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Race, Ethnicity, and Political Behavior

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Summary and Keywords

Whether as a consequence of colonialism or more recent international migration, ethnic diversity has become a prominent feature of many contemporary democracies. Given the importance of ethnicity in structuring people's identities, scholars have sought to incorporate ethnicity in their models of people's political behavior. Studies focusing on individual support for group interests among ethnic minority members find that higher socioeconomic status generally leads to a reduced emphasis on ethnicity in forming individual political opinions. However, this relationship is often considerably weaker among ethnic minorities with frequent experiences of discrimination, pessimistic assessments of equal opportunities in a country, and social pressures from group members to comply with group norms. Research also shows that, in comparison to majority populations, members of ethnic minorities are generally less active in politics, more likely to use contentious forms of political action, and support left-wing political parties that promote minority interests. Key explanations of differences between ethnic minorities and majorities in Western democracies focus on the importance of individual and group resources as well as political empowerment via representation in policymaking institutions, usually enabled by higher shares of minority populations within electoral districts.

Keywords: political behavior, ethnicity, race, immigrants, political participation, political engagement, political action, voting, protest, political socialization, political empowerment

Introduction

Whether as a consequence of colonialism or more recent international migration, ethnic diversity has become a prominent feature of many contemporary democracies. The presence of ethnic minorities, while enriching in many ways, may present a number of political challenges. As Verba and his colleagues noted, "when political adversaries are defined by their race or ethnicity, the dilemmas of democratic governance are often posed more starkly: not only may the conflicts be of particularly extended duration and

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impermeability to compromise, but since they ordinarily engage groups that constitute minorities, they raise concerns about majority tyranny” (Verba et al., 1993, p. 453).

In spite of these dangers, political participation of minorities and majorities alike has been deemed crucial for ensuring the legitimacy and stability of democratic governance. Participation in conventional ways, such as voting, enhances people’s sense of having a stake in the system, encourages them to become more knowledgeable about politics, and enables individuals to channel their demands to the political system in legal and peaceful ways. These issues may be particularly important with respect to ethnic minorities that are more likely to feel discriminated against, become alienated from electoral politics, and motivated to engage in political violence.

Political participation enhances democratic legitimacy also indirectly, that is, by contributing to descriptive and substantive representation in policymaking institutions. Since people generally prefer voting for representatives from their own ethnic group, high levels of minority political participation mean better chances for their co-ethnic representatives to get elected to public office. Moreover, given that minority legislators are more committed to advancing their group interests, descriptive representation of ethnic minorities provides better opportunities for adopting policies that are favorable to these groups. Descriptive and substantive representation, in turn, strengthens minority attachment to the political system, their willingness to accept democratic rules and practices, as well as acquire greater respect from majority group members.

This chapter focuses on political behavior of ethnic minorities primarily in affluent democracies of North America and Europe. To assess when minority members behave as members of their ethnic group as opposed to self-interested individuals, I first examine people’s support for their ethnic group interests. I then analyze the extent to which ethnic minority status is linked to people’s engagement in various forms of political action. After presenting evidence on differences in voting turnout and protest behavior between ethnic minorities and majorities across nations, the chapter considers several explanations of these differences, including individual and group resources, political empowerment via co-ethnic representatives, as well as minority group size and political institutions. Since some ethnic minorities consist of large immigrant populations, I also address the importance of immigrant-specific experiences, such as socialization in origin countries and citizenship acquisition in adopted homelands. Finally, I discuss how and why ethnicity matters in shaping party preferences among minority members. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodological challenges in studying ethnic minorities and suggests several avenues for future research.

Ethnicity, Race, and Support for Minority Group Interests

Ethnicity is commonly defined as a set of descent-based individual characteristics that are either difficult or impossible to change, such as skin color, nationality, or primary language (Chandra, 2004, 2006; Birnir, 2007). Note that this definition refers to skin color—often seen as a key characteristic of race in Western democracies—as one of the distinguishing features among ethnic groups.¹ This chapter follows previous research in using this broad definition of ethnicity.

The idea that ethnic identity structures people's political attitudes and behavior has roots in social identity theory. This theory stipulates that any group is defined in relation to other groups. In addition, the basic human need to assign order and meaning to the social environment encourages people to differentiate themselves into social groups even in situations where no real differences between groups exist (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Once established, social categorization and perception of oneself as belonging to a certain group leads people to adopt the kind of behavior that favors in-group members and discriminates against out-group members.

Ethnicity and race are not the only sources of social differentiation, and their importance may vary across individuals and over time (e.g., Chandra, 2006). However, these features of individual identity play a considerable role in shaping people's political attitudes and behavior, particularly among minority members who are more likely to define themselves in terms of ethnicity than majority members (Birnir, 2007, p. 4). People rely on ethnicity in making political decisions to enhance their cognitive efficiency. Since most individuals are unable to access and process all relevant information, they seek information shortcuts, or heuristics, to infer how choices they make relate to their self-interest. Dawson (1994) argued that African Americans employ the so-called "Black utility heuristic", that is, a set of collective interests of their racial group, as a proxy to their individual interests in deciding which party to support. Similarly, a number of cross-national studies viewed ethnicity as "low-information rationality," and argued that ethnic identities often override other identities in party and voter behavior, particularly when information available to voters at the time of elections is in short supply (e.g., Birnir, 2007; Chandra, 2004).

