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Abstract


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This dissertation is a multi-layered examination of the practice of voting, with a focus on the electoral turnout of immigrants. Chapter Two’s statistical analyses show that pre-migration cultural familiarity with democracy, formalized as levels of democratization in source countries, strongly shapes the likelihood of post-migration voting among Canadian immigrants. These origin effects, comparable in size to the best predictors of turnout that we have, exert a persistent influence – affecting turnout not only among the foreign-born, but also among the native-born second generation. Multilevel models demonstrate that the shifting source country composition of immigrant period-of-arrival cohorts provides an alternate explanation for what have previously been identified as generational, racial, and length of residence or ‘exposure’ effects among immigrant voters. This provides further evidence that voting is in most cases habitual, and raises questions about the acquisition, transmission, and reproduction of a voting practice. Chapter Three’s narratives of political development, gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, confirm the importance of parental influence, and suggest that the ‘stickiness’ of practical capacities like voting may be the result of powerful processes of observational social learning. Providing a new twist on dominant models of political socialization, observation of parental voting appears to be the pivotal event in a path-dependent process of political learning, with acquisition of values and beliefs playing a supporting, rather than a leading role. Chapter
Four recent efforts among sociologists to amend action theory to make more room for habit, and these efforts are discussed in reference to contemporary research on turnout. I argue that these theoretical revisions still retain too sharp a focus on the cognitive aspects of practice. There is a lack of appreciation for the ways that action itself – our own previous actions and the actions of those close to us – can directly structure outcomes. Evidence from cognitive neuroscience is used to more precisely delineate habitual behaviour and thought. Where the intergenerational transmission of voting behaviour is concerned, culture is often coded directly into embodied practice. Efforts to encourage electoral participation should be built on a better understanding of voting’s substantial behavioural aspects.
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Finally, I wish to acknowledge my mother, Lia Pikkov, for her endless faith in me and in my abilities. I only wish that my father, Lembit Pikkov, were still here. His own dreams of higher education ended in 1946, after six months of study in economics at the University of Bonn, when his only pair of dress pants (shared with a room-mate) fell apart on the way to morning lectures. Decent clothing was at that time a necessity for university attendance, but hard to come by for a penniless 22 year old far from home.

To John, Sam, and Talvi, all my love.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Format of the Dissertation

This introductory chapter provides a summary of my findings and of the contributions each of the dissertation’s three substantive chapters (2,3 and 4) make to questions and issues of concern within various fields of inquiry. The concluding chapter of the dissertation offers some thoughts about how my findings contribute to our understanding of politics and democratic participation. It also offers a few suggestions about how immigrant turnout can be encouraged. I close with a brief consideration of the historical context of my work.

Summary of Findings

Immigrant electoral turnout (Chapter 2)

Most contemporary studies of immigrant electoral participation focus on current contexts. The political institutional landscapes immigrants encounter in the host country receive attention. Factors such as how well immigrants do educationally and economically, and whether they suffer exclusionary treatment are also considered. Where variation among groups cannot be explained through such factors, socio-demographic characteristics are examined, including such things as the size and spatial concentration of particular groups, their institutional completeness, social networks and social capital, and the length of settlement in the community. Nonetheless, researchers continue to find large, unexplained, systematic differences in participation across different groups.

Where a comprehensive account of the factors influencing the political participation of immigrants is made (eg Bird et al. 2009) the influence of differences in political culture and socialization is discussed, but rarely given serious or sustained attention. In Canada, this neglect
is justified by researchers who claim that we need not bother investigating cultural difference, because immigrant pasts, if they matter at all, do not matter for long. With continued residence, it is claimed, differences rooted in pre-migration political socialization erode both reliably and quickly. My research casts considerable doubt on this argument, providing evidence that group-based variation in voting tied to origin can be very persistent. What, exactly, is the source of these differences in turnout across origin groups?

My statistical analyses show that the answer lies in immigrants’ political pasts. Specifically, the level of democratization in the country of origin predicts the likelihood of voting after migrating to Canada, and this effect is comparable in strength to the very best predictors of voting that we have (education and age). My work demonstrates that pre-migration familiarity with democracy, rather than racial status or recency of arrival, underlies and explains much of the large variability in voting rates that exist across immigrant groups in Canada. Moreover, in sharp contrast to other studies that do acknowledge differences among immigrant voters in their rate of turnout, I find that origin’s effect is long-lasting, extending even across generations - to the native-born children of immigrants. Among the native-born second-generation, parents’ origins retain the power to predict whether their offspring votes.

By demonstrating the enormous effect of particularities of history and culture, the limitations of seeing political integration as an outcome of current contexts alone is made clear. It is not only the post-migration treatment of immigrants, the institutional, political, and ideational landscapes within host countries, and the current configurations of immigrant communities that matter. Even if current contexts remain our primary interest and focus, without taking origin effects into account, we will be unable to accurately isolate and specify the variable
effects of context and contemporary experience on different immigrant populations, both in
national and in cross-national studies.

Given the large numbers of immigrants arriving in Canada with little in the way of
democratic experience, my findings – of persistent barriers to participation among many immigrants - raise concerns about the potential political marginalization of a growing segment of the population, and about ‘system health’ – the long-term legitimacy and effectiveness of
democratic political institutions. At a time when Canada’s young people are less inclined to vote
than their parents, to what extent will today’s ‘second wave’ (post 1960’s) immigrants and
immigrant communities – in particular those who come from non-democratic or marginally
democratic countries and are also economically and educationally disadvantaged - reliably turn
to voting over time? It also raises questions of interpretation and attribution, which require
consideration if we are to know how to tackle the challenge of low levels of participation.
Should we conclude that non-voting immigrants, and their children, along with other non-voters,
do not value democracy? Is it a question of knowledge? Or of skills and habits? How are values
and skills related? More generally, how is voting learned? The dissertation’s second empirical
chapter tackles these questions.

Political Socialization (Chapter 3)

The statistically significant associations of the previous chapter tell us that a persistent
relationship exists between origin and voting, but not about the mechanisms that animate the
link. In Chapter 3, the goal is to explain how these patterns in turnout are produced and
reproduced. How, exactly, does the influence of political origin make itself felt across time and
space? There are many possibilities, and Chapter Two’s results can be claimed by those adhering
to a variety of theoretical perspectives. Are the differences between groups rooted in distinctive
values and narratives, or varying levels of knowledge concerning politics? Or do group-specific associational involvements and opportunities for mobilization produce the inter-generational consistencies? Or is it a matter of practical capacities and habits? What are the most important sites in which political attitudes and capacities are nurtured?

Scholars of political behaviour assert that, beyond age and education, political knowledge and a sense of duty regarding voting are among the most reliable predictors of electoral participation (e.g. Blais 2007). Political socialization experts continue to see discussion of politics within families, and parental example, as among the most influential sites for learning political orientations and behaviours. My data strongly support this emphasis on the family. However, we know very little about how discussion and modeling within the family influence outcomes, or about how knowledge and feelings of duty are acquired. These processes require investigation. Is it the content or the frequency of political discussion that matters? Is discussion more important than concrete example or is it the other way around? Do we put knowledge into action, or do actions – both our own and the actions of those close to us - inspire us to become knowledgeable?

To investigate these questions concerning causation and process, I use in-depth interviews to learn about political development. My findings are surprising. Contrary to dominant models of political learning, I find that childhood observation of the behaviour of important role models within intimate networks appears to be a pivotal event in the social learning through which voters are produced. Though we are not ourselves aware of it, voting is something we may be inspired to do, at the outset of our voting careers, primarily because we have a memory of our parents doing it. Although the number of interviews I am able to analyse is relatively small, and my findings therefore remain hypothetical, the very robust consistencies I
find suggest the intriguing possibility that there is a path-dependence in our political development, whereby our parents’ ‘action-commitments’ spark our interest, prepare us to pay attention to politics, help get us to the polls for the first time, and determine whether we will ultimately see voting as worthwhile. We normally do not understand much about voting when we start to do it, but we learn as we go. Where memories of parental voting are absent among my respondents, especially in the absence of direct experience of political action in other social sites, the likelihood of voting is much lower. Social learning theory appears to provide a useful theoretical framework for empirical study of the mechanisms and processes of transmission of practical knowledge, and explains the strong path-dependence and ‘stickiness’ of the origin effects identified in the statistical study.

These processes seem to operate very similarly across a wide range of origin groups. In trying to understand the question of why immigrants in some origin groups vote more than others and the means through which the practice is learned, light is shed on voting behaviour more generally. Voting is re-conceptualized as a practice that, in the usual case in established democracies, may give rise to values, beliefs and knowledge, rather than the other way around.

Theories of Action, Culture & Practice (Chapter 4)

Taking the findings of the previous two chapters together, not only does voting itself appear to be a habitual behaviour, the acquisition of a voting practice appears to rely on imitation as much as (or perhaps even more than) it does on reflective deliberation and conviction. The role of rationality and knowledge in the decision to vote or abstain appears, in the account here, to be far more causally trivial than most of us can easily accept. Indeed, despite the strong evidence upon which it now rests within the field of political behaviour, even the simple description of voting as “habitual” is objected to in some quarters. Resistance to habit as a
mainspring of human action is not new in sociology – it dates to the establishment of the discipline (Camic 1986). This pedigree makes the bias no less problematic, given the mounting evidence supplied by cognitive neuroscience that a great deal of human action originates predominantly in unconscious (habitual) cognition. Recent efforts among a small group of influential sociological theorists to incorporate this knowledge into action theory argue that the answer lies not in denying the evidence, but in understanding and interpreting it correctly, in ways that acknowledge the continued importance of identities, values and meanings. An examination of this work provides the focus for Chapter 4.

The chapter begins with a synopsis of the evidence from studies of turnout that favour models of voting as habit. I then review recent theoretical efforts that urge social scientists to acknowledge the importance of habit in moving us to action. I discuss neuro-scientific research regarding dual-process (habitual versus reflective) cognition in order to define, enrich and deepen our understanding of habitual behaviour, and also to explain the interplay of unconscious and conscious cognitive process in our actions. All of this helps to provide a strong theoretical underpinning for a continuing (if diminished) role for rationality in voting. However, in the rush to reassure ourselves about the continuing importance of values, rationality, identity and meaning, it is important not to lose sight of evidence, like the evidence presented in this dissertation, that physical or embodied action itself (our own and that of others near to us) often plays a rather direct part in structuring our future actions.

Accordingly, I look at these new theories of motivation and action to see how well they can accommodate and make sense of my findings. Even among these theorists who hope to bring practice and habit to our attention, there is still a tendency to investigate habit primarily by attending to its cerebral aspects, resulting in theoretical models of action that emphasize
cognitive process and content while neglecting the structuring nature of physical or embodied capacities and skills. In other words, we are still paying too much attention to what people think and believe, and too little attention to what they learn to do, how and when they learn to do it, and the factors that influence the persistence of behavioural habit and cultural practice across actors and contexts.

The group-level patterning seen in immigrant voter turnout can certainly be described as an expression of cultural difference, insofar as it represents a ‘residue’ of history which outlives these contexts. However, these residues are expressed and reproduced at the level of action, coded in embodied practice. Differences in behaviour do not always or necessarily originate in what is usually referred to as culture, that is, in differences of discourse, opinion, or narrative (although they will always be expressed and reflected there in one way or another). My interview findings show that beliefs and schematic understandings concerning politics and government often change dramatically between immigrant generations, while voting behaviour does not. The challenge, from a theoretical point of view, is to provide a more general account of the foundations of differences in practice, inclusive of cases in which an analysis of attitudes, discourse, beliefs, or values, however interesting, does not yield a persuasive explanation. To this end, we are in need of theory that encourages us to pay more attention to the materialist, embodied end of cultural practice.

