (US Census 2007, Black 2006, CBS StatLine).

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4 This paper will intentionally avoid the issue of native minority representation, not because it is unimportant, but because a largely separate literature has developed around these issues because of the different legal and normative contexts surrounding native minorities in most country. Furthermore, there are a number of theoretical linkages in this literature to the African-American population, even though the historical experience of immigration is so different and distant for this group; in the American experience, it should also be pointed out, a non-trivial minority of the Hispanic population is also fourth-, fifth-, or later-generation and thus also detached from the “immigrant experience” as frequently understood in European context. Thus in including some of the theoretical knowledge from these groups, “minority” will occasionally be used, perhaps sloppily, as a shorthand for non-White, non-indigenous groups in North America and immigrant-origin groups in Western Europe.
Nonetheless, the numbers are increasing in most countries, if slowly, and as can be seen from the last example, there are some countries (such as the Netherlands) where the gap is becoming relatively small, and other countries (such as France) where the gap remains quite large (Brouard and Tiberj 2010).

Existing studies of immigrants as voters have focused quite closely on political behavior at the individual level. These have largely been based upon the well-developed American literature of political incorporation, both from political science and from sociology. This branch of research studies the ways that individuals find themselves included in (or excluded from) the political processes of their host country, either through assimilation or incorporation as a bloc. Such research has focused on the obstacles to assimilating or achieving political power, and more narrowly on the ways that party allegiances and voting patterns are developed (e.g., DeSipio 1996, Schildkraut 2001, Alba and Nee 2003; see also Saggar 2000 for a review of the British literature). While some of these explanations are convincing, party positions are largely taken as a given in this literature, and partisan identity is seen as developing out of ideological preferences, socioeconomic conditions, or other personal factors but not from the strategic actions of the parties. Furthermore, this analytic strand has been underdeveloped outside of the U.S. and the U.K., and there is a lack of comparative research to show if the same factors apply to immigrant communities in Europe.

The radical right literature, on the other hand, has taken the politics of the immigration issue seriously, but has largely ignored immigrants themselves. These party-based studies have developed along three primary lines of analysis. First, there is a set of spatial voting models which have predicted major changes in the classical left-right
political spectrum. Immigrants are one of several groups assumed to vote on the “left-libertarian” end of the spectrum, while new opportunities have opened for more right-authoritarian politics (Inglehart 1990; Kitschelt 1994, 1995; Norris 2005). The second line of analysis follows sociotropic (i.e., based on economic preferences and perceptions) models of voting and argues that increases in unemployment or other factors have encouraged a growing constituency for the “populist radical right” (Betz 1994; Golder 2003, Mudde 2007). A third, more recent literature has emphasized the importance of institutional opportunities and mainstream party strategies for these new populist radical right movements to appear (van der Brug et al. 2005; Meguid 2005, 2008), but here, too, the emphasis has been on immigration as an issue and not with immigrants as potential voters affecting party strategies.

**Minority Representation**

The question of what causes a greater or smaller number of immigrants to be represented in parliament is part of a larger debate on the question of descriptive representation. Should members of identifiable minority groups, including immigrants but also including indigenous ethnic minorities and non-ethnic groups (such as women or the GLBT community), necessarily be represented by people who share this attribute with them? Hannah Pitkin’s (1967) elaboration on the idea of descriptive representation, which “depends on the representative’s characteristics, on what he is or is like, on being rather than doing something,” has led to a long literature in political science on the question of whether descriptive representation is in itself important, or whether it has innate links to the effectiveness of policy or substantive representation. Pitkin was herself
quite concerned about the substantive implications of the idea, which rest on an impossible-to-achieve ideal of perfect representation (1967, 86-87). While some early empirical studies also questioned the benefits of this linkage (e.g., Swain 1993), more recent studies in American politics have generally found that there are distinct advantages to descriptive representation that spill over into substantive areas (see, for example, Williams 1998; Mansbridge 1999).\(^5\) For Mansbridge, in addition to some real psychological and social benefits to descriptive representation, political actors who share attributes with a disadvantaged community have a considerably easier time communicating with that group than actors who are not a part of the community; the greater the division between the two groups, the more likely descriptive representation will be necessary in order to foster any communication between the two (1999, 643). While the American literature has been positive about the importance of descriptive representation, it should be pointed out that the results of comparative studies have been mixed, and there is simply a smaller sample of studies in the European context on which to draw (Bird, Saalfield and Wüst 2010.\(^6\))