To assess when individuals behave as members of their ethnic or racial group, as opposed to members of nonethnic groups or simply as self-interested individuals, some studies sought to explain people's support for their ethnic group interests. Early research revealed strong perceptions of linked fate among African Americans in the United States (Dawson, 1994). These perceptions were seen as responsible for why African Americans remain highly homogeneous in supporting the Democratic Party despite a growing socioeconomic diversity within the group. Subsequent studies revealed, however, that these findings do not always extend to other ethnic and racial minorities in the United

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States, such as Asian Americans or Latinos. Attachment among members of these groups has been considerably weaker and more malleable than among African Americans.

To understand these differences, Chong and Kim (2006) argued that experiences of discrimination and perceptions of equal opportunities in a society are central to explaining the extent to which socioeconomic status weakens support for group interests among ethnic minorities. Those who belong to groups with frequent experiences of discrimination and perceive lack of equal opportunity in their country—such as African Americans in the United States—improved individual socioeconomic status does not undermine the salience of ethnic considerations in shaping their political decisions. In contrast, for minorities whose members feel less or not at all discriminated against, such as Asian Americans or Latinos in the United States, higher socioeconomic status leads to less emphasis on ethnicity in forming their political attitudes. Thus, minority group members who think that social mobility can be achieved as a consequence of hard work, education, and other individual investments are less likely to focus on supporting and advancing collective group interests. However, if opportunities are perceived to be limited and group affiliations are seen as responsible for restricting social mobility, individuals belonging to minorities are more likely to work together with their group members to improve their status within society.

Research from other countries confirms that discrimination experiences matter in shaping political choices of ethnic minority members. For example, those who believe their ethnic group members are being discriminated against in a country are more likely to support political parties that have traditionally defended and promoted minority interests, such as the Labour Party in the United Kingdom (Sanders et al., 2014). Moreover, this relationship is especially strong among ethnic minority voters who have made efforts to integrate into the mainstream society in their country of residence. In other words, for ethnic minority members who have embraced their host country's cultural practices, perceptions of discrimination against their ethnic group provides a particularly strong motivation to vote for a pro-minority party compared to minority members who have made fewer efforts to integrate. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between perceptions of discrimination among one's ethnic group members and personal experiences of discrimination. This is because while the former encourages ethnic minority members to vote for a pro-minority party, the latter appears to have the opposite effect: specifically, personal experiences of discrimination motivate ethnic minorities to punish governing parties at the time of elections, even when incumbent governments include a pro-minority party (Sanders et al., 2014). Hence, to the extent that governments fail to protect individuals from personal discrimination, minority members are prepared to vote them out of office.

Yet, perceptions of discrimination against one's group members provide only part of the explanation why ethnic minority members promote their group interests. Another part of the story has to do with the ability of groups to shame individuals who have defected from their group norms of political behavior to pursue their individual interests. Using experiments that explicitly considered situations involving trade-offs between co-ethnic

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group interest and self-interest among African Americans in the United States, White and colleagues (2014) found that defections from group-oriented behavior are not uncommon, but that these defections are less likely in the presence of social monitoring and expectations of sanctions from the group. Moreover, where group norms are clearly defined and intensely felt—as is the case for African Americans in their support for the Democratic Party—the reputational costs of pursuing self-interest at the expense of the group goals becomes particularly high. As a consequence, individuals are more likely to resolve trade-offs between group and personal interests in favor of the group. Whether these findings extend to other countries with different combinations of ethnic minorities, political histories, and more fragmented party systems is a question that should be explored in future research.

Resource-Based Models of Political Participation Among Minorities

While support for ethnic group interests varies as a consequence of perceptions of the factors discussed above, another central question is to what extent ethnicity is related to various forms of political behavior. Do ethnic minorities participate in politics more or less than majorities? Do they engage in the same types of political activities, and, if not, what explains these differences?

I start with voting turnout as the most common form of political activity that shapes the composition of democratic governments. Figure 1 shows differences in voting turnout between ethnic minorities and majorities across 32 established and newer democracies using the *European Social Survey* (ESS) data, 2002–2013;² and the *United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy* (CID) Survey, 2006.³ I calculated differences by subtracting the percentage of voting turnout for individuals who said they do not belong to a minority ethnic group from the percentage of voting turnout for citizens who belong to an ethnic minority group (non-citizens were excluded from calculations).⁴ Thus, positive values indicate that ethnic majorities voted at lower rates than ethnic minorities.

For 27 of the 32 countries, ethnic/racial minority members are less electorally active than majorities. However, there are considerable differences among countries. For example, in the Netherlands there is almost a 19 percentage point gap in turnout between the majority population and ethnic minorities composed largely of Muslims and recent immigrants. This voting gap is common across most of Europe, when the minorities are mostly foreign-born individuals (such as in Denmark and Sweden), or when ethnic groups are marked by deep cultural and religious differences (such as in Israel and the Netherlands). At the same time, the pattern is reversed in several newer democracies. For example, in Poland and Lithuania where ethnic Russians or Ukrainians constitute long-standing ethnic groups, minorities vote 9 percentage points higher than majority populations.