**Contributions to Scholarship**

I have organized the discussion of contributions by article. The statistical analyses of immigrant voting presented in the first article are of interest to two groups of scholars: those interested in immigrant integration, and those interested in electoral turnout.
Electoral Behaviour and the Study of Turnout

For those who study electoral turnout, the study described in Chapter 2 addresses important and neglected questions about immigrant-related reductions in turnout. Where they have received some attention, for example in Canada, such reductions have generally inspired two responses. The first is to see evidence of discrimination nurturing alienation and non-involvement (an argument for which I find some evidence), and the second, more dominant response is to wave such differences away as being transient. An important point that the first article makes is that a conviction of transient differences may be based on faulty evidence. It relies on cross-sectional data that does not distinguish between immigrants in terms of national origin. Immigrants in the post 1960s period increasingly arrive from countries with very little in the way of democratic history. The high voting rates of older immigrants, most of whom came from countries with substantial democratic traditions, are compared to the lower voting rates of recent immigrants, and it is assumed that the differences are the result of length of residence. But it is highly unlikely that older immigrants started out with voting rates as low as those of recent arrivals.

Previous longitudinal research shows strong cohort effects in voting, demonstrating not only that strong period effects come into play, but also that voting (and non-voting) are highly persistent – indeed habitual - behaviours at the individual level once we are beyond our first two or three opportunities to vote. Dramatic change and convergence over time in the voting rates of individual voters doesn’t fit well with this picture. There is also the question of how to explain the low voting rates of the racial minority second generation in Canada. If a couple of decades of familiarity with the host society were all that was needed, surely the native-born, native-educated offspring of immigrants would not show depressed voting rates relative to White
immigrants and the non-immigrant mainstream. While greater sensitivity to discrimination in the second generation provides some part of the answer, my work provides a new answer to these puzzles that focuses on differences in practical capacities and cultural repertoires among immigrants differentiated by origin. In the process, these findings identify a new source of potential long-term decline in turnout within countries of immigration.

There is work to be done to estimate the extent to which immigration is contributing to turnout decline in established democracies, in Canada and elsewhere. Cross-national studies of turnout consistently identify ‘increases in electorate size’ as having a negative effect on turnout (Geys 2006), without providing (to my mind) a persuasive explanation for how or why growth in the size of the electorate matters (see Franklin 2004, footnote pg 178, Geys 2006). A visual inspection of the data suggests that strong negative effects are concentrated in countries of immigration (eg see Franklin 2004, p. 249-250). The findings presented here should be tested for other countries where data on voting and immigrant origin is available, and where immigrants are sufficiently over-sampled to provide sufficient numbers for analysis. There are a variety of challenges where data are concerned, since national electoral studies often classify immigrants in highly idiosyncratic ways that reflect the integration policies and social imaginaries of the host society, rather than identifying the national and political origins of immigrants. However these problems are not insurmountable. Finally, once the influence of origin has been more firmly established, we will be in a much better position to test hypotheses regarding the effect of electoral institutions and political contexts on immigrant participation cross-nationally. We will also be in a better position to understand trends in turnout among young people if we factor in the effect of parental origin.
Immigration and Integration Research

Scholars of immigrant integration in North America, and especially assimilation theorists, focus on socio-economic success. Success within economic realms is often believed to pave the way for integration of every kind. Political integration remains relatively under-researched and under-theorized. My dissertation contributes by outlining the influence of origin on voter turnout, and by demonstrating that this is not an inconsequential, transient effect, but one that is sizable and persistent. This is proof that immigrant pasts matter quite a bit, at least within some national and historical contexts, and that these pasts continue to matter even where educational and economic levels are high. Unfortunately, widespread resistance to cultural explanations, often nowadays labeled as ‘effects of origin’, is found among sociologists who study majority-minority relations (Hein 2006). There is fear that cultural explanations encourage caricature, stereotype and victim-blaming, and work at cross-purposes to the empowerment of minority groups. Cultural explanations are also considered problematic if they are used in a sloppy manner. It is frequently argued that cultural difference cannot simply be identified – in every case it also requires explaining.

In part, disagreements about whether the investigation of cultural difference is worthwhile reflect different concerns. Where public sociology and activism are the order of the day, current contexts and the ways in which may handicap immigrants form a logical focus. From this perspective, it is feared that criticism of current conditions is blunted if immigrants’ behaviour is explained in any part by their pasts in other countries. Such concerns seem to me to be misguided. We will not understand the influence of context without taking into account its interactions with origin effects. And yet scholarly discussion of immigrant political integration often ignores source country experiences completely.
For example, in one recent award-winning book (Kasinitz et al 2008), which looked (among many other things) at political participation within the second generation, lower voting rates among Russian Jews in New York City are discussed entirely in terms of relations between different Jewish groups in New York, and without any mention that recent experience of a totalitarian regime might have an effect. Similarly, the high voting rate of immigrants from Jamaica is attributed to the influence of the African-American community, with no mention made of the great enthusiasm for elections found in the former British colonies in the Caribbean. That these blind spots can exist even under the stewardship of Mary Waters (a co-writer of the book who has written about the role of culture in the in success of West Indian and Chinese immigrant communities in the United States), shows how ingrained the neglect of culture is among integration scholars. The default assumption remains that immigrants are shaped only by the immediate contexts they face.

This is an unsustainable position, and one that is explicitly repudiated in the great comparative historical studies of ethnic relations (Schermernorn 1978, Horowitz 1985). Given the dramatic demographic shifts underway in countries of immigration, integration processes and outcomes will most certainly be affected not only by contexts, but also by the characteristics, including the cultural backgrounds and political histories, of migrating individuals and groups. We need not stoop to the over-heated rhetoric of a ‘clash of civilizations’ to acknowledge that cultural difference – understood broadly as differences in both cultural practices and understandings, shaped in part through the history of relations between groups, can be highly influential to immigrant behaviour. Some researchers have begun to identify other kinds of ‘origin effects’, though it is not surprising that these efforts have taken place in other disciplines. For example, in the United States, immigrants’ policy preferences with regard to economic
Redistribution are predicted by redistributive policies in source countries, a cultural effect that is found to persist strongly into the second generation (Luttmer and Singhal 2010).

Having said this, it is important to investigate the underlying causes of cultural difference, and to be explicit about what exactly is meant by culture. My investigations of voting led me to think about culture not only as a symbolic orbit, but also as a set of concrete skills, learned primarily through example and observation, rather than discussion and justification. As the second article in this dissertation demonstrates, the project of encouraging democratic political participation, and of overcoming the influence of prior contexts, need not be a ‘battle for hearts and minds’. Rather it involves the purposeful engagement of bodies in practical action. Culture consists of what is done, as much as it consists of what is said or thought.

The second chapter of the dissertation, which identifies observational social learning within intimate networks as the causal mechanism underlying the association between origin and turnout, contributes to the fields of political socialization and political behaviour.

**Political behaviour**

Three major schools of thought have dominated the field of political preference and voting behaviour. The earliest postwar work, associated with scholars at Columbia University, emphasized the social influence exerted through networks of family, friends and co-workers in political decision-making. This approach was then largely eclipsed by the more ‘psychological’ perspective promoted by scholars attached to the Michigan School, which stressed the importance of subjective group identities and of long-standing political orientations and partisan attachments. The third approach makes use of rational choice theory to highlight the importance of economic calculation in voter choice.
Each approach has something to offer, but when it comes to understanding the decision to vote (rather than the question of who to vote for), the rational choice perspective has been the most disappointing. Rational choice theorists have difficulty explaining why people vote at all, given the vanishingly small utility of voting for the individual. However models of voting that are based on the idea of ‘bounded’ rationality have made some progress. These focus on collective rewards as well as individual ones, or see rationality operating only on some portion of the electorate, or otherwise view rationality in a new way. For example, recent work that sees the influence of contexts among early (not yet habitual) electoral participants provides one promising version of bounded rationality.

The Michigan ‘psychological’ school (Campbell et al. 1960) has provided the dominant framework for most recent research, and the major studies extending (Miller and Shanks 1996) or replicating the earlier study with new data (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008) continue to stress the importance of both early influences and of persistence in participation as well as in partisan choice.

The marginalization of the social networks approach is in part due to lack of information about social networks in the election surveys that dominate study in this field. Prominent scholars, especially Anthony Heath, have argued that the influence of social networks should not be underestimated, despite the difficulty of studying them (Heath 2007, see also Verba et al. 2005). My work contributes modestly to this argument, by emphasizing the role of observational learning within the intimate networks of family.

My work nonetheless differs from the Colombia school approach in that the specific mechanism through which influence is exerted is different. Whereas the social networks tradition focuses largely on the sharing of information within social groups, my work emphasizes the
importance of modeling, and here there is once again affinity with the more ‘psychological’ Michigan school approach, which stresses the importance of political orientations picked up early in life.

My findings provide one answer to the challenge with which Andre Blais concludes his review of the state of the art of turnout research in the Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour:

The decision to vote or not to vote hinges on many considerations but the two most important ones appear to be whether one is interested in politics or not and whether one feels that voting is a civic duty. And so the challenge is to come up with compelling explanations for why people tune in or off politics and for why they come to believe that voting is a moral obligation or simply an individual choice option (Blais 2007, 633).

My research, which (to the best of my knowledge) stands alone as a post-1960s investigation of the processes of intergenerational reproduction of voting at the micro level, demonstrates the crucial importance of observation of the ‘action-commitments’ of parents and others. These actions may be more persuasive than the thoughts and ideas communicated via argument, explicit expectation, or persuasion (though these have a complementary effect). It is the observation of action and the undertaking of action that sets the stage for the development of the long-standing general political orientations (including an interest in politics, and a sense of obligation or duty regarding voting) that writers in the Michigan School tradition identify as the bedrock of a voting practice.

My work builds on research that conceptualizes voting as habitual, an idea that has been promoted by Mark Franklin, Eric Plutzer, Green, Shachar, and others. This work in turn rests upon an enormous volume of evidence regarding the persistent nature of voting practices at the individual level, beginning with the seminal texts of the Michigan school. Nonetheless, some people (even those like Andre Blais whose work owes much to the Michigan tradition) do not seem quite sure about applying the label of habit to voting (Blais 2006). This discomfort with
viewing voting as habitual behaviour is much stronger among non-specialists, who are less familiar with the cutting edge of turnout studies. Chapter 4 is motivated in part by a desire to clarify the different conceptions of habit that are employed, and to deepen our understanding of what is means to say that behaviour has a substantial habitual component.

**Political socialization**

The overall trend in socialization research, at least since the publication of *The Lonely Crowd* in 1950, is to see a waning of the family’s influence on the individual. Political socialization has not been exempt from this trend. Where work in the early post-war period granted family and childhood socialization a central place in determining the individual’s political preferences and actions, all talk of stability, reproduction, tradition, and parental influence waned during the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. As David Crosby’s lyric put it, we would now “teach our parents well.” The influence of social movements, media, workplace, and peer-groups became forefront, in both the popular and the sociological imagination.

In the field of political socialization, enormous attention has focused on voluntary associational memberships and involvements as sites for the formation of attitudes and arenas for mobilization. However, the findings regarding the influence of associations have been mixed. While voluntary associations of the “bridging” variety appear to reflect and reinforce democratic civic orientations, it is unclear whether they actually produce them. Recently, prominent scholars who study political attitudes and behaviour have re-iterated the importance of involuntary associations - especially the family, even in its “post-nuclear” double wage-earner guise. Several have urged a return to the study of childhood, a call that has so far been largely ignored. The strong continuities in political behaviour and preference within families have generated
explanations based on genetic inheritance within prominent social scientific journals, but competing non-biological models of family influence remain under-developed.

Researchers in political socialization who focus on family influence have uncovered strong correlations. Kent Jennings, working with a longitudinal data set encompassing three generations, finds that reproduction of political attitudes and participation within families is associated with discussion of politics, and with parental example. Similarly, the correlation of voting with feelings of duty and knowledge of politics is well established by Andre Blais and Henry Milner, among others. What is missing, and what my work provides, is a model of the social interactions and learning processes involved, which cannot be ascertained through analysis of surveys. Attending to these individual-level processes allows the prioritization of some correlational relationships over others within a causal framework. My analysis of the interview data suggests that in established democracies, in unexceptional times, voting may be learned largely through a physical apprenticeship within intimate circles. However, I also find a small, but potentially important role for certain kinds of (explicitly political) experiences within organizations, thus lending some qualified support to the ‘associations argument’.