In looking at party politics, descriptive representation can also be seen as a strategic choice on the part of parties who are interested in reaching out to a new population. Parties have a choice between programmatic and personal strategies when reaching out to a particular constituency. The former involves parties taking (and publicizing) policy positions and the latter involves reaching out directly to voters or to groups speaking on their behalf. Descriptive representation can be an effective personal strategy for parties,

\(^5\) Or at least in certain contexts (Cameron, Epstein and O'Halloran 1996).
\(^6\) See also Nixon (1998) for a prominent negative finding in the U.K. context.
as there is considerable evidence that immigrant voters and their descendants are, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to vote for someone of the same background. For the American case, at least, there is evidence for this in prior waves of immigrants (Glazer and Moynihan 1963, Wolfinger 1964) and in the modern era (Barreto 2007, Nuño 2007).

**Number of Minorities in Parliament**

As pointed out above, the number of immigrant minority representatives in European and North American governments has not matched the size of the communities in the voting eligible population. However, while this may be the general rule, there is variation in the degree to which representation has been achieved, and some patterns begin to emerge.

First, the question of voting eligibility matters. It should not be surprising that there has been a larger disconnect between the numbers of immigrant representatives and the size of the community where smaller sections of the community are eligible to vote. This can be due as in the American case to large-scale illegal immigration (as in the American case) or due to a difficult or exclusionary citizenship policy (as in the Swiss or the pre-1999 German case). In either circumstance, the fact that large swaths of the immigrant population are ineligible to vote both reduces the potential pool of immigrant politicians and the overall electoral power of the immigrant community. That these sectors of the population cannot participate in electoral politics does not mean that they have no political power or organizational capacities (via labor unions, civic associations, protest movements, etc.). The group’s capacity to become an electoral force is, however, limited to the size of the voting-eligible population rather than the size of the immigrant
community at large. In that context, for example, the 4.9% of the U.S. House and Senate of Hispanic background following the 2010 elections is rather divergent from the almost 16% of the population of Hispanic origin, but much closer to the estimated 6.8% of the voting population identified as Hispanic in that year.⁷

Secondly, there is a general tendency for immigrant-origin candidates to do better at the local level than at the national level. There have been no systematic comparisons across countries at the local level, and a later goal of this research project will be the compilation of this data to verify this pattern comparatively. Nonetheless, a number of individual case studies tend to indicate that this is the case, with immigrant minorities having a greater rate of success winning seats on provincial, municipal and local councils than at the national level.⁸

One problem with the literature in this area is that there are effectively no cross-national comparisons of minorities in parliaments, making broad comparative surveys difficult. A few dual-country studies have shown the promise of comparing immigrants in parliament and in local government as an outcome, including Irene Bloemraad’s (2006) study of the United States and Canada and Romain Garbaye’s (2005) comparison of France and the United Kingdom. Later stages of this research project will therefore necessitate the compilation and documentation of broadly comparative data on

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⁷ Data from The 2009 American Community Survey and the Center for Immigration Studies. It should be noted that these percentages are for all Hispanic-origin residents and/or voters, not accounting for immigration status.

⁸ In the U.S., for example, Hispanics in 2008 made up 17.6% of Texas’ and 12.7% of California’s Congressional delegation, while they make up 20.4% and 22.5% of these states’ legislatures, respectively, against 36 and 37% of the overall states’ populations. (NELEO 2008) See also Le Lohé 1998 for evidence from the U.K., Togeby 2008 for evidence from Denmark, and Garbaye 2005 for a France/U.K. comparison.
immigrant-origin elected officials, in order to test the effects of the hypotheses below on the outcome of descriptive representation.

**Electoral Opportunities**

The rules and institutions governing elections are a fairly obvious starting point in determining whether minorities make it into parliament or onto party lists. These effects can be happening in two different stages; first at the level where candidates are selected, and second during the actual elections.