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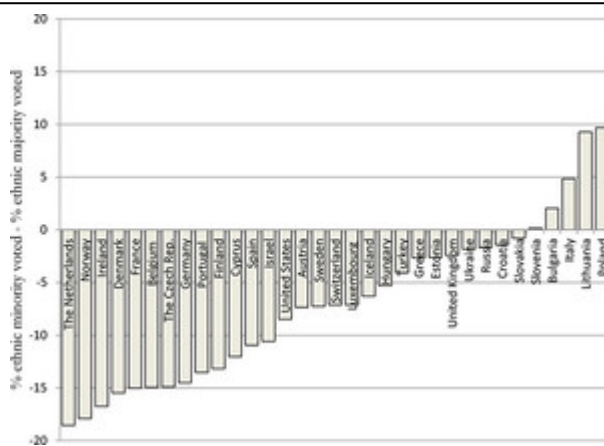


Figure 1: Difference in Voting Turnout between Ethnic Minorities and Majorities across Nations.

Source: The European Social Survey, 2002-2013 (Rounds 1-6) and the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Survey, 2006; non-citizens were excluded.

These results are largely consistent with early research showing that Blacks in the United States voted at significantly lower levels than their White counterparts. One key explanation of this difference in America focused on economic inequalities between the two groups: since Blacks generally have lower socioeconomic status, they are less endowed with individual resources such as money, time, and skills

that facilitate political participation. Interestingly, accounting for individual socioeconomic status revealed that Black Americans voted more than White Americans (Verba & Nie, 1972). This led researchers to focus on group resources—psychological and organizational—to explain how groups may compensate for the negative effects of low socioeconomic status of their group members on their political participation.

Among psychological group resources, scholars emphasized the importance of group consciousness, generally understood as a combination of an individual's subjective identification with a group, dissatisfaction with the group's status in society, and desire to improve the group's position through collective action (Miller et al., 1981). Group consciousness indeed provided a significant boost to Blacks' political participation in the 1970s (e.g., Miller et al., 1981; Shingles, 1981). However, the effects of group consciousness on Blacks' political participation faded in subsequent decades as the Civil Rights movement declined, and African Americans became no more likely to vote than White Americans (e.g., Leighley & Nagler, 2014).

Moreover, the results with respect to group consciousness did not always generalize to other minorities, such as Asian Americans or Latinos in the United States (e.g., Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999). One explanation of this difference is that most Asian Americans and Latinos identify themselves primarily by their country of origin (e.g., Chinese or Mexican) rather than by a pan-ethnic group, such as Asian American or Latinos (e.g., Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996). Nevertheless, Latinos who do identify with their pan-ethnic group and exhibit other features associated with group consciousness—being dissatisfied with group's access to political or material resources and attributing blame for this condition to the system—are more active in politics than other Latinos (Stokes, 2003). Moreover, group consciousness appears to be particularly important in motivating political action

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that is directly tied to the group, such as working for or contributing money to a co-ethnic candidate and attending a demonstration or meeting based on ethnic minority issues.

Beyond group consciousness, organizational resources available to ethnic minorities also matter. Participation in voluntary associations can enhance political participation of their members by developing civic skills that facilitate political activity as well as by directly mobilizing individuals. In line with this perspective, Tate (1991) found that African Americans who belonged to a Black political organization or a politically active Black church were more likely to vote in the U.S. presidential primary elections in the 1980s than others in their racial group. Organizational affiliation has a positive effect also on Latino political participation (Hritzuk & Park, 2000), although long history of racial segregation has enabled African Americans to develop more extensive organizational resources than more recently arrived Latinos (e.g., Leighley, 2001).

One type of organizations that has played a particularly important role in mobilizing political activism among African Americans in the U.S. is Black churches. Religious institutions can facilitate political action by creating motivations for their members to become politically involved, contributing to group consciousness, as well as by providing resources that enable the connection between motivations and political action. However, attendance of religious services does not automatically translate into high levels of political activity: only individuals exposed to political messages in churches were found to be more politically engaged (Calhoun-Brown, 1996). Involvement of many Black churches in the Civil Rights movement meant that African Americans attending religious services were more frequently exposed to political messages and requests to participate in politics than Latinos. Moreover, being predominantly Protestant—religion with congregations that tend to be small in size, allow for greater lay participation in the liturgy, and are organized on a nonhierarchical basis—African Americans are said to have more opportunities to develop civic skills that enable political participation than Latinos affiliated with Catholic churches (Verba et al., 1993, p. 481).

Cross-national studies confirm that members of ethnic minorities generally participate in politics less than majority populations, as we saw in Figure 1 (e.g., Norris, 2004; Sandovici & Listhaug, 2010). Individual and group resources account for the difference in voting turnout between ethnic minorities and majorities in Canada, but to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom. In France, low voting turnout among non-European-origin ethnic groups has been attributed to their residence in socioeconomically disadvantaged urban areas. At the same time, although South Asian voters in the United Kingdom are more likely to live in areas of economic deprivation, they are more likely to turn out to vote than other groups. Moreover, membership in voluntary associations has a positive effect on local political participation among Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean immigrants in the Netherlands, while the results from Denmark and Belgium are less consistent across different ethnic groups. Surveying immigrants in Sweden, one study found that the effects of voluntary associations on minority political participation depend on the type of association (Strömblad & Adman, 2010). While voluntary associations encourage non-electoral political activities among immigrants, associations based on

ethnic origin do not. This is because ethnic associations help their members to develop civic skills that enable political participation, but they provide fewer opportunities for political mobilization through networks of political recruitment for their members.