The principal innovation is to elevate previous action and observation of the actions of others to greater prominence as predictors of future action, while casting doubt on the causal priority of discursive learning of beliefs, values and knowledge.

The third article (Chapter 4) of the dissertation tackles the question of how these findings sit within general theories of motivation, action, culture, and practice. Research is generally motivated by some theoretical puzzle. Each of the two empirical chapters – the statistical study and the interview-based one - address theoretical issues within specific subfields. However, the
findings of these studies raise larger theoretical issues, which go to the foundations of our understanding of action. The third paper (Chapter 4) explores these issues.

**Action Theory and the Influence of Culture**

Much sociological research relies upon a model of action that sees actions as motivated by values and beliefs. Practice theory, beginning with Bourdieu’s work, has challenged this view by emphasizing the importance of habit to action outcomes. I examine two recent theories of action drawing upon this insight: the first takes a cognitivist focus and emphasizes the importance of unconsciously held orientations and beliefs; the second puts a pragmatist emphasis on the interplay of habit and reflectivity at the center of its argument. Both of these recent efforts, while usefully emphasizing the importance of habitual practice, continue to orient the researcher toward the cultural schemas, values, beliefs and understandings that accompany practice. My paper draws attention to the way that actions themselves – ones own previous actions and the actions of others within intimate networks - shape subsequent behaviour. It questions the assumption that a focus on mental processes, whether these processes are conscious or unconscious, offers the best insight into the way that practical capacities are shaped and nurtured. Sometimes, depending on the actors and the practices involved, I argue, it is more revealing and more useful to focus on concrete practices themselves. This requires that we think harder about the manner in which practical capacities are learned and reproduced. Cultural practices should be viewed as distinct in some respects from cultural understandings. Practice deserves consideration on its own terms, since embodied habit is, in many instances, at the core of group culture. This requires modification of dominant views of culture, which have, since the 1970s, emphasized its symbolic aspects.
Chapter 2 - Electoral Turnout of Immigrants in Canada: Effects of Origin, Length of Residence, and Perceived Discrimination

Abstract:

Existing accounts of immigrant turnout in North America show a strong positive relationship between length of residence and voting, supporting claims of rapidly increasing electoral participation and political integration over time. Other studies show that voting among some racial minority groups appears to decline in the second generation, calling these claims of rapid and easy political integration into question. While perceived discrimination among the immigrant second generation does appear to be associated with lower levels of turnout, this article argues that we also need to pay more attention to the influence of political origin. Level of democratization in source countries is a powerful and persistent predictor of voting not only among foreign-born citizens, but also among immigrants’ native-born offspring. Multilevel models demonstrate that the shifting source country composition of immigrant period-of-arrival cohorts provides an alternate explanation for what have previously been identified as generational, racial and length of residence effects among immigrant voters. These findings bring to light a previously unidentified barrier to participation and a potential source of long-term turnout decline within countries of immigration.

Introduction

The political participation of Canada’s immigrants – particularly their rate of electoral turnout – is a topic of growing importance. With continued high rates of immigration a near-certainty, and projections that the foreign-born may comprise between 25 and 28% of the Canadian population by 2031\(^1\), immigrant voting is of interest from many perspectives. Whether we are concerned about barriers to equality and full social membership, the future direction of politics in Canada, or the long-term legitimacy and health of democratic institutions, immigrant votes matter.

\(^1\) [http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100309/dq100309a-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100309/dq100309a-eng.htm). This trumps the previous high – of 22% - between 1911 and 1931.
In North American studies of turnout, the lower average voting rates of recently immigrated citizens are consistently explained with reference to temporal variables – the relative youthfulness of the recently immigrated population, and their short period of residence in host societies (Bass & Casper, 2001; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Bueker, 2005; Soroka et al., 2007; White et al., 2008). The strong statistical effects of age and especially of years of residence within cross-sectional analyses support a narrative of rapid and reliable immigrant acculturation and assimilation through growing familiarity with (“exposure” to) the host society.

This story is one that ignores enormous variability among immigrant groups in turnout. Many immigrants, concentrated in particular source-country, or origin groups, vote at high rates immediately upon gaining citizenship, in some cases at much higher rates than the third-plus generation Canadian ‘mainstream’. Others maintain relatively low levels of participation over time.

Moreover, claims of long periods of accelerating participation post-migration are at odds with recent research into electoral participation. There is strong evidence that for most people, electoral participation is based on something of a “standing decision” established in early adulthood, with voting and non-voting becoming habitual thereafter (Plutzer 2002; Gerber, Green and Shachar 2003; Green and Shachar 2000; Miller and Shanks 1996; Campbell et al 1960; Brody and Sniderman 1977; Beys 2006; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1985, Lewis-Beck et al 2008, Kanazawa 2000, Fowler 2006)\(^2\). This means that after the first several opportunities for electoral participation, most individuals persist in voting or non-voting regardless of the circumstances surrounding particular elections. While some portion of early non-voters can be

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\(^2\) The substantial literature supporting the idea of voting as habit has also inspired formal theoretical models of turnout that move away from a rational model of forward-facing choice towards a backward-looking behavioural model of choice based on principles of reinforcement or adaptive learning (see Sieg and Schulz 1995; Kanazawa 1998, 2000; Bendor et al. 2003; Fowler 2006, Collins et al 2009; Denny and Doyle 2009).
expected to take up voting as they age, the imprint of initial participation and non-participation remains strong. As a result, change to turnout levels, whether attributed to changing electoral contexts or changing electorates, occurs principally among new voters (Franklin 2004, Blais et al. 2004, Lyons and Alexander 2000, Miller and Shanks 1996, Johnston et al 2007). If this is true, we would not expect years of residence to affect outcomes so strongly – definitely not beyond the first decade of an individual’s voting career. Yet existing analyses claim that voting increases very dramatically among Canadian immigrants in their first 20 years of residence.

This chapter addresses two questions. The first is whether perceived discrimination is associated with lower rates of turnout in the immigrant second generation. The second question is whether the dominant depiction of immigrant voting – that it goes up in a dramatic linear fashion for decades as duration of residence lengthens – is flawed by its neglect of historical effects. North America’s enormous ‘new wave’ of migrants – mainly of non-European-origin - did not begin to crest until the 1970s. The estimation of exposure’s effects within previous studies that span long time periods relies on the questionable assumption that past and present immigrant cohorts are interchangeable.

If we want to test arguments about acculturation on the basis of a ‘years of residence’ measure, we must be sure to account for any influential differences among immigrants that correlate with period of arrival. Otherwise we will mistake variation in turnout associated with period-of-arrival for differences in turnout caused by length of residence. The methodological issues are most easily illustrated with the more familiar example of age. When using cross-sectional analyses, estimation of generational cohort effects is essential if we wish to accurately measure the life-cycle effects of aging on turnout (Johnston, 1989, 1992; Miller and Shanks 1996). If cohort is neglected, a vastly inflated estimate of the effect of growing older results,
equivalent to predicting that young voters with very low average turnout rates in North America will acquire - simply as a function of aging - the near-universal commitment to voting seen among the portion of the electorate that came of political age in the decade following the second world war.

One dimension of difference between so-called ‘old-’ and ‘new-wave’ immigrants to receive attention among researchers is physical appearance. It is argued that racial differences among immigrants produce very different ‘contexts of reception,’ which affect their propensity to vote. Indeed, evidence that voting rates among racial minority immigrants as a whole go down in the second (native-born) generation, relative to the first, provide another ground upon which some researchers question claims of immigrants’ reliable assimilation to dominant patterns of political participation. It is argued that such trends may be the result of alienation arising from experiences of discrimination (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001), which are felt more keenly in the second generation than in the first (Maxwell 2010). Accordingly, I test for the effect of perceived discrimination on turnout, and do find a negative effect in the second generation (although these findings are not consistent across minority groups). Combined with the negative effects of poverty, perceived discrimination plays some part in explaining low turnout among second generation minority members.

However, an alternative dimension of difference across immigrant cohorts - that of differences in political experience and culture tied to national origin – shows even more dramatic and consistent results. The spotlight here is not on the environments that immigrants encounter – important as these are - but on an equally important and neglected factor, namely the political orientations and behavioural strategies that immigrants bring with them from their origin countries. My analyses show that political origin is an extremely strong factor in explaining
immigrant turnout – able to account for both generational and racial variation in the Canadian data.

**The Influence of immigrant generation and of “race”**

National-level research on the voting behaviour of native-born second generation immigrants is rare. Using US data, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) analyze generational voting patterns among immigrants categorized racially, and find an increase in voting in the second generation among Whites, a decline among Latinos and Asians, and no change among Blacks. In research using Canadian data, a puzzle exists in the form of a racial gap in electoral participation that is found among the Canadian native-born second generation, but not the first generation - with the young adult offspring of racial minority migrants voting less than their white counterparts (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). The negative association between racial minority status and voting among the native-born - who do not lack familiarity with the host country or its languages - calls into question the conclusion that ‘exposure’ erases difference, and has raised fears of long-term failures of social integration of immigrants along racial lines (Reitz and Banerjee 2007; Tossutti 2005; Jedwab 2006).

It is intuitively persuasive that perceptions of discriminatory treatment could affect political participation, although neither of the studies that investigate the issue directly with Canadian data find evidence to support the claim (Reitz and Banerjee 2007, Tossutti 2007). If some sort of link seems plausible, the historical (and research) record shows that it is very difficult to predict discrimination’s effects. Discrimination can inspire ‘voice’ (empowerment) as well as ‘exit’ (alienation) (Hirschman 1970). The 1924 immigration quotas in the US designed to limit immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans (and stop Asian immigration entirely) referred explicitly to the racial inferiority of all of these groups. While Asian-Americans were
denied the vote until much later, historians believe that this legislation inspired organization, mobilization, naturalization and voting among the maligned European groups (Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001). More recently, nativist campaigns in California in the mid 1990s are found to have stimulated voting among Mexicans in that state (Ramakrishnan 2005). In France, an enormous increase in voter registration in 2007 among French Muslims was attributed in the media to the inflammatory rhetoric of then-Presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. Finally, if we look at voting trends among racial minorities in the United States, with Asians voting least, Hispanics in the middle and Blacks voting most, it is difficult to construct a coherent explanation based on the idea that experiences of discrimination inhibit voting.

The surge in voting in the United States in 2008 among Latinos was widely attributed to a protest over failed immigration policies; however, these same policy failures, this time said to have caused dejection and alienation, were blamed for the ebb in 2010. The point is that evidence concerning the specific effect of perceptions of injustice or discrimination on political participation is both scant and contradictory (for example, see deSipio 1996, versus Pantoja and Gershon 2006).

In the absence of theory addressing the relationship between perceived discrimination and voting, we can borrow from theory concerning ethnic conflict. Two broad, and contradictory, theoretical postulates flow from Competitive or Ecological Theory (Olzak and Nagel 1986) on the one hand, and from an Internal Colonialism/Cultural Division of Labour perspective (Hechter 1975, 1978), on the other. In the first (Ecological Theory) approach, reductions in economic and social distance across groups – the receding of discriminatory barriers and the approach of parity - spur politicization and activism in modern states, because the state acts as redistributive broker on the basis of claims of injustice. Broadly speaking,
inequality is disempowering. In the second (Internal Colonialism) approach, the greater the economic stratification and social distance across groups, the greater the spur to group solidarity and politicization. Of course, much depends on the type of political action under scrutiny, and on other factors not taken into consideration here. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to construct two broad hypotheses concerning the effect of discrimination on voting based loosely on these theoretical foundations.

**Hypotheses Regarding Discrimination’s Effects on Turnout**

Ia Where social and economic differences across groups are small, perceptions of discrimination will spur politicization (Competition Theory).