**Election Rules**

One of the most important differences across countries in electoral rules is the distinction between single-member districts and proportional representation (PR). Single-member districts, greatly increase the local focus of political campaigns. As immigrant populations tend to be concentrated in urban areas, the likelihood of an immigrant community making up the majority or even a large percentage of an electoral district is much likelier where the districts themselves are geographically bounded and small. Amsterdam and Rotterdam, whose non-Western-origin populations have reached 50% and 47%, respectively, might expect to elect significant numbers of immigrant-origin candidates to the national parliament (even accounting for the fact that some share of this population is non-naturalized and not yet voting-eligible). However, in elections for the
national parliament this vote is diluted into the overall national vote, i.e., into a population that is only 11.2% non-Western in origin, before seats are assigned.⁹

Given the evidence that there is some electoral benefit to candidates who share an ethnic background with their constituents (see above), it is therefore more likely that immigrant-origin candidates will be more likely to stand for and be elected to parliaments in specific districts where a large share of the voters are themselves of immigrant origin and thus this benefit is substantively significant. Where votes are averaged across large (or even national) electoral districts, it will reduce the electoral incentives for parties to promote immigrant-origin candidates and thus they will be less likely to appear on party lists. Mixed-member districts, where some candidates are elected through PR and some are elected in single-member districts potentially offer a middle ground between these two with some leverage for immigrants to stand in immigrant-majority districts. Because campaigns are generally run at the national level in these countries, however, this potential for district campaigns may not be realized in fact. All five Turkish-origin members of the current Bundestag, for example, were elected from PR lists, and none holds a district seat.

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⁹ Preceding data is for 2010 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)
Table 1: Electoral Systems by Type

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A corollary to this is that we should expect to see greater numbers of immigrant-origin representatives at lower, sub-national levels of government where immigrants are more likely to make up majorities of the relevant constituencies, which as we have seen above appears to be the case in many countries.

One other effect of single-member districts that should be kept in mind is that they generally reduce the number of successfully political parties to two or “two-and-a-half”\(^\text{10}\), such that while immigrant political power might be concentrated more effectively in these districts, there may also be fewer political parties for the community to work with.

- Hypothesis 1: The presence of single-member districts for parliamentary elections will increase the likelihood of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.

\(^\text{10}\) For a synopsis of theory and evidence behind this rule, see Riker (1982)
Another subset of electoral rules has the potential to affect the probability of immigrant-background politicians being nominated and elected to office. This concerns the nomination procedures themselves, and the important variation seems to be how strictly the party controls the nomination procedures. In most of the countries in this study, parties have fairly strict control over who represents them on the ballot and, in the PR systems, over who gets into parliament given the number of seats that have been assigned to them. But there are a few exceptions to this rule. The first is the concept of preferential voting. In this system, voters in a PR election cast a vote for party and seats are apportioned strictly on that basis. However, voters also cast a preferential vote for a candidate, and in the case that the number of seats assigned is lower than the total number of candidates, it is the highest-ranked candidates in terms of preferential votes who will be selected to fill these seats. Where this electoral rule is in place, immigrant communities have used it to “rally behind” a candidate for their community. This has been cited as the single most important factor for getting immigrant-origin candidates into local office in Denmark (Togeby 2008) and Norway (Bergh and Bjorklund 2011) in recent elections, although in neither case has this yet been successfully exploited to gain national office. Another instance where parties do not have strict control over their candidates is in the American open primary system, which may offer a similar opportunity for immigrant communities to support a candidate of similar origins. Differences in eligibility for party primaries and distribution of partisan identification make this somewhat complicated, although these differences can be leveraged for a within-country comparison to see if any combination of laws regarding primaries seem to make a difference.
• Hypothesis 2: Looser party control over the nomination process will increase
the likelihood of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.