Minority Empowerment and Political Participation

Additional explanations of political participation among ethnic minorities focus on political context, most notably minority political empowerment. The concept was originally proposed by Bobo and Gilliam (1990) who defined political empowerment as “the extent to which a group has achieved significant representation and influence in political decision making” (p.378). They found that Blacks living in areas governed by a Black mayor participated in politics more than either Blacks living in other areas or their White counterparts in the same areas. They argued that political empowerment encourages Blacks to become more politically knowledgeable and develop more positive attitudes toward government and politics—qualities that in turn lead to higher levels of political participation.

Subsequent research has shown that *descriptive representation* (that is, minority electoral candidates and representatives in public office) indeed enhances political knowledge and political efficacy among ethnic and racial minorities. These effects are not limited to African Americans but extend to other minorities in the United States, as well as to minorities in other nations (e.g., Banducci et al., 2004; Pantoja & Segura, 2003). However, the relationship between descriptive representation and voting turnout among minority members has received less empirical support. In the United States, a number of studies revealed limited evidence that Black candidates contributed positively to voter turnout among African Americans in presidential elections (e.g., Tate, 1991, 1993) and in congressional elections (Gay, 2001). The results are mixed with respect to the consequences of co-ethnic candidates on minority electoral participation in other countries as well.

One way to explain these mixed findings is by considering the effects of ideology on the relationship between descriptive minority representation and minority political participation. Since ethnic groups are not monolithic in their political orientations, Griffin and Keane (2006) argued that this attitudinal heterogeneity can influence the effects of descriptive representation on minority voting turnout. They showed that even African Americans—a group assumed to be particularly cohesive in their political attitudes—do not respond to the presence of a Black member of Congress in their district in the same way. Since most Black members of Congress are liberal or are perceived as liberal (McDermott, 1998), only African Americans who are liberal tend to turn out to vote at higher rates when represented by a Black member of Congress.

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Other studies adopt even more skeptical views about the capacity of descriptive representation to boost voting turnout among ethnic or racial minorities. This research suggests that it is not the presence of minority candidates but rather the size of minority populations in a district that is responsible for both—higher numbers of minority candidates and higher levels of minority voting turnout. Consistent with this perspective, Fraga (2015) showed that once the size of a minority group in a voting district is taken into account, there is no evidence that African American, Latino, or Asian American candidates increase voting turnout among members of their ethnic group. Instead, minorities are more likely to vote in both primary and general elections when their co-ethnic group share in a local population is higher. The size of minority population not only provides better electoral opportunities for the group; it also encourages political elites to focus their electoral campaigns and mobilization efforts on those groups.

While not directly focused on testing the empowerment thesis, a number of studies in other countries confirmed the importance of minority size for electoral participation of their group members. Co-ethnic residential density increases voting turnout for Black Africans and Caribbeans, as well as for South Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis) in the United Kingdom (Heath et al., 2013), and for Turkish immigrants in the Danish local elections (Togeby, 1999). Moreover, large cross-national studies found that the geographic concentration of ethnic communities contributes positively to their engagement in political protest (e.g., Cleary, 2000). Taken together, these studies indicate that there is strength in numbers for ethnic minorities when it comes to their political participation. In fact, group size is one of the most consistent determinants of minority political activism.

Electoral Rules, Districting, and Minority Political Participation

The debates on the consequences of electoral systems for ethnic minorities have focused in large part on minority opportunities to elect their preferred candidates. The expectation is that electoral systems that provide better chances for minorities to become represented in policymaking institutions lead minorities to develop more positive attitudes toward the political system as well as stronger motivations to express political demands via conventional means of political engagement, such as voting. However, single member district (SMD) electoral systems make it very difficult for geographically dispersed ethnic communities to elect co-ethnic representatives. Even when these minorities constitute substantial shares in some areas, they are usually unable to elect co-ethnic representatives via SMD electoral systems without a numerical majority within the population of their electoral district.

One solution to this problem is to create majority-minority districts, where a minority in a country can form a majority within an electoral district. Such districts have enabled ethnic minorities in the United States to increase their presence in public office, and it is in fact rare for minority representatives to get elected outside majority-minority districts.

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At the same time, there have been concerns that majority-minority districts may result in lower levels of electoral competition and therefore dampen voting turnout, offsetting the positive effects of minority empowerment on their electoral participation. Yet, there is no evidence that majority-minority districts are linked to lower levels of electoral competition: just as majority-White districts vary in their levels of competitiveness, the same holds true for majority-minority districts. As a consequence, Latinos residing in majority-minority districts feel more empowered and have higher voting turnout than their non-Hispanic counterparts (Barreto et al., 2004). Moreover, research on redistricting showed that being assigned to a district where one's race or ethnicity is in a majority increased voting turnout in subsequent elections among African Americans and Asian Americans (as well as Whites) (Fraga, 2016). In short, redrawing district boundaries to increase minority size within districts in SMD systems can be an effective way to stimulate voting turnout among groups that otherwise may become alienated from the political process.