Ib Where social and economic differences are large, discrimination will either not affect, or will inhibit politicization/voting. (Competition Theory)

II Where social and economic penalties are large, discrimination will spur politicization/voting. (Internal Colonialism/Cultural Division of Labour Theory)

**Another basis for variation - the influence of origin**

The second approach pursued here holds that where immigrants and their children are concerned, origin matters. The gross aggregation that occurs in broad racial groupings, as well as the identification of pseudo-generational groups from cross-sectional data, complicates the finding that turnout appears to decrease in the racial minority second generation. The adult ‘second generation’ children of immigrants are not in most cases the offspring of the ‘first generation’ immigrants sampled simultaneously in a cross-sectional sample. A shift over time in the source countries of Black immigrants from Caribbean to African countries, for example, or from one set of African or Caribbean countries to another, means that the origins of racial
minority ‘generations’ identified in cross-sectional generational groups may be different. These differences, in turn, may underlie and explain what otherwise appear to be a ‘generational’ effect. By mixing together people with different origins, racial and generational groupings (like the aggregate “immigrant” itself) mask the effects of culture and history.

The claim that people develop lasting political-cultural habits and orientations as a result of shared social locations during their formative years has a long history in political sociology and political science. Mannheim’s [1952] (1972) theory of generations – in which the common experiences of a youthful and receptive age cohort result in shared perspectives throughout life - finds an echo in evidence that many people adopt what amounts to a ‘standing decision’ to vote or not to vote based in part on their experience of their first few elections (Franklin, 2004; Plutzer, 2002; Miller and Shanks, 1996). These studies lend support to a conceptualization of voting as habit – a practice that generally becomes (or does not become) an established part of behavioural repertoires early in adult life. Whether the practice is initiated in this period depends on many factors, with the competitiveness of elections stressed by some (Franklin 2004, Johnston et al 2007), and changes to the characteristics of electorates considered more important by others (Blais et al 2004).

Demographics play an important role in understanding turnout trends. The extension of the franchise from 21 to 18 year olds (in Canada this occurred in 1970) has resulted in a decline in the voting rate in part because of the specific characteristics and circumstances of young people themselves. Young voters are less likely to vote, irrespective of the character of individual elections. Some studies find this is due to decreasing deference and sense of duty in younger generations (Blais et al., 2004; Blais, 2000; Blais and Young, 1999; Nevitte, 1996) or to decreasing political interest, attentiveness or political literacy (Blais, 2002; Pammet and LeDuc,
2003; Rubenson et al., 2004). Others argue that eighteen-year-olds’ lives are generally filled with transitions and upheavals that raise the costs of learning to vote (Plutzer, 2002).

Immigrants are another group whose circumstances and characteristics may predispose them to lower turnout. Most accounts highlight a temporary dampening effect caused by migration’s disruptions and a transitory lack of familiarity with the host country. However, such disruptions may have lasting effects. Moreover, if political orientations and habits are a product of historical and cultural locations during formative periods, we would expect immigrants’ diverse political cultures and histories to coincide with diverse political behaviours. Given the strength of habit where voting is concerned, the extent to which any such effects of origin will fade as time spent in the country increases is open to question.

Existing accounts of variability tied to origin

When immigrants are disaggregated by ethnicity or origin, evidence of sometimes dramatic group-level variability in voting has been noted both in the United States (Arvizu and Garcia, 1996; Calvo and Rosenstone, 1989; Tam, 1995; Cho, 1999; Kasinitz et al., 2008) and in Canada (Lapp, 1999; Chui et al., 1991; Black, 1987; Wood, 1981). However, findings are difficult to reconcile with each other, as there is often a failure to separate immigrants from non-immigrants, and broad regional groupings like ‘European’ or ‘Asian’ are frequently used. Many studies are based on samples limited in size, scope or representativeness. National-level studies overcome some of these limitations, but often retain broad racial or regional categorizations.

In the national studies that take an interest in origin, source country is a significant predictor of voter turnout about half the time (Bass and Casper, 2001; Bueker, 2005). But small numbers of sampled individuals in many country categories make significance tests stringent,
and the small number of countries in any given study (due to the small number of minority respondents overall) makes detection of patterns across groups challenging.

Since the survey data used for this study (Statistics Canada’s Ethnic Diversity Survey EDS) over-samples minorities, there were sufficient numbers to allow me to take a preliminary look at variation across 15 source country groups or groupings using logistic regression to calculate the likelihood of turnout. Groups that held adequate numbers of respondents after removal of missing cases on all variables were included (N>100). In practice this low cut-off meant that the likelihood of type-II error (not finding significance) is high, but the patterns revealed are suggestive.

The variations in turnout by ethnicity that others have found were certainly present. At the high end, several European origin groups were more (often much more) likely to vote than the reference group of ‘third-plus generation’ Canadians (those born in Canada with both parents also born in Canada). Even after controlling for age, education, income and marital status, immigrants from Italy, the Netherlands and Germany all voted at higher rates than the Canadian ‘mainstream,’ dramatically so in the case of those from Italy and the Netherlands. Can origin help explain this? Both are countries that enjoy high turnout rates, and both have histories of mandatory voting\(^3\). Among the twenty nations of Western Europe, five out of the top seven countries for turnout in the post-WW II period had such laws in place either at present, or in the past (Gratschew 2004).

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\(^3\) The last election in which the Dutch were obliged to vote was in 1967 (the laws were on the books from 1917 to 1970). Turnout in the subsequent national poll (in 1971) decreased by around 20%. In Italy, the laws are enforced by so-called “innocuous sanctions”, which nonetheless can make it difficult for non-voters to receive certain state benefits, such as child-care spaces. See Frankal, Elliot. 2005, Monday 4 July. “Compulsory voting around the world.” Guardian. Available at: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jul/04/voterapathy.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jul/04/voterapathy.uk)
At the low end, several more recently arrived country of origin groups were significantly less likely to vote than the mainstream. Among these mostly visible minority groups, a great deal of variation was nonetheless present. With and without controls, immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, India, and the Philippines came closest to meeting the reference group’s rate of turnout. In other words, Canadian citizens who immigrated from countries with democratic traditions are more likely to vote than those who came from countries where democratic traditions were absent or weak, such as China, Hong Kong, Russia, and Ukraine. If a further control was added, for residence of less than 20 years, these patterns are moderated somewhat, but still present, with statistically significant differences from the reference group present in the largest groups that varied most from the mainstream.

The argument that familiarity with English is at the root of these differences in participation runs up against the counter-argument that it is actually English colonial history, with its impositions of democratic institutions, that matters. A focus on language does not account for the great electoral enthusiasm long noted among the Greek and Italian communities in Canada, nor can it explain why Canadian immigrants from European countries like the Netherlands and Denmark vote at much higher rates than those from the United Kingdom and the United States (and at much higher rates than the Canadian ‘mainstream’, for that matter).

There are also anomalous findings. For example, turnout among immigrants from Arab League countries is much higher than one would expect given democratization in origin countries, pointing to the presence of a ‘political refugee effect’, which is often used to explain the very high voting rates among Cuban-Americans. Nonetheless, the most salient pattern in the data is that the more robustly democratic the country of origin – especially in a participatory sense - the greater turnout is post-migration.
One effect of political origin previously noted within analyses that differentiate according to source country concerns the effect of coming from a communist state. Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) find that coming from a repressive or communist regime has inconsistent effects, increasing electoral turnout among Cuban-Americans, while otherwise lowering voting rates. Bueker (2005) finds a negative effect for absence of democratic experience across 10 countries of origin. This paper builds on these findings, but utilizes a more expansive view of political and historical legacies. Source countries differ not only in whether democracy is present, but also in the degree of enthusiasm with which democratic practices and responsibilities are exercised. Rather than conceptualizing democracy as simply present or absent, an index that gauges the level of democratization in source countries on a scale from zero to forty-six is employed to test whether origin country political histories influence the likelihood of voting in new national and political settings. I overcome the small-N problem by employing a methodology that allows use of the full range of source countries present among Canadian immigrants, so that more than 100 country-of-origin data-points are used to estimate origin’s effects.

**Origin Effects in the Second Generation**

The issue of whether effects associated with parental origin might persist into the immigrant second generation has not been previously studied. Research on political socialization that suggests political engagement is strongly determined by childhood exposure to political discussion and participation among influential adults provides support for a hypothesis of persistence (Jennings et al., 2001; Jennings, 2002; Verba et al., 1995). At the same time, an immense literature on immigrant adaptation and assimilation identifies intergenerational movement towards the mainstream in socio-economic outcomes. Assuming that the processes of
political adaptation share something with other integration outcomes, this suggests that the influence of origin will wane generationally.

**Hypotheses Regarding Origin’s Effect on Turnout**

Five hypotheses are derived from the foregoing discussion and review of literature.

I. Turnout among immigrants varies by country of origin.

II. Length of residence acts as a proxy for differences in the source-country composition (and differing political cultures) of immigrant cohorts.

III. Differences in immigrant origin help explain the variation attributed to ‘generation’ and ‘race.’

IV. The level of democratization in immigrants’ countries of origin has a positive relationship to turnout, explaining substantial amounts of group level variation.

V. Effects from parents’ source country will persist, more weakly, into the second generation.

**Data and Methods**

A lack of data has made it difficult to make a stronger case for ethnic or cultural effects tied to origin until now. Statistics Canada’s Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) provides a unique opportunity to look closely at the effects of ethnicity on voting, because it asks about electoral behaviour while also providing extraordinarily detailed information about Canada’s diverse immigrant population. The EDS, a post-censal, national survey of 42,476 residents conducted jointly by Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2002 provides the individual-level survey data used in this study. The total response rate was 76%, with first
generation immigrants having a response rate of 73%, while second and above generations averaged a 77% response. Interviews were conducted in English, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Italian, Punjabi, Portuguese, Vietnamese and Spanish. The full sample is used, as the Public Use Micro File provides only two highly aggregated categories for year of arrival, fails to provide nativity data on parents (providing only ethnic ancestry), and does not provide enough detail in place-of-birth data for the first generation. The survey represents over 23 million people. The most valuable characteristic of the survey for this paper’s purposes is its over-sampling of non-Canadian, non-British and non-French origin groups so that they represented two-thirds of the sample. This over-sampling of ethnic minorities together with questions about birthplace of both respondent and respondent’s parents provides the opportunity to differentiate large numbers of first and second generation immigrants finely by origin.

The country-level data used comes from Vanhanen’s (1990) comparative indexes of democratization (described in more detail below and in Appendix B).

I draw various sub-samples in the analyses. The first set of analyses, which concentrate on the effect of perceived discrimination, use an all-ages sample, and differentiate respondents by immigrant generation and by racial or visible minority status. The second set, which consider the effect of origin, begin with an all-ages (20+) sample of foreign-born (first generation) immigrants. First generation immigrants in all cases include the 1.5 generation – immigrants who arrived as children. They are included in order to reduce the collinearity of age and length of residence in the 1st generation sample, and to increase numbers.\(^4\) The next three sets of models sample young adults aged 20 to 35. This age range is chosen for several reasons: because

\(^4\) Although it would be interesting to see whether the effect of source country democratization differs between the 1st and the 1.5 generation, the inclusion of the 1.5 with the 1st generation cannot plausibly be considered problematic in terms of a potential inflation of the democratization effect – if anything, one would expect a dilution of origin effects among those who had spent part of their childhood in the host country.
diverse-origin immigrants in the second generation are not present in sufficient numbers beyond the age of 35 (see Figure 1); in order to ensure an adequate amount of variation in turnout (given the very high rates of turnout among older Canadians); as a further means of reducing the covariance of age and length of residence in the first generation sample; and to compare the generations at the same point in the life cycle. A comparison across first, second, and third-plus (native-born respondents whose parents are also native-born) generations is modeled, and then outcomes are separately modeled for first and second generation immigrants with parents both from the same source country⁵. Non-citizens, who would not be eligible to vote, are excluded in all cases from the analyses. Single-level logistic regressions employ bootstrap weights, while the multi-level models use re-scaled weighting, which uses the survey population weights to weight the sample up to population shares (while retaining the actual sample size). These “shares” are created by multiplying the survey weight by the ratio of the unweighted sub-sample N to the weighted sub-sample N.