Party Competition

Beyond laws and formal election rules, the nature of electoral competition and the
structure of party politics will also likely affect the degree of success facing immigrant-
background candidates. Parties of the left have often been seen as the natural home for
European immigrants due to the working-class status of the bulk of immigrant arrivals,\textsuperscript{11} and studies of voting behavior among immigrants have generally shown that immigrant
electors in Europe do indeed vote primarily—though not exclusively—for social
democratic, labor or socialist parties (e.g., Saggar 2000, Michon, Tille and van Heelsum
2007). However, parties of the left have also traditionally earned a large section of their
support from the native-born working class, who are the most likely to see themselves in
competition with immigrants for both market and government resources. Although it is
not yet clear whether they have become the populist radical right’s most important
constituency, a number have studies have shown that a sizable portion of the growth in
these parties in Europe has come from former supporters of parties of the left rather than
from Conservative, Christian Democratic or other parties of the right (Betz 1994,
Kitschelt 1995, Givens 2005). Parties on the left are thus frequently faced with the
tradeoff of being the most likely to gain immigrants’ vote, but also being the most likely
to lose constituents on the basis of a strong pro-immigrant position.

\textsuperscript{11} Due to the presence of large numbers of highly-skilled immigrants to the U.S. and Canada due to
differing immigration policies, this natural affinity is much weaker for American and Canadian immigrant
communities.
Much of this is contingent on the strength of the populist radical right in a given country. In countries where these parties do not exist or are too weak to be perceived as viable political options, they will not act as potential “exit” options for traditional working-class constituencies. In this case, parties of the left may be more willing to take stances favorable to the immigrant communities as they may be better able to win over the new constituency without losing the old. Additionally, where no populist radical right party has emerged, questions of immigration may be slightly less salient and drastically less polarized such that parties can enact policy relating to immigrants with less public debate, leading to less awareness and thus less dissatisfaction within their traditional constituencies—a process that has been pointed to as an important explanation for variation in immigration admissions policy debates (Howard 2009). Where there is a strong party on the far right, however, there is a clearer alternative for disaffected working-class voters, and policies pertaining to immigrants and immigration will likely be much more salient and much more rancorous. For these reasons, we might expect the presence of strong populist radical right parties to restrict the ability of social democratic or left-wing parties to promote candidates with immigrant backgrounds for fear of angering their traditional supporters. Contrarily, other parties in the system which are not competing for the same traditional constituencies may not be affected in the same ways by the presence of a strong anti-immigrant or radical right party.

- Hypothesis 3: The presence of a strong populist radical right party will decrease the number of immigrant-background candidates nominated by traditional parties of the left (i.e., social democrats, socialists).
• Hypothesis 4: The presence of a strong populist radical right party will have no effect on the number of immigrant-background candidates nominated by other mainstream parties (i.e., conservatives, Christian democrats, liberals, greens)

Social Networks and Civic Organizations

Another area that has the potential to greatly affect the likelihood of having minorities in the legislative body is the presence of immigrant organizations, and of the kinds of social and civic capital that might allow the immigrant community either to mobilize politically or to build connections with the larger community. While this fits into a much broader literature on the overall nature and usefulness of social capital, there are specific aspects which might be measured and which could indicate the type and strength of the communities’ connections. This paper will argue that specific types of network and social capital will lead to increased levels of descriptive representation. First, more active civic organizations and higher levels of social capital will increase the probability that individuals within it are active in politics, increasing the pool of individuals that might successfully climb up through the nomination and election processes. Second, high levels of social capital will increase the political knowledge and skills of immigrants, at both the individual and community level, closing the gap in levels of participation and making it more likely for immigrants to become actively and successfully involved in local politics. Third, the greater the strength of civic organizations in a community, the more easily that parties interested in an immigrant constituency (and government agencies more interested in working with such communities) will be able to find a partner in the immigrant
community to work with. Lastly, states with a historically corporatist understanding of group representation will be slower to encourage or recognize immigrant participation, but if and when immigrant groups are finally recognized, they will be incorporated quickly into the system.

Trust and Political Engagement

Social capital is conceptualized as both an aggregate and individual-level phenomenon, and the first way in which social capital matters for immigrant representation relates to the latter of these understandings: the way in which increased levels of social capital and civic trust feed into individual political behavior. Research into the effects of social capital on individuals has shown that those people who more actively participate in politics will have higher levels of trust in the society around them; the reverse, to a lesser extent, appears also to be true (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Tillie and Slijper 2007). Building off this, I expect to find that when levels of social trust are higher, overall political participation be higher in the immigrant community. More importantly, a greater number of individuals will possess the levels of high civic engagement necessary to be politically active, and the pool of potentially effective political candidates within the community will be increased thus increasing the likelihood of achieving descriptive representation on party lists and in parliament, above and beyond the effect of a more engaged immigrant community.