Less clear is whether SMD systems perform considerably worse than PR systems with respect to motivating voting turnout among ethnic minorities. Although PR systems provide more opportunities for minority groups to get their parties elected to parliament, geographic concentration enables minorities to elect their co-ethnic representatives also in SMD systems (Norris, 2004). At the same time, PR systems may provide stronger incentives to political elites and interest groups to invest in long-term mobilization of ethnic or racial minorities because geographic mismatch between where their party needs votes and where group members reside is less of a concern.

Empirical evidence does not offer unequivocal answers to these debates. Ruedin (2009) found no evidence that electoral systems matter for ethnic group representation in national parliaments. Similarly, Norris (2004) concluded that distinguishing between PR and SMD electoral systems fails to explain why ethnic minorities generally report lower levels of political efficacy and voting turnout than majorities. In contrast, Banducci and her colleagues (2004, p. 551) found that the impact of descriptive representation on minority voting turnout is weaker in the United States, which has a SMD system than in New Zealand that employs a mix of SMD and PR (known as mixed member proportional system). Moreover, a change from a SMD to a mixed member proportional electoral system in New Zealand in the 1990s resulted in greater increase in political efficacy among ethnic minority members than in the rest of the electorate (Banducci et al., 1999).

Country case studies from Europe suggest that preferential voting in PR systems may provide additional incentives for ethnic minorities to become politically involved. Togeby (1999) claimed that preferential voting in the Danish local elections motivates ethnic minorities to vote at greater rates than electoral rules in other countries. Bergh and Bjørklund (2011) noted that in Norway, immigrants rely on preferential voting to promote their co-ethnic candidates in local elections. Future research should establish with more certainty to what extent preferential voting provides an advantage to ethnic minorities to achieve higher levels of representation and electoral participation of their co-ethnics.

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Another mechanism to enhance the political empowerment of minorities is to adopt ethnic quotas in legislative institutions. Yet, as with majority-minority districts, introducing such quotas may not necessarily increase minority electoral engagement. Secure seats may reduce incentives for political mobilization among minorities, as less effort is required to ensure their representation in public office. Moreover, adoption of quotas for disadvantaged groups does not always result in improved substantive representation of minorities, that is, adoption of policies favored by those groups. For example, the effect of ethnic quotas in India is significantly weakened by the multi-caste nature of political parties and the fact that most political mobilization takes place along party lines, not along the lines of ethnicity or caste (Dunning & Nilekani, 2013).

Political Protest Among Ethnic and Racial Minorities

Among various types of political participation, protest falls into a category of more unconventional and contentious political action. It has traditionally attracted individuals with high levels of political mistrust and dissatisfaction. And while participating in lawful demonstrations has become an accepted and common form of political activity for majority populations, it remains a primary outlet for disadvantaged ethnic minorities, as well as other groups that lack access to politics through conventional channels and are alienated from the established political order.

Figure 2 displays differences in protest behavior between ethnic majorities and minorities across 32 established and newer democracies using the 2002–2013 *European Social Survey* (ESS) data. I calculated these differences by subtracting the percentage protesting for individuals who said they do not belong to an ethnic minority group from the percentage protesting for individuals who belong to an ethnic minority group. The figure reveals that for most countries, ethnic minorities protest more than majorities. For example, in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway—countries with large numbers of non-European Muslim immigrants—the difference is between 5 and 10 percentage points in favor of ethnic minority protest participation. At the same time, in some countries, such as Spain and Luxembourg where ethnic minorities include individuals from other European countries, the pattern is reversed, and the difference is about 5 percentage points in favor of majority participation in lawful demonstrations.

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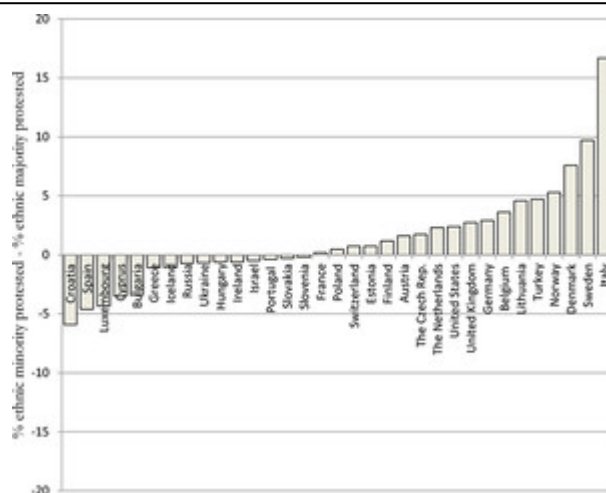


Figure 2: Difference in Protest Behavior between Ethnic Minorities and Majorities across Nations.

Source: The European Social Survey, 2002-2013 (Rounds 1-6) and the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Survey, 2006.