Figure 1 – Minority Status of 2nd Generation Electorate, Age 20-35

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⁵ Over 80% of second generation immigrants have both parents from the same source country.
Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is derived from a single questionnaire item that asks “Did you vote in the last federal election?” asked of citizens aged 18 and over. All samples are limited to citizens aged 20 and over, who would have all been 18 years old and therefore eligible to vote at the time of the election in question. While voting is often over-reported on surveys, and this one is no exception, a false report of voting may reasonably be thought to indicate an intention to vote or recognition of the importance of voting which makes the inclusion of ‘false’ positives within the ‘yes’ category acceptable. The EDS reports that equal numbers of immigrants and non-immigrants voted in the previous federal election, and data generated by the 2004 Canadian Election Study (CES) shows parity between immigrant and native-born voters overall, just as the EDS does (Henderson, 2005). At least at aggregate levels, immigrants and non-immigrants appear to over-report voting at similar rates. Nonetheless, systematic bias in reporting at the group level could still be present.

Individual-level Predictors

Voting studies in North America have consistently found a positive relationship between voting and age, education, and income. Education has the strongest association, while low income or poverty has a moderate negative relationship. Age shows a strong, positive and

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6 In the survey overall, 78% of eligible voters reported casting ballots in the 2000 election. Actual turnout was around 64%.
slightly curvilinear relationship to turnout (Leighley, 2001; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Tilley, 2002; Verba and Nie, 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

Where immigrant voting is the focus, studies show marriage and cohabitation to be associated with turnout (Bass and Casper, 2001; Bueker, 2005). Poverty’s effect appears to vary across origin groups, having no association with turnout among immigrants from communist countries and a relationship of inconsistent strength elsewhere (Bueker, 2005). Immigrant voting studies disagree on the relative importance of age and length of residence or exposure. Most find that both variables have a positive relationship to voter turnout (Soroka et al., 2007; Bass and Casper, 2001; Bueker, 2005; Ramakrishnan, 2005). Some see a positive effect for length of residence but not for age (White et al., 2008; Cho, 1999). Studies that examine turnout in new electorates (newly democratized peasant societies or newly enfranchised segments of the population) report an effect for age but not for exposure (experience with the vote) (Niemi et al., 1984; Niemi and Barkan, 1987).

While these differences may be partly the result of different datasets and differently measured variables, the collinearity of age with length of residence is an underlying problem. Researchers employ a variety of strategies: they leave one or the other variable out (Bueker, 2008; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007); use dummy variables (Bass & Casper, 2001; Ramakrishnan, 2005); use natural log transformations of their temporal variables (White et al., 2008); or choose samples or cases that hold one or the other variable constant (Black, Niemi & Powell, 1987; Niemi et al., 1984; Niemi and Barkan, 1987). The present study minimizes the collinearity of age and residence by using truncated age samples and including the 1.5 generation in the foreign-born sample, so that respondents arrived in the country at widely varying ages (the Pearson’s r
correlation coefficient for age and residence in the first generation all ages sample is 0.65, while in the younger sample it is 0.25).

The usual interpretation of these individual-level predictors is that as we age and form families we develop a heightened sense of community and responsibility. Longer residence among immigrants results in a greater sense of belonging and “ownership” in, as well as familiarity with, the host society, which is thought to lead to greater participation. Higher levels of education result in increased knowledge of political systems, the accumulation of skills translatable to political processes, and stronger feelings of political efficacy. Greater income is claimed by some to increase the stake of voters in the system, and by others to attract the attention of political entrepreneurs and parties.

These interpretations have been challenged by evidence that individual-level socio-demographic factors are often conditioned by the rate of turnout over time – rather than the other way around (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Franklin, 2004). According to this view, inertia among older voters socialized during periods of greater electoral competitiveness accounts in part or in full for the higher voting rates of older people. Age therefore acts as a lagged indicator of participation rates during any particular electoral cohort’s early engagement in politics. Indeed Franklin concludes that unless data from multiple elections is included in studies, the inclusion of individual-level variables makes statistical models inherently misspecified (since variation in the character of individual elections cannot be taken into account). In the absence of longitudinal data, we need to exercise care in our interpretation of these variables’ effects.

Table 1. Variable Construction

| Low Income | This dummy variable was constructed because a continuous income variable would have resulted in too many lost cases, and because previous research finds a strong effect for poverty, but a much weaker one for wealth. A ‘high income’ dummy was discarded when it was found not to have significant effects. The low income variable was constructed using Statistics Canada’s |
Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) for the year 2001, a series of estimates of income levels meant to represent “relatively worse off families” and popularly known as Canada’s poverty lines. LICOs were calculated according to household size and size of community, and the dummy variable constructed for the analysis correspondingly assigns individuals to low income or non-low income (the reference group) on the basis of these three criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Married or Cohabited</td>
<td>The dummy variable for single is constructed against the reference group of those who are married or cohabiting, widowed or divorced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age is a continuous variable calculated from date of birth to year of survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>The education variable is continuous, equalling total years of education of respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Length of residence is a continuous variable, calculated in years, by subtracting respondent’s year of entry into Canada from the survey year (2002). This variable is estimated in samples of the first generation only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty Years or Less Residence</td>
<td>A dummy variable that targets first generation immigrants who have resided in Canada for twenty years or less is used as a control where analyses include respondents outside of the first generation, since the continuous variable ‘Years of Residence’ applies only to them. The dummy’s reference category includes first generation immigrants resident for more than 20 years, and 2nd and 3rd+ immigrants. The choice of cut-off is chosen based on previous research and my own analysis of the data, which finds that the effect of residence in all-ages samples extends only to 20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Minority</td>
<td>Statistics Canada designates as racial (or “visible”) minorities those persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color. Respondents who report Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Arab backgrounds are included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>This dummy variable assigns individuals to the reference category if they report having experienced discrimination in the previous 5 years/since arriving in Canada never or rarely, while the target category is comprised of individuals who report having experienced discrimination sometimes or often. The interviewer explains that “discrimination may happen when people are treated unfairly because they are seen as being different from others.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group-level Predictor: Origin Country Democratization**

The Democratization Index (DI) selected for use in this study consists of the scores given 147 countries in 1988 by Vanhanen (1990), with values ranging from zero to forty-six (see Appendix A). Based on Robert Dahl’s definition of healthy democracies, Vanhanen’s scores encompass Dahl’s dual criteria of inclusion and contestation. Since other commonly used
measures of democratization emphasize competitiveness over participation, my theoretical interest in the participatory aspect of democratic regimes and national political cultures explains my choice of measure (for a fuller discussion of democratization measures, see Appendix B).

The index is a product of: 1) the percent of the total population that votes and 2) the degree of competitiveness in the electoral process measured by the percentage of the vote received by all but the largest party. Vanhanen’s index correlates strongly with other democratization indexes, such as the Freedom House indexes of civil and political liberties, and the measure of democracy employed in Ted Gurr’s Polity project (the correlation is in the vicinity of .80 in both cases, see Vanhanen 2003, p. 68-78). Aside from its attention to actual levels of participation in each country, it has the advantage over these other operationalizations of relying very little on subjective judgments and more on a relatively very few, easily obtainable indicators.

A one-time measure, given historical change to political systems over time, is obviously less than ideal. A fair amount of nuance in political histories is left out. No doubt a variable that tracked political histories more precisely would provide an even stronger result than the one obtained. Nonetheless, the 1988 variable, capturing the long period of cold-war stability of state forms (from the end of the Second World War until the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s), makes the 1988 index most appropriate for capturing default political cultural positions.

---

7 The measure of competitiveness may seem counter-intuitive, given that within established democracies competitiveness is sometimes measured in a contrary fashion. For example, Franklin (1994) operationalizes it as the closeness to majority status of the largest party, in which case ‘competitiveness’ is understood as being in part linked to effectiveness (the greater the possibility of your party achieving a majority, the greater their chances of instituting policy change). Here, where an index of the quality of democracies ranges across a very wide range of polities, including fledgling and ‘window-dressing democracies,’ the measure is in place to penalize one-party systems in which no real alternative to the ruling party exists. The higher the share of votes of the smaller parties, the more widely distributed power is assumed to be.
for the election being studied here. Nonetheless, imprecision is certainly present. The snapshot of political culture supplied assesses the situation before the transitions of East European and South American countries to democracy. Recent immigrants from Russia, for example, are coded as having a democratization score of zero when in fact they have some experience of democracy (although, given the fragility of some of these democratic transitions, this does not seem overly problematic). In addition, countries like Germany, Italy and Greece receive high scores, despite significant democratic lapses experienced under authoritarian governments. It should be kept in mind that the index fits the experience of the oldest immigrants from Europe less well than for others (hence also the fit may be uneven among these older immigrants’ children, who may be sampled in the 20-35 year old second generation sample).

Paying attention to shifts in the political origins of immigrants over time illustrates origin’s potential to explain the puzzle of a second generation racial gap in voting where none exists in the first generation. There is a strong inverse relationship of racial minority status and level of democratization in the second generation, but not the first, with dramatic change among whites, who are increasingly recruited from former authoritarian regimes. The average democratization score of Whites is nearly triple that of Non-Whites among the parents of the second generation, who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. A convergence to low levels of democratic experience across racial groups in recently arrived immigrant cohorts, as illustrated in Figure 1, may explain the much smaller racial gap in turnout seen among young (20-35 year old) foreign-born Canadians. This gap is also seen in Table 2: the distance between the average

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8 Vanhanen also repeated the exercise in 2003, providing a snapshot of democratization levels at the turn of the century – this index was tried out in preliminary analyses and, as expected, did not predict turnout nearly as well. In addition, Vanhanen’s indexes can be separated into the two components of participation rates and competitiveness. Neither index alone predicted turnout well.
democratization score of minority and non-minority individuals is 8 points in the first generation young adult sample, while it is 22 points in the second generation young adult sample.

Figure 2 Avera
g democratization scores by period of arrival
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Weighted Proportions and Mean Values for Variables</th>
<th>1st generation age20+</th>
<th>1st generation age 20-35</th>
<th>2nd generation age20-35</th>
<th>3rd gen 20-35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Racial Min Non-Racial Min</td>
<td>All Racial Min Non-Racial Min</td>
<td>All Racial Min Non-Racial Min</td>
<td>All Racial Min Non-Racial Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>0.81 0.73 0.86</td>
<td>0.63 0.63 0.62</td>
<td>0.68 0.6 0.71</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Minority</td>
<td>0.41 n/a n/a</td>
<td>0.63 n/a n/a</td>
<td>0.27 n/a n/a</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>0.13 0.15 0.11</td>
<td>0.15 0.17 0.12</td>
<td>0.09 0.1 0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports Discrimination</td>
<td>0.12 0.21 0.05</td>
<td>0.14 0.21 0.07</td>
<td>0.1 0.21 0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Married or Cohabitting</td>
<td>0.32 0.35 0.3</td>
<td>0.56 0.58 0.52</td>
<td>0.63 0.82 0.56</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence &lt;20yrs</td>
<td>0.3 0.52 0.15</td>
<td>0.64 0.72 0.51</td>
<td>n/a n/a n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Values</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratization</td>
<td>19 10 25</td>
<td>12 9 17</td>
<td>17 11 33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>13 14 13</td>
<td>14 14 14</td>
<td>15 15 15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>52 46 56</td>
<td>29 28 29</td>
<td>28 25 28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residence</td>
<td>30 20 38</td>
<td>17 15 19</td>
<td>n/a n/a n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N to nearest 10</td>
<td>7290 2990 4300</td>
<td>1270 800 470</td>
<td>1800 490 1310</td>
<td>3920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a = not applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statistical Models

The analysis falls into two sections. The first set of models in this section (Table 3) looks at the effect of experiences of discrimination on the probability of voting among white and racial minority first and second generation immigrants, against the reference group of the Canadian third-plus generation, controlling for recent arrival, age, education, marital status, and low income. Tables 4 and 5 employ split runs to look at discrimination’s effect within different minority groups, in the first and second generation. The sample, in all cases, consists of Canadian citizens age 20 and over.