A potential criticism of this understanding of civic organization is that the trust that members develop might apply only within the particular organizations into which people are socialized. People who join groups end up trusting people more—but only other
members of the group, or at least of the specific community from which the group is drawn (Stolle 2001). If this is the case, then increasing activity among civic organizations may improve levels of trust, but not in a way that benefits overall political activity and which in fact separates immigrants further from their surrounding communities. Janelle Wong (2006) has indicated that this kind of apolitical socialization may be the case for some contemporary American immigrant groups. These communities are organizing and seeing a growth of ethnic and immigrant associations, but without the presence of strong political parties, these associations are not as focused on political mobilization as similar groups in the past.

- Hypothesis 5: Increased levels of civic trust will increase the likelihood of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.

_Civic Organizations as “Schools of Democracy”_

Another way of understanding the importance of civic organizations in the context of immigrant political organizations draws on a long tradition of viewing civic associations as a place for learning the ways in which democratic societies work. In this light, immigrant organizations might be potentially strong engines for teaching civic participation and political skills to the immigrants that join them. This understanding of associations underlies much of the political science literature on social capital (e.g., Putnam 1993, 2000; Skocpol 2003) and builds on a much longer set of research that indicates that members of civic organizations are more likely to be positive about, informed about, and active in politics (e.g., Almond and Verba 1993, Verba Brady and Schlozman 1995).
One potential problem with this view is that it assumes immigrant organizations to have similar goals, orientations and modes of operation as the larger community, without which the civic learning may not be applicable. A civic organization which focuses its energies on efforts other than politics, or which continues to operate in the language of its members’ origin rather than the language of the host community, may serve to reinforce barriers rather than to break them down (Aptekar 2008). On the other hand, Meindert Fennema and Jean Tillie’s (1999) study of civic associations in Amsterdam found that density of civic associations was tied to the strength of democratic participation regardless of the content or goals of the civic organizations, leading them to the conclusion that “to have undemocratic ethnic organisations is better for the democratic process than to have no organisations at all.” (723) It may also be the case that whether the type of organization matters will depend on the surrounding political structure, and later authors have attributed Fennema and Tillie’s findings to the pluralist nature of Dutch political life, in contrast to similar organizations in Belgium (Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2006) or Germany (Vermeulen 2006) which appear to have been less effective at encouraging participation.

These studies have tended to focus on aggregate levels of political knowledge. However, extending the argument from the prior section, if levels of political knowledge increase with the activity of civic organizations, it is also likely that the pool of individuals that are knowledgeable about the political system and likely to engage in political activity will increase, thus also increasing the supply of potentially effective candidates in the immigrant community at the same time that the political activity of that
community is increasing, which will also likely lead to more immigrants standing for and winning election to parliaments.

- Hypothesis 6: Increased numbers of civic organizations within an immigrant community will increase the number of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.
- Hypothesis 7: Increased numbers of civic organizations within an immigrant community will increase the level of that community’s political activity.

*Civic Organizations as Intermediaries*

Another aspect of civic organizations (and their relation to social capital) which needs to be examined is the level of interconnectedness that these organizations have with other groups in the same community, as well as with networks in the larger national community. Tillie and Slijper (2007) find the high rates of interconnectedness among Turkish organizations in the Netherlands to be an important explanation for the high rates of Turkish participation in the political sphere—despite the fact that other immigrant groups tend to also have large numbers of civic associations and that participation in associational life is associated with participation at the individual level.

The degree to which these groups “bridge” their connections to political parties and other networks in the larger political community will also impact their effectiveness. If groups remain interconnected but largely cut off from the larger community, it is possible that neither higher levels of aggregate social capital nor an interconnectedness between ethnic civic associations will have a method of turning into political influence, nor will it increase the likelihood of ethnic politicians climbing the political ladder. In looking at the
Swedish case, Maritta Soininen points to the potentially exclusive nature of existing social networks as an obstacle even for qualified candidates from well-organized (but outsider) communities:

What probably makes it even more difficult to gain access to these important informal networks is that the membership criteria are more subtle than for more formal organizations. Indeed, these networks can instead work against under-represented groups, because they also have a conserving effect. Sometimes a nomination committee might find it difficult...to “lift down” a person from a political position when that elected member is part of the same informal network to which the members of the nomination committee also belong. (Soininen 2011, 155).