The choice of political action among ethnic minority members depends primarily on minority access to government (Birnie, 2007). Where an ethnic group lacks representation in policymaking institutions, minorities are more likely to exit electoral politics and look for alternative means to voice their political demands, including protest and violence. In contrast, having access to these institutions encourages

minorities to settle into expressing their political demands via conventional means and become represented by ethnic parties, multiethnic parties, or even nonethnic parties. The extent to which nonethnic parties decide to appeal to ethnic minorities depends on the levels of electoral competition, that is, the importance of minority votes for a party to get elected and the prospects of having to negotiate with minority-supported parties in forming coalition governments (Wilkinson, 2006).

Political Participation Among Immigrants

While some ethnic minorities have resided in their countries for many centuries, others are more recent arrivals. Being born in a different country may leave a mark on one's socialization experiences, and researchers have sought to assess how much these experiences influence immigrant political behavior in their adopted homelands.

Standard explanations of immigrant political participation, such as socioeconomic status, are helpful but insufficient for understanding why immigrants engage in politics. Since foreigners were socialized in a political system that is different from the one they currently inhabit, explaining immigrant political behavior requires accounting for these experiences. One aspect of socialization experiences among first-generation immigrants is the level of democracy in their country of origin. Being born in a non-democratic country means less exposure to democratic norms and practices when growing up and consequently fewer skills and less knowledge necessary for political participation in liberal democracies (e.g., Just & Anderson, 2012). Conversely, previous exposure to democratic governance facilitates immigrant political integration into a democratic host country, including newcomers' ability to engage in various forms of political action.

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Political participation is lower among foreign-born individuals than native-born individuals in many established democracies, as first-generation immigrants tend to be preoccupied with immediate concerns of getting settled in their adopted countries. However, political participation is higher among newcomers who have stayed in a country for a longer period of time and are more proficient in their host country's official language. Moreover, citizenship status not only gives immigrants a legal right to vote in national elections, but also contributes positively to their engagement in other forms of political action (Just & Anderson, 2012). This is because citizenship is a resource that reduces the costs of political participation: as a legal status, it lowers the potential risks of political participation, such as the risk of deportation or losing the right to naturalize as a consequence of participating in a protest that turned violent. Furthermore, since naturalization process often requires learning about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and professing loyalty to the political order of a host country, citizenship provides a psychological boost to newcomers' political engagement by encouraging immigrants to internalize the ideals of active citizenship, and in doing so, make cognitive engagement with politics less costly.

While attachment to a host country encourages immigrants to naturalize, and, consequently, become more politically active, scholars wondered whether strong attachments to origin country may have an opposite effect. Specifically, scholars asked whether attachments to the origin country hinder the political integration and participation of new arrivals in their host country's politics. However, existing research reveals no empirical support for such expectations. Maintaining ties with friends and relatives in one's native country, sending money back, and frequently traveling to one's home country, as well as following native country's politics do not reduce political participation among immigrants (e.g., Hritzuk & Park, 2000). In short, there is no evidence of a trade-off between immigrant transnational political engagement and participation in their host country's politics. Instead, for politically active immigrants, these activities are complementary and form a broad repertoire of political action that transcends country borders.

Immigrant political participation is shaped by individual attributes and socialization experiences before arrival, but also by their sociopolitical environment in countries of residence. Immigrant identification with a host country is higher in states where newcomers have easier access to individual citizenship rights, but it is not related to multiculturalism policies designed to promote cultural group rights (e.g., Koopmans, 2013). Interestingly, immigrant political participation responds to the informal environment of public opinion toward immigrants rather than formal government policies designed to integrate new arrivals. In Europe, hospitable opinion climates toward immigrants in their host countries increase non-electoral political participation among foreign-born individuals (Just & Anderson, 2014). Moreover, this relationship is particularly strong among those newcomers who are dissatisfied with the political system. In contrast, while multiculturalism and citizenship policies are positively related

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to pro-immigrant opinion climates of native populations, these policies have no direct effect on political participation among foreign-born individuals.

One difficulty with studying immigrant political behavior is that what applies to foreign-born individuals does not always extend to second-generation immigrants. Some scholars noted that second-generation immigrants participate in politics more than first- or third-generation immigrants, whereas others found that as a consequence of segmented assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993), different ethnic groups follow different trajectories of political participation over time and across generations (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001). Cross-national analyses reveal that second-generation advantage among immigrants manifests itself in the levels of less institutionalized forms of political action (Just et al., 2014). Being born in a host country, second-generation immigrants feel more entitled to equal treatment than their foreign-born parents, and therefore become more involved in politics than either foreign-born individuals or subsequent immigrant generations.

Party Preferences Among Ethnic and Racial Minorities

For most individuals, political participation is not an end in itself, but rather a means to influence policy decision-making. In democratic elections, this is usually achieved by casting votes for a political party or candidate that is expected to represent their constituents' interests in legislative institutions. Understanding ethnic minority political behavior would therefore be incomplete without considering how and why minorities develop support for particular political parties, or the extent to which they express this support at the time of elections.