The second section, assessing the effect of origin on turnout, begins with an “all-ages” (20+) sample, but then moves to a sample of young adults, for the reasons set forth in the Data and Methods section above. These analyses feature a series of multilevel logit models, as well as a few regular logistic regression models for comparison. At the first level of analysis in the multi-level models, variables show the effect of generation and minority status, and control for the effects of discrimination, (which allows us to further gauge this variable’s effect in a younger age sample), as well as for the effects of age, education, marital status, and poverty. The second level consists of +-100 country of origin groups, and the effect of democratization is assessed at this second level.

Multilevel models permit the specification of group-level effects even where group size is small, and are the most appropriate method of analysis where a high degree of intra-class correlation, or clustering, is present. The influence of group membership and context, once established, is accounted for by allowing the intercept to vary across the mean differences in turnout across groups. In effect, the random intercept provides a parsimonious control for average turnout of the +-100 national origin groups present in each sample. Change to the
random intercept’s variance term across models gauges the explanatory power of the independent variables in accounting for these group-level differences. At the same time, second-level explanatory variables (in this case source country democratization) must attain significance with only some 100 data points (corresponding to level-2 units) rather than against the much greater number of individual observations. These features of random-effect / multi-level models forestall the overestimation of significance that occurs in regular regression when the assumption of independent observations is violated (that is, when hierarchical or nested data structure is ignored). In addition, the group-centering of continuous variables means that the assessment of a variable’s effect becomes more group-specific. We are able to see whether length of residence makes a difference not only when comparing individuals in a relatively recently arrived group with individuals in a group where most people have been here longer, but also to take into consideration its effect within each group.

**Results I: Discrimination**

The analyses focusing on assessment of perceived discrimination’s effect all employ single level logit regressions. In Table 3’s Model 1, with controls in place, all first generation immigrants (both visible minority and White) have a lower probability of voting than the third-plus generation (respondent and respondent’s parents all born in Canada) reference group. In the second generation, minority status is associated with a large reduction in the probability of voting, while White second generation immigrants are actually significantly more likely to vote than the reference group. In the next model, when a control for residence of twenty years or less is added, both first generation groups cease to differ from the 3rd-plus generation, but the gulf between the reference group and the second generation minority group now appears even larger.

**Table 3 Effect of Discrimination on voting, 1st and 2nd and 3rd+ Generations, age 20+**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.539</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)***</td>
<td>(0.26)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation by minority status (dummies)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-plus generation (reference group)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation white</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.065)*</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation racial minority</td>
<td>-0.372</td>
<td>-0.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)***</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation white</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.073)*</td>
<td>(0.073)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation racial minority</td>
<td>-0.408</td>
<td>-0.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.116)***</td>
<td>(0.104)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Residence/Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years or less residence (first generation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.104)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination and interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination’s effect on 3+ generation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination x first gen white</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination x first gen racial minority</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination x second gen white</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.372)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination x second gen racial minority</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.237)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)***</td>
<td>(0.011)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age2</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0001)***</td>
<td>(0.0001)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.008)***</td>
<td>(0.008)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-0.295</td>
<td>-0.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.082)***</td>
<td>(0.082)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single - never married</td>
<td>-0.445</td>
<td>-0.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.063)***</td>
<td>(0.063)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>23,320</td>
<td>23,320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: Ethnic Diversity Survey 2002
Table 3’s final model adds variables that measure the effect on voting of perceived discrimination. The results indicate that experiences of discrimination do not affect the likelihood of voting among first generation immigrants, whether they are White or racial minority. In the second generation, however, there appears to be a strong, negative statistical association between perceived discrimination and voting among those with minority status. Note that, after introducing an interaction between minority status and discrimination, the difference between the reference group and the minority second generation (now referring to those who have not experienced discrimination) is eliminated (reduced in size, and to statistical non-significance). These models suggest that discrimination inhibits voting, and that discrimination explains the second generation minority’s lower voting rates relative to Canadian-born citizens with Canadian-born parents. On the face of it, Hypothesis 1b (where social and economic penalties are large, discrimination inhibits politicization) finds strong support here.

However, the story becomes more complex when within group analyses are estimated (Tables 4 & 5). In the first generation, as expected, the discrimination variable does not attain statistical significance for anybody (Table 4). In Table 5, also as expected, we see that discrimination appears to have a strong negative effect for the combined minority category (column 2). However, its influence weakens considerably within the split runs. It does not achieve statistical significance for any of the groups. For Chinese, South Asians, and ‘Other’ Minorities, this may very well just be a ‘small N’ problem. In these groups, the effect is large and negative, though it does not achieve statistical significance.

Table 4: Effect of Discrimination, detailed racial groups, 1st generation
Table 4. Effect of Discrimination on Voting for Detailed Racial Groups in First Generation, age 20+, split runs, bootstrapped logistic regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White M1</th>
<th>White M6</th>
<th>All minorities M2</th>
<th>All minorities M3</th>
<th>All minorities M4</th>
<th>All minorities M5</th>
<th>Chinese M2</th>
<th>Chinese M3</th>
<th>South Asian M2</th>
<th>South Asian M3</th>
<th>Black M2</th>
<th>Black M3</th>
<th>Other minority M2</th>
<th>Other minority M3</th>
<th>Other minority M4</th>
<th>Other minority M5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-3.117</td>
<td>-2.276</td>
<td>-2.306</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>-7.655</td>
<td>-2.217</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.379) p=0.09</td>
<td>(1.464)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.34) **</td>
<td>(1.025) *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.609) ***</td>
<td>(0.627) ***</td>
<td>(1.379) p=0.09</td>
<td>(1.464)</td>
<td>(2.34) **</td>
<td>(1.025) *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes or often</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.513</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.416)</td>
<td>(0.321)</td>
<td>(0.446)</td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023) ***</td>
<td>(0.025) ***</td>
<td>(0.051) p=0.06</td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td>(0.104) **</td>
<td>(0.043) *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0002) ***</td>
<td>(0.0003) **</td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
<td>(0.001) *</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015) **</td>
<td>(0.015) ***</td>
<td>(0.029) p=0.06</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.05) *</td>
<td>(0.026) *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-0.155</td>
<td>-0.166</td>
<td>-0.628</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.166)</td>
<td>(0.357) p=0.08</td>
<td>(0.379)</td>
<td>(0.453)</td>
<td>(0.256)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single - never married</td>
<td>-0.353</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.604</td>
<td>0.291</td>
<td>-0.464</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.123) **</td>
<td>(0.13) **</td>
<td>(0.331)</td>
<td>(0.357) p=0.09</td>
<td>(0.391)</td>
<td>(0.203) *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,370</td>
<td>2,650</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001

N reporting discrimination | 230 | 570 | 80 | 170 | 120 | 210
% reporting discrimination | 5  | 21 | 14 | 23 | 32 | 20
Table 5: Effect of discrimination, detailed racial groups, 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation
Table 5: Effect of Discrimination on Voting for Detailed Racial Groups in Second Generation, age 20+, split runs, bootstrapped logistic regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White (M1)</th>
<th>All minority (M6)</th>
<th>Chinese (M2)</th>
<th>South Asian (M3)</th>
<th>Black (M4)</th>
<th>Other minority (M5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.919</td>
<td>-3.029</td>
<td>-4.401</td>
<td>-6.281</td>
<td>-0.475</td>
<td>-3.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.749)***</td>
<td>(1.2)*</td>
<td>(3.126)</td>
<td>(3.972)</td>
<td>(3.75)</td>
<td>(1.801)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes or often</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>-0.579</td>
<td>-0.739</td>
<td>-0.589</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
<td>-0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.359)</td>
<td>(0.197)**</td>
<td>(0.506)</td>
<td>(0.364)</td>
<td>(0.449)</td>
<td>(0.389) p=0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.028)***</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(0.287)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0003)**</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.025)***</td>
<td>(0.048)**</td>
<td>(0.097)</td>
<td>(0.077)*</td>
<td>(0.075)*</td>
<td>(0.072)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-0.609</td>
<td>-0.867</td>
<td>-0.114</td>
<td>-0.686</td>
<td>-2.828</td>
<td>-0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.235)**</td>
<td>(0.28)**</td>
<td>(0.94)</td>
<td>(0.659)</td>
<td>(5.397)</td>
<td>(0.476)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single - never married</td>
<td>-0.446</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.381</td>
<td>-1.159</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.161)**</td>
<td>(0.255)</td>
<td>(0.469)</td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
<td>(0.708) p=0.1</td>
<td>(0.387)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 2,710, 1,200, 280, 310, 200, 410

*=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***=p<.001

N reporting discrimination: 123, 250, 40, 67, 81, 65

% reporting discrimination: 5, 21, 14, 21, 41, 16
Among Black respondents, however, who report the highest level of discrimination (as reported at the bottom of Tables 4 and 5), there is no relationship between discrimination and turnout at all (meaning that discrimination has no effect, or that it increases the likelihood of voting among some people and decrease it among others). Since Black Canadians are among the most economically marginalized of the minority groups, as well as reporting the most discriminatory treatment, Hypothesis II is clearly refuted (exclusion and discrimination spurs politicization). However, in drawing our attention to the specific circumstances of the minority groups among whom the negative effect of discrimination appears, it also calls Hypothesis Ib into question.

There is enormous economic heterogeneity within the “minority” category in Canada, and it is among people in the groups suffering both less discrimination and less economic penalty that the relationship between discrimination and (not) voting is strongest. For example, in the Chinese group, where the negative relationship between voting and discrimination is strongest, both education and income levels are high in the second generation – exceeding those of both the European-origin second generation and the third-plus generation, and this is true for the South Asian group as well (Boyd 2008). The Competitive hypothesis suggests that where social and economic distance is diminishing between groups we will see politicization in response to discrimination (Hypothesis Ia). This is clearly not the case here.

Where Hypothesis Ia (discrimination spurs politicization) receives some support is in the effects of perceived discrimination on third-plus generation respondents (table 3, Model 3, Discrimination’s effect on 3+ generation). While the effect in these analyses is small and not statistically significant (not surprising given the small number of White respondents reporting discrimination), discrimination appears to be associated with a higher likelihood of voting in this
group. We will return to this issue in the next set of analyses looking at source country effects, in which discrimination is included as a control, where this tendency for long resident whites who experience discrimination to be more likely to vote will be encountered again.

Clearly the story is a complex one, and generalizations about discrimination’s effects on voting are difficult to make on the basis of the evidence here. While there is a reduced likelihood of voting among many visible minority second generation citizens who report experiencing discrimination, discrimination does not appear to inhibit voting among individuals in the groups who suffer the most from it. It is associated with a reduced likelihood of voting only among people in those groups subject to less discrimination, and in the third-plus non-minority population, it may be associated with a greater likelihood of voting. Once again, aggregate categories mask particularities of group history and culture which may be relevant in understanding how all of this works. For example, among the White third-plus generation, discrimination is reported mainly by Jewish-Canadian respondents. This group’s long and very particular history may be relevant (as are the group’s enormous material resources). It is difficult to discuss the South Asian and “Other Minority” cases because these groups contain a variety of origin groups, but in the Chinese group, political origins may also help explain the alienating (rather than politicizing) effect of perceived discrimination. We turn now to consideration of this factor.

**Results: Origin**

In all of the multi-level analyses presented here (Tables 6, 7, and 8), the importance of origin to immigrant turnout is demonstrated by the significance of the intercept variance term in the presence of control variables (e.g. Table 6, Model 1). Hypothesis I is supported – turnout is

**Table 6: Voting, 1st Gen Immigrant Citizens, age 20+**
Table 6: Determinants of Voting, First generation immigrant citizens, ages 20+, Multilevel Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.359</td>
<td>1.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.153)***</td>
<td>(0.167)***</td>
<td>(0.168)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.027)***</td>
<td>(0.027)***</td>
<td>(0.027)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age2</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0002)*</td>
<td>(0.0002)*</td>
<td>(0.0002)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)***</td>
<td>(0.012)***</td>
<td>(0.012)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married or cohabited</td>
<td>-0.455</td>
<td>-0.454</td>
<td>-0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.162)***</td>
<td>(0.161)***</td>
<td>(0.162)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minority Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Minority</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure to Canada</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of residence</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)***</td>
<td>(0.015)***</td>
<td>(0.015)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of residence2</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0001)*</td>
<td>(0.0001)*</td>
<td>(0.0002)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Level Variable (origin)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Democratization</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)**</td>
<td>(0.007)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-level Interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratization x Residence</td>
<td>-0.0006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0002)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Random Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept variance</td>
<td>0.5607***</td>
<td>0.4903***</td>
<td>0.496***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs of Residence slope variance</td>
<td>0.0003***</td>
<td>0.0002**</td>
<td>0.0001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 (individuals)</td>
<td>7003</td>
<td>7003</td>
<td>7003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 (groups)</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p < .05  ** = p < .01  *** = p < .001
Source: Ethnic Diversity Survey 2002
strongly patterned by country of origin. This also tells us that the assumption of independent individual-level observations is violated, and that proceeding with regular regression may be problematic.