Looking at social networks from a sociologist’s point of view, however, it is possible that even if these strong informal networks are exclusionary and have a dampening effect on the overall political effectiveness of the immigrant group, certain members of the community stand to benefit from the “structural holes” in the flows of information and power. Where there is limited information flow between groups, any actor able to position himself in the network as a broker between then will have considerably greater opportunities to broker exchanges and to leverage his own position between the sources of social capital.12 If this is the case, it leads to an alternative hypothesis: stronger exclusionary networks in the majority community might reduce the overall influence of the community, but may allow for significant political opportunities for the individuals able to act as information brokers and negotiators between the two communities. We might expect such a situation to be reflected in fewer elected representatives, but with those representatives reaching higher positions of power in the national government, as they are expected to “speak for” their larger community.

12 See Burt (1992, 1997) for a more detailed description of the idea of “structural holes.”
• Hypothesis 8: High rates of interconnectedness among immigrant civic organizations will increase the number of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.
• Hypothesis 9: Strong informal networks will reduce the number of immigrant-origin candidates on party lists.
• Alternative Hypothesis 9: Strong informal networks will reduce the number of immigrant-origin candidates on lower-level party lists but have no negative effect on the number of immigrant-origin candidates on national party lists.

Civic Organizations in Plural and Corporatist Models

The nature of interactions between civic organizations and the government is another important consideration, and the differences between social-democratic, corporatist and pluralist systems should also affect the way that immigrant civic organizations are able to achieve representation. There is reason to think that corporatist systems\textsuperscript{13} and pluralistic systems will have divergent outcomes, as the influence that certain civic groups have in the former system will likely make them more effective at representing their members’ interests, but new groups in this system will have a harder time making their voices heard. This type of system sets the bar high for entrance to the public discourse, and once

\textsuperscript{13}By corporatism, I mean here the concept of organized and hierarchical interest representation, as defined by Schmitter: “a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support.” (1974, 93)
the warrant is given for participation, participation of the chosen group or groups remains defined by the terms of the state. It is for this reason that the literature has thus far been skeptical about the effects of corporatist systems on individual immigrants (Lash 1994) and on immigrant organizations (Karan 2008). Likewise, comparisons between organizations in traditionally pluralist countries and more corporatist or social-democratic states have found that they have a positive effect on overall civic participation only in the former group, both for the public at large (Stolle 2001) and immigrants in particular (Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2006).

The corporatist arrangements that make it difficult to get a groups’ interests represented in the first place may, however, make that representation more effective and more stable once it is finally established. Decades may pass before immigrant civic, religious and labor organizations are granted an established place at the bargaining table, but once they are there it might be easier for them to influence decisions. In the case of immigrant representation, it is thus likely that corporatist systems might be expected to be more exclusionary at lower levels, but to be more accommodating at higher levels and work to promote those sectors of the immigrant community that are eventually included—whether this is seen as accommodation or “co-optation” is a separate but open question, of course. As immigrant groups grow and become a more established part of the community, it is likely that they will eventually pass a threshold where they will be incorporated into the larger set of represented interests. This incorporation will thus take longer to initiate but will likely proceed more quickly once it has begun.

- Hypothesis 10: States with a strong set of corporatist arrangements are likely to see lower levels of political participation among immigrants
Hypothesis 11: States with a strong set of corporatist arrangements are likely to see fewer immigrant-origin candidates in sub-national politics but no fewer politicians with an immigration background being nominated and elected nationally.

Conclusions

This research project is obviously in its beginning stages, but as the literature suggests and the preliminary data indicate, there is reason to believe that the ideas and hypotheses generated in single-country and dual-country studies of immigrant representation can be extended to more broad, cross-national comparisons. Electoral opportunities and the structure of social capital seem to be the type of explanation best suited to explain the variation in the success rate, and in the type of success, of immigrant-origin politicians being nominated and elected to office. Understanding what affects immigrants’ incorporation into political office should provide insights into the underlying political behavior of immigrant communities and the degree (and type) of political incorporation being achieved.

References


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