Since people tend to use information shortcuts in their voting decisions, and ethnicity provides such a shortcut, ethnic minorities often vote for parties and candidates that express their group interests. These may be ethnic parties or co-ethnic candidates, and research shows that ethnic minority members prefer voting for co-ethnic candidates even when these candidates are less qualified than other candidates. However, ethnic minority interests may also be represented by multiethnic or even nonethnic parties that, in an effort to secure minority votes in competitive electoral environments, sometimes choose to promote and protect ethnic minority interests (Wilkinson, 2006). In the long run, if an ethnic group feels represented, members of that ethnic group continue voting for a party or parties that represent their group interests (Birnie, 2007).

Commitment to group interests does not mean that electoral support for a party among minorities is necessarily stable over time. Since ethnic socialization cultivates attachment to the ethnic group rather than a party, members of the ethnic group will support a party in a stable manner as long as it represents the group's interests. This fact explains why some minorities, such as African Americans in the United States, realigned their party preferences in the mid-20th century. While some African Americans initially supported

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the Republican Party due to the party's historical opposition to slavery, the Black vote has become solidly Democratic since the 1960s, when the Democratic Party established itself as a defender of civil rights and subsequently supported other measures designed to promote racial equality, such as affirmative action. Thus, African Americans have shifted their party support, even though they remained highly loyal to their racial group and advancement of its political interests.

Evidence from other countries confirms that ethnic minorities, including foreign-born individuals, tend to support left-wing political parties. These parties are usually perceived as more sympathetic to minorities' interests, and more committed to promoting their policy preferences. For instance, in the United Kingdom the effects of ethnicity in national elections are larger in magnitude than any of the other measures of social cleavages, such as class or religion (Heath et al., 2011). What is more, ethnic minorities are more than twice as likely to support the Labour Party as White British voters. Similarly, in other European countries ethnic minorities are more likely to vote for left-of-center parties than other voters (e.g., Bergh & Bjørklund, 2011).

But ethnic minorities are not a unified electoral block. For example, a considerable share of Asians in the United States and the United Kingdom support political parties on the right of the ideological continuum. While most Latinos in the United States favor the Democrats, Cuban Americans are predominantly Republican. These patterns may reflect the ideological orientations of immigrants who fled left-wing authoritarian regimes, such as China and Cuba, and who as a result have developed strong opposition to left-wing governments. However, increasing Asian vote for the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom may also be a consequence of enhanced party efforts to attract Asians, whose values are seen as being closer to the philosophy of the party in comparison to other ethnic groups. Another interesting finding about voting behavior of ethnic minorities is that support for pro-minority parties weakens as a consequence of improved individual socioeconomic status. This effect is particularly pronounced among those minority group members who do not feel discriminated against as a consequence of their ethnicity (Chong & Kim, 2006), and who do not expect to be sanctioned by their group members for defecting from group norms of political behavior (White et al., 2014).

Methodological Issues

Research on ethnic minority political behavior is not without methodological challenges. One issue is that the number of minority citizens in nationally representative surveys is often too small to provide reliable estimates in statistical analyses. Scholars have sought to overcome this problem by oversampling ethnic minorities (e.g., Heath et al., 2013; Leighley, 2001; Sanders et al., 2014), while others have employed official voting records (e.g., Fraga, 2015, 2016). Recent cross-national public opinion survey projects, such as the *European Social Survey* (ESS), have enabled scholars to study immigrant populations by pooling data across different countries and over time (e.g., Just & Anderson, 2012, 2014). This approach allows researchers not only to identify and study first- and second-

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generation immigrants, but also analyze the same ethnic communities in different countries and over time.

When using surveys that did not oversample minorities, researchers should assess whether key characteristics of ethnic minorities in their sample correspond to official statistics with respect to ethnic minorities in their country. Large differences compared to official statistics would suggest that a survey may not be appropriate for studying ethnic minorities. These differences may occur for a number of reasons that have to do with data collection by polling organizations: some ethnic minority members may be difficult to locate due to their uncertain income and legal status. Other minority members may refuse to be interviewed due to limited skills to speak the host country's official language. Moreover, some surveys, such as many national election studies, focus exclusively on citizens, and therefore may not include recent immigrants who do not have a legal right to vote. In light of these difficulties, surveys designed to generate a representative ethnic minority boost sample provide the best opportunities to obtain reliable results when studying various aspects of political behavior among ethnic minorities. Future research would benefit from more coordinated efforts in cross-national survey projects to obtain such minority samples.

Another issue related to survey data has to do with overreporting of voting turnout among citizens. Overreporting participation in elections is not limited to ethnic minorities: since voting is perceived by many as a civic duty, it is not uncommon for individuals to say that they voted in elections when in fact they did not because they want to give a socially acceptable response. However, there is evidence that some minorities, such as African Americans in the United States, overreport their voting turnout to a greater extent than other individuals (Abramson & Claggett, 1984). Perhaps because African Americans have struggled to achieve voting rights, they appear to have more difficulty to acknowledge that they chose not to exercise these rights and overreport their voting turnout more than others. Abramson and Claggett (1984) also found that controlling for traditional determinants of voting turnout erases the effect of race when using survey indicator of voting turnout, but not when relying on a validated turnout measure. Whether these findings extend to other minorities in the United States or other countries is an empirical question that remains to be addressed. However, these findings do suggest that the differences in electoral participation between ethnic minorities and majorities may be even deeper than we thought.