In Table 6, based on analyses with an all-ages sample of first generation immigrants, Hypothesis IV also finds support in Models 2 and 3. Level of democratization in countries of origin has a strong positive, statistically significant relationship to turnout. Figure 3 illustrates the fitted probability of voting by length of residence and level of democratization (and their interaction), with other variables held at mean values. After 2 years of residence, those who come from countries with the highest level of democratization have a probability of turnout approximately 25% higher than people from countries with the lowest level of democratization. Democratization’s effect wanes as residence lengthens, but the effect appears to remain large and influential for several decades. Indeed, the effect of years of residence is strengthened in model 3, where it now refers to the effect of residence among those who come from countries with democratization scores of zero.

Hypothesis II does not find support. While democratization and residence modify each other, there is no evidence here that exposure acts as a proxy for the changing political culture of immigrant cohorts over time. Length of residence remains a strong and significant predictor of turnout, especially among those who arrive with low levels of democratization (shown by the steeper slope of the dashed line in Figure 3, and the main effect of democratization in Model 3). In these models, the slope (the size of the effect) of residence has been allowed to vary across the 148 origin groups, as indicated by the random effects term for this parameter near the bottom of the table. The reduction in the term across the models shows that democratic histories (including

---

9 The interaction of democratization with residence was not significant (p=0.987).
variation in the effect of democratization by length of residence) explain 67% of the variation in how residence affects turnout across different groups.

**Figure 3: Effect of Democratization on voting by Residence, 1st Gen, 20+**

It is not at all clear, however, that use of an all-ages (20+) sample constitutes a fair test of the effect of these entangled variables. While multicollinearity of independent variables is within acceptable ranges according to diagnostic tests, there are a number of problems. The main one is that diversity of origins and diversity of outcome are both extremely limited among older, earlier cohorts of immigrants. Given the lack of diversity of origins, it is not surprising that its influence appears small, and that of long residence appears strong. And since almost everyone at the upper range of residence votes (in a confluence of period, origin, and life cycle effects), there is almost no variation to explain, leaving us (and the mathematical software) at a disadvantage in trying to decipher the intersection of effects.
By limiting the sample to young adults 20-35 years old in the remaining analyses (Tables 7 and 8), we ensure that diversity of origins is present throughout variable ranges, the covariance of democratization, age and residence is greatly reduced, and variation in voting greatly increases, as Table 2 demonstrates. The age range is dictated by the desire to include the second generation, given concern about low voting rates among second generation minority citizens. In the second generation, as Figure 1 showed, variation in origins drops very steeply with age, and is almost nonexistent after the age of 35. By keeping the age range uniform across the three generations, we control for life cycle effects, and keep period effects within tighter bounds than is the case with an all-ages sample. Most importantly, by focusing on young first generation adults, all of whom have been in the country for 35 years or less, we are looking specifically at the group among whom the effect of length of residence is supposed to be strongest (those in the country 20 years or less). In other words, we limit the extent to which length of residence may be picking up qualitative differences between earlier-arriving immigrants, and the diverse-origin immigrants you have arrived in the period since the liberalizations of the late 1960s.

Table 7 provides a comparison of single level logit analyses (Models 1 and 2) with multilevel logit analyses (Models 3-6). In all cases, turnout among 20-35 year old first and second generation immigrants is compared to turnout in the third-plus generation. Comparison of the findings of the single and multi-level models helps clarify both techniques and results. Hypotheses II and III predict that differences in source-country composition of immigrant cohorts will account for some or all of the variation that has been attributed, in single-level analyses, to length of residence, generation, and race. Looking first at the single-level models, we see that in Model 1, with controls, the dummy variables targeting 2nd generation

Table 7: Voting, 1st, 2nd & 3rd+ Generation, Age 20-35, single and multilevel
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.612</td>
<td>-3.283</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.381)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(1.799)</td>
<td>(0.241)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individual Level Variables**

*Generation by minority status*

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd+ gen. (reference category)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st gen. white</td>
<td>-0.207</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>(1.804)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.221)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st gen. racial minority</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
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<td>(0.231)</td>
<td>(0.274)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd gen. white</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.164)</td>
<td>(1.803)</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd gen. racial minority</td>
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<td>-0.0001</td>
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<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
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<td>(0.205)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Control Variables**

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence less than 20 years</td>
<td>-0.193</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.371</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>-0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.091)</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.109)</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
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<td>-0.367</td>
<td>0.086</td>
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<td>0.082</td>
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<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.357)</td>
<td>(0.354)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single - never married</td>
<td>-0.244</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>-0.114</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
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<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
<td>(0.065)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
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**Discrimination**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.249</td>
<td>0.255</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.197)</td>
<td>(0.149)</td>
<td>(0.271)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination, 1st gen minority</td>
<td>-0.249</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.707</td>
<td>-0.698</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(interaction)</td>
<td>(0.359)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.438)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination, 2nd gen minority</td>
<td>-0.658</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.815</td>
<td>-0.822</td>
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<tr>
<td>(interaction)</td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
<td>(0.319)</td>
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</table>

**Democratization (measured at group level M3-5)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Democratization</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous, 0-46)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
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</table>

**Random Components**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept variance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.777</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.689</td>
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**Observations**

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<tr>
<td>Level 1 (individuals)</td>
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<td>6990</td>
<td>6990</td>
<td>6990</td>
<td>6990</td>
<td>6990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 2 (countries of origin)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*  
Source: Ethnic Diversity Survey 2002
racial minority respondents, and the one meant to isolate the effect of being resident in Canada 20 years or less, both show a negative relationship to turnout, consistent with previous research. In Model 2, after adding discrimination and democratization, both effects (2nd generation Minority and Less than 20 Years Residence) are reduced in size, and no longer are statistically significant. Although the intervening models are not reported on here in order to streamline the presentation, separate addition of either one of these two explanatory variables (discrimination or democratization), can statistically “explain” the negative effect of 2nd generation minority membership on voting. On the other hand, it is the inclusion of the democratization variable that renders the residence effect smaller and non-significant - the addition of the discrimination variables produces no change to the residence effect. These findings suggest that length of residence may be acting as a proxy for differences in political culture (source country democratization) among successive cohorts of immigrants (Hypothesis II), and that differences among immigrant groups in political culture, tied to period of entry (alone or in combination with the negative effect of perceived discrimination) can statistically explain the negative generation and race effects that previous research has identified (Hypothesis III).

In the multilevel models (3-6), a very similar story is told. In Model 3, with controls in place, there do not appear to be any significant generational or racial differences in turnout, but this is because the random intercept at the second level tracks, and in effect controls for, the average turnout levels of the 133 country of origin groups in this analysis. Differences in the intercept and in individual coefficients are also explained by the group-centering of continuous control variables at the first level, so that the effects of age, education, and length of residence are now being measured not only across individuals, but also within groups. The intercept variance term now tracks average source country group-level variation, and thus demonstrates, in
a slightly different and more direct way than the single-level analyses did, that race and
generation effects may be artefacts of the source country composition of the pseudo-generational
groupings in the cross-sectional sample (Hypothesis III). In other words, when we take into
account average turnout within source country groups, and the source country composition of the
generational groups, there are no generational or racial effects to explain. However, we have
done nothing to explain group-level variation. Entering discrimination into Model 4, we do see
some effect – a marginally significant positive effect for discrimination among Whites, in this
case 1st, 2nd, and 3+ generation Whites combined, and a strong negative effect for discrimination
among second generation minority respondents. This helps to explain variation in turnout
overall, as indicated by the change in the log likelihood statistic, but there is now actually more
variation to explain at the group level (intercept variance term). When we enter democratization
in Model 5, we see further improvement in 2LL, and now we have also explained some of the
group level variation, as indicated by the reduction in the intercept variance. Democratization
achieves statistical significance across the much smaller number of data points at the second
level, registering the same effect size as in Table 6 (Model 3), where it measures
democratization’s effect among recently arrived immigrants.

While the previous analyses have been useful for explaining variation in turnout among
immigrants relative to the 3+ generation, they are less well suited to measuring the effect of
democratization and of residence among the immigrant first and second generations. First,
Tables 6 and 7 measure the effect of democratization on voting not only in these groups, but also
among the very large ‘Canadian origin’ 3+ generation group. It is worthwhile checking its effect
among immigrants alone. Second, the inclusion of all the generations requires the use of the “20
years of residence or less” dummy, rather than the continuous “length of residence” variable,
which applies only to the first generation. The years of residence variable is much more precise; the dummy may be measuring other differences (for example, broad differences in source country political cultures among the most newly arrived immigrants) rather than those related to turnout increase year by year, as intended.

Table 8 focuses on measuring the effect exclusively among the immigrant first (Models 1-2) and second generation (Models 3-6), using split runs. In the 1<sup>st</sup> (including the 1.5) generation, democratization has a strong, highly significant effect, and the reduction in the intercept variance term between models 1 and 2 indicates that democratization explains nearly 40% of the variation in turnout at the group level. To most accurately demonstrate the size of the effect, fitted probabilities were calculated, holding all other variables at mean levels. The effect of coming from a country with a democratization score of 0 versus coming from one with a top score of 46 is approximately 24%. Repeating this exercise for the two strongest predictors of turnout in North American studies of voting - age, and education - we find that between 20 to 35 years of age, the probability of turnout increases by approximately 25%, while the difference between quitting school at 16 years of age (10 years of schooling) and completing several post-graduate degrees (24 years of schooling) changes the probability of voting by approximately 30%. This demonstrates that among young adults, democratization’s effect is comparable to that of the strongest predictors of turnout that we have. These effects are illustrated graphically in Figure 4.
## Table 8: Voting, 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} Generation, Age 20-35, multilevel models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Generation</th>
<th>Second Generation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22) **</td>
<td>(0.204) **</td>
<td>(0.16) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous)</td>
<td>(0.024) **</td>
<td>(0.024) **</td>
<td>(0.019) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous)</td>
<td>(0.026) **</td>
<td>(0.026) **</td>
<td>(0.022) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.381)</td>
<td>(0.386)</td>
<td>(0.252) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married or cohabited</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.176)</td>
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<td><strong>Minority Status &amp; Discrimination (2nd gen)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial Minority</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
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<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td>(0.282)</td>
<td>(0.276)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(dummy)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination Among Minorities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(interaction)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure to Canada</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Years of residence</td>
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<td>0.029</td>
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<tr>
<td>(continuous)</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group Level Variable (Origin)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of democratization</td>
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<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continuous 0-46)</td>
<td>(0.007) ***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007) *</td>
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<td><strong>Random Effects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept variance</td>
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<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 (individuals)</td>
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<td>1271</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 (Origin groups)</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2LL</td>
<td>-1.811004</td>
<td>-1.81303</td>
<td>-2.564753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<.05   ** = p<.01    *** = p<.001    n/a = not applicable

Source: Ethnic Diversity Survey 2002
Figure 4: The Effects of Years of Education, Age, and Source Country Democratization Scores on Voting, Fitted Probabilities, Holding other Variables at Mean Values
The lack of influence of length of residence is a striking finding, since residence’s effects are (according to previous research by White et al. (2008), and in my own single level logit regressions with an all-ages sample) concentrated in the first two decades of residence. Since the average length of residence in this sample is 17 years, we would expect exposure’s effects to be at their strongest here. Instead, the term is not only statistically not significant, it is half the size it was in the all-ages sample (Table 6). This cannot be blamed on a lack of variation in length of residence among these young adults. Around half of the first generation immigrants in this sample came to Canada as children under the age of 18 (the so-called 1.5 generation), so variation in duration of residence is plentiful. The many 1.5 generation immigrants in the sample make the enormous influence of origin and the lack of effect of residence even more remarkable, given that many other kinds of integration outcomes of the 1.5 generation – educational attainments, for example – tend to conform more closely to those of the second (native-born) immigrant generation. Here we have strong evidence that in the all-ages sample, length of residence may be acting as a proxy for differences across period-of-arrival cohorts in levels of democratic familiarity, rather than measuring the effect of growing familiarity with host country contexts among individual immigrants, year by year, as duration of residence grows longer.