Conclusions

Ethnicity influences the patterns of many people's political behavior in Western democracies. On average, those who belong to ethnic minorities tend to be less active in politics, prioritize more contentious action to express their policy demands, and support left-wing political parties that are more committed to promoting their group interests. Key explanations of these differences focus on individual and group resources as well as political empowerment via representation in policymaking institutions, usually enabled by

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high shares of minority populations within electoral districts. Among minorities with large foreign-born populations, socialization experiences in origin countries, opinion climates toward immigrants, as well as citizenship status, linguistic skills, and duration of residency in a host country also play a role. Moreover, the extent to which ethnic minority members choose to promote their group interests in the political sphere of society depends on their perceptions of discrimination against the group as well as social pressure from group members not to depart from group norms in their political behavior.

Although significant progress has been made in research on ethnic minority political behavior, a number of fruitful venues for future research remain. Existing scholarship would benefit from a better understanding of the impact of different political regimes and political institutions on the patterns of ethnic minority political behavior. Democracies have been found to reduce violent political action among ethnic minorities, as they provide better institutional channels to citizens to express their grievances and motivate governments to be responsive to minority demands (e.g., Cleary, 2000). Ethnic divisions can stabilize party systems in new democracies, especially if minorities are able to achieve representation in policymaking institutions, and therefore prevent their members' exit from electoral politics in favor of engaging in political violence (Birnie, 2007). However, little is known about how the patterns of minority political behavior vary across different autocracies—such as military, personalist, or single-party regimes—and how socialization in such regimes translates into political activism of foreign-born individuals in their host societies. In addition, more could be said about how political institutions in democracies, including federalism and various aspects of electoral systems, influence party strategies to mobilize ethnic minorities with different patterns of geographic distribution within countries.

We should also pay more attention to different ways in which political elites seek to attract electoral support of ethnic minority members and evaluate the success of these strategies. Existing research usually focuses on mobilization efforts by political parties or candidates in a form of their direct contact with minority members (e.g., Leighley, 2001). But politicians' strategies to appeal to non-co-ethnics are not limited to voter mobilization at the time of elections. Politicians in multiethnic societies also engage in building political alliances with other ethnic groups, and, once elected, offer important political offices (e.g., vice presidency, cabinet positions) to candidates from these groups. Candidates may also try to leverage their individual characteristics, such as mixed ethnic heritage, knowing multiple local languages, or having a spouse of a different ethnicity, to shore up support from voters belonging to ethnic groups other than their own. The relative success of these strategies in motivating political engagement and electoral support among ethnic minorities, and whether these minorities respond to these strategies for instrumental or symbolic reasons, is an issue that remains largely unexplored.

Another interesting question is the extent to which members of different minority groups collaborate to achieve their policy goals. Ethnic minorities have important goals in common, such as combating discrimination in various spheres of society, including labor

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market, housing, and education. At the same time, these minorities may see each other as rivals, especially if they compete for scarce resources or differ significantly in terms of their cultural traditions and practices, particularly in the area of religion. A long history of intergroup hostility in origin countries of immigrant communities may also prevent minority willingness to work together in their countries of residence. For instance, Muslims in the United Kingdom are less likely to vote when a Sikh candidate stands in their constituency, while Sikh voters are less likely to vote in the presence of a Muslim candidate. It would be useful to examine to what extent and under what conditions minorities would work together with other minorities to achieve their political goals, and under what conditions such collaboration is less likely to take place.

People move across country borders to escape civil wars, political persecution, economic poverty, and natural disasters. They also migrate in search of more fulfilling professional experiences, alternative lifestyles, and more pleasant retirement. For better or for worse, migration has been on the rise in recent decades and is not expected to subside in the foreseeable future. This is because migration is closely linked to the processes of economic development and globalization, sustained by migrant social networks and transnational organizations, and shielded from public hostility by legal commitments of liberal democracies to protect newcomers' human rights. Social diversity fueled by international migration means that the importance of ethnic group politics is likely to grow in many countries around the world. This implies that our models of political behavior developed in homogenous states may no longer apply in contemporary societies, and will need to be revised to take into account ethnic group experiences. To the extent that researchers will be able to achieve this will affect the prospects of peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups and their ability to resolve differences in democratic and nonviolent ways in the future.

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Notes:

(1.) Sen and Wasow (2016) have recently challenged defining race merely on the basis of skin color. Instead, they suggest treating race as a composite indicator of numerous attributes (e.g., skin color, dialect, region of ancestry, religion, social status, etc.) and using the concepts of race and ethnicity interchangeably.

(2.) These data are from the cumulative file for the first six rounds of the European Social Survey. The data and documentation are available at: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>.

(3.) The data and documentation are available on the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) website (survey study # 4607) <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/4607>.

(4.) To identify ethnic minorities in the *European Social Survey* data, I used the survey item, “Do you belong to a minority ethnic group in [country]?” Respondents who gave a positive response were coded as member of an ethnic minority, and those who gave a negative response—as being part of an ethnic majority in their country. Unfortunately, this survey question is not available in the *United States Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey* project. As an alternative, I therefore relied on the survey item measuring whether a respondent is Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, or other. Individuals classified as White were coded as ethnic majority members, and others—as belonging to an ethnic minority.

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