Models 3-6 in Table 8 test whether political origins continue to exert an effect on turnout among the offspring of immigrants. Model 2 shows that age, education, and poverty are all associated with turnout in this group. Democratization in parents’ origin country exerts a moderate and significant effect, weaker than is found among the foreign-born, but far from negligible (Hypothesis V). The reduction in variance at the intercept with the addition of democratization shows that this factor once again accounts for a sizable portion of the variation in turnout between groups (again, around 40%).
Finally, the effect of discrimination in these split runs presents some surprises. In Model 4, the discrimination variables do not attain significance, either for the white or for the minority second generation immigrants. Moreover, while discrimination’s effect among White 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation immigrants is very small, it is negative, rather than positive, as it was in the all-ages single-level analyses focusing on discrimination. These differences may be a result of the younger sample, or of the varying intercept, controlling for average turnout across origin groups. When discrimination is entered alone, it does attain significance, though the effect is considerably weaker (-0.4) than it was in previous analyses (in Table 7), where the effect of discrimination in the second generation minority group is measured relative to its (positive) effect in the third-plus generation (-0.6).

Conclusions and Implications

Cross-sectional analyses appear to show a dramatic increase in the rate of immigrant turnout over time, leading to predictions that recently-arrived, lower voting immigrants will all turn reliably to voting over time. This interpretation of the evidence is flawed by a lack of consideration of the ways that older and newer waves of immigrants differ from each other. One way that the post-1960s immigrants are distinguishable from previous waves is in appearance, with most newer immigrants belonging to racial or “visible” minorities. This has prompted concern that discriminatory treatment may be inhibiting political participation among these minorities. This chapter presents evidence that perceptions of discrimination are strongly and negatively associated with voting among some minority groups, but the effect is inconsistent across different analyses and sub-samples, and there appears to be no effect among individuals in the (Black) minority group that
experiences the most discrimination. The argument that discrimination is a principal explanation for the gap between white and minority second generation voters is not a compelling one.

A great deal of work remains to be done before we can offer a generalized explanation for political engagement or alienation resulting from perceived discrimination. Discrimination may have an effect at the group level, in addition to, or rather than, at the individual level (as psychological theories of ‘Group Threat’ or ‘Identity Theory’ would predict). In other words, the perception that members of one’s group are treated poorly, even if one does not personally experience poor treatment, may be influential. The EDS does not ask questions that allow me to test this possibility. However, even if such a group-level effect were present, the historical record suggests that the effect of perceived discrimination will remain conditional on particularities of historical and contemporary context.

It may also matter where discrimination is experienced. Official discrimination – that is, discriminatory treatment suffered at the hands of the state or state officials – might be more likely to result in political engagement. Nearly all of the discrimination reported by Canadian respondents in the EDS was in civil society arenas. Whether looking at all minorities together, or at individual groups, poor treatment was experienced in the overwhelming majority of cases on the street, in shops and restaurants, or in the workplace. Almost none was reported (in this pre 9-11 survey) in schools, government offices (including immigration and customs offices), or at the hands of health workers or police officers.

While immigrant cohorts vary by race, they also vary by source country and political past, and such origins are strongly predictive of immigrants’ electoral participation. Among young adult immigrants, more or less democratic political cultures in source countries predict voting post-migration among individuals, and explain a substantial amount of the variance in
average voting rates between national origin groups. It is worth emphasizing the strength of the effect – among immigrant voters, political experience joins a very small handful of strong and reliable predictors of turnout. Among the young adult offspring of immigrants, political culture tied to level of democratization in parents’ source country continues to significantly predict voting, though more weakly than among the foreign-born.

Although length of residence, race, and political culture have a broad tendency to coincide, the correspondence is far from perfect. Older, White, earlier-arriving immigrants have, on average, a greater cultural familiarity with democratic forms of government, while minority immigrants who have arrived in the last several decades are more likely to come from countries where democratic experience is limited. But there are many exceptions. Some large racial minority origin groups vote at relatively high rates, and some large European origin groups – for example, many recent arrivals from the former Soviet Socialist Republics - vote at low rates. Political culture tied to origin predicts voting much more accurately than racial minority status or length of residence does, among both first and second generation immigrants.

Estimating the effect of duration of residence presents challenges given that diverse-origin immigrants are very few among long-resident immigrants. However where origin is controlled at the intercept and diversity of origins is present across the variable’s range, (accomplished here by limiting the sample to young adults), the predictive power of length of residence is greatly curtailed. Indeed it disappears, just where we would expect to see it at its strongest, during the first decades of residence\textsuperscript{10}. In explaining this finding, the advantage of multi-level models in permitting group-centering of variables should also be recalled. The years

\textsuperscript{10} Analyses not included here but available upon request showed that in single level logit regressions, the effect of residence was strongest in the first twenty years of residence, a finding also reported by White and his colleagues (2006) and Jedwab (2006).
of residence variable is measuring the effect among individuals within origin groups, as well as across them.

Where origin remains unspecified and/or samples estimate residence’s effect over very long periods, it appears that exposure operates as a proxy for origin – tracking the decreasing levels of familiarity with democracy among successive immigrant cohorts arriving in North America in the post-war era.

Among the young adult first generation as among the second, the temporal spur to participation appears to be age, in agreement with Niemi et al. (1984, 1987) and Black, Niemi and Powell (1987). Whether this is a genuine life-cycle effect, a reflection of changing electoral contexts, or both, cannot be determined with my data. The latter possibilities certainly exist, since average levels of turnout in Canadian federal elections fell 14% from 1984 to 2000, from 75% to 61%. It is possible that the effect of age is tracking the older immigrants’ political socialization during earlier, more competitive, elections, in line with Franklin’s (2004) theories. It is interesting to note that age does not have an effect on voting among the minority second generation (see Table 5).

The findings presented here disagree with the studies of White and his colleagues (2006, 2008) who find no effect of age and a large effect of duration of residence on immigrant turnout. They also conflict with the findings of Bueker (2006) and Ramakrishnan (2005), who find an effect of both age and length of residence. Controlling for origin, measuring the effect of residence within, as well as across groups, and limiting the sample to young adults in the current study likely explains these differences, but further research is called for to sort these disagreements out fully, ideally with longitudinal data.
Finally, the relationship of race and generation to turnout can be explained by compositional shifts in origin country among period-of-arrival cohorts when young, relatively recently-arrived immigrants are compared against young second and third plus generation Canadians. Paying attention to shifts in the political origins of immigrants over time provides the means to explain the puzzle of a second generation racial gap in voting where none exists in the first generation. A convergence to low levels of democratic experience across racial groups in recently arrived immigrant cohorts, as illustrated in Figure 2, explains the much smaller racial gap in turnout seen among the young (18-35 year old) Canadian foreign-born. While there is some evidence that perceptions of discriminatory treatment in this group also contribute to lower levels of turnout in the second generation, origin provides a more consistently observable alternative explanation for generational and racial variation in voting overall. Indeed, the negative effect of minority membership in the second generation does not even show up when origin is controlled for – before discrimination or democratization are entered into the models (Tables 7 and 8).

Democratization does not explain everything where the second generation is concerned; it has a weaker effect than in the first generation\(^\text{11}\), and there remain unspecified factors as well as specified ones, like poverty, contributing to variation across groups. Despite this, the evidence presented here strongly suggests that the correlation of race with low turnout among second generation immigrants at the individual level is explained statistically through differences in the varying political histories and cultures of differently composed immigrant cohorts.

\(^{11}\) This may be in part because the 1988 measure of democratization provides a less accurate estimate of the political experience of some of the parents of the second generation, for example among Europeans socialized under authoritarian regimes in the inter-war period.
The bottom line is that low turnout among recent immigrants in Canada is best understood not as a failure of racial integration, but as a failure to politically integrate immigrants from countries with low levels of democratic experience.

The shape, form and extent of immigrants’ political commitments and practices have only recently begun to receive systematic empirical scrutiny, and the political participation and citizenship practices of immigrants remain under-theorized (Bloemraad et al., 2008). This article contributes to an emerging literature in the areas of immigration, citizenship, voting, and race and ethnicity by looking at the contribution of cultural differences to immigrants’ political participation. There has long been a general reluctance to see origin as influential to integration outcomes (see Hein, 2006 for a general discussion; where voting is concerned, see Bird et al 2009, and Arvizu and Garcia, 1996).

The insistence that contexts of reception trump the influence of cultural difference is one factor that has contributed to the widespread use of racial, or other highly aggregated categories in the analysis of data, though data limitations also play a role. Our tendency to lump immigrants into generic racial or ethnic groups does not produce a cultural similarity within these groups, and ignores the important influence that group membership has on outcomes. This study highlights the potential value of investigating origin’s influence on other kinds of questions concerning immigrant preference and behaviour. For example, recent research suggests that in the United States, immigrants’ preferences with regard to redistribution are strongly predicted by redistributive policies in source countries, and these preferences have been found to persist strongly into the second generation (Luttmer and Singhal 2010). Similarly, attitudes towards taxation (“tax morale”) among second generation American immigrants are also predicted by parents’ countries of origin (Halla 2010).
Long-term changes to turnout in established democracies are largely the result of generational replacement (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Lyons and Alexander, 2000; Blais et al., 2004; Franklin, 2004). A variety of patterns have been noted. The enfranchisement of women led to a sudden large drop in turnout that took about 50 years to disappear – until those older women socialized not to vote left the electorate. In contrast, many scholars now believe that the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 resulted in an extended period of decreasing turnout in Western democracies - with the effects not yet fully felt (Franklin, 2004). A steady supply of newly enfranchised voters who vote less than the older stock of voters can produce large cumulative effects on turnout as decades go by, even if initial declines appear relatively small.

Because of this, the findings of this paper have important implications for our understanding of turnout trends. Continued growth in the proportion of the citizenry who received their political socialization in nondemocratic contexts could produce a substantial long-term drop in turnout in countries of immigration. However the heavy influence of origin shown here in one election and one country tells us not only about the immigrants concerned, but also – at least potentially - about the electoral institutions and political contexts in one time and place. The point of this article is to establish the importance of immigrants’ culture and history in explaining their political behaviour; this is not meant to deny the importance of contexts. Within other contexts the effect of origin may be weaker or stronger. Further and comparative research across both elections and countries, which can identify the separate and combined effects of origin and context, is clearly called for.

Demographic change caused by immigration may exert a long-term downward pull on turnout in countries that receive many immigrants from nondemocratic countries, and we would be wise to pay attention to this possibility. However, we also need to keep in mind that
favourable electoral contexts can boost turnout – especially among new voters, including recent immigrants (Bueker, 2008). A high intake of immigrants therefore presents an opportunity for democratic renewal, as well as a challenge to democratic health. However, we will not realize these opportunities without an understanding that the exclusionary barriers immigrants face include the disadvantages conferred by a lack of familiarity with democratic practices. If we are to avoid the political marginalization of a sizable portion of the citizenry, steps must be taken to overcome these barriers both indirectly, by reforming electoral institutions in ways that make voting a more attractive and effective exercise of political power, and directly, by finding means through which to ensure that all immigrants are made familiar with democratic practice.
Chapter 3 - How Voters are Made: Observational learning and the intergeneration transmission of practice

Foreword

The previous chapter shows that immigrants’ electoral turnout is strongly associated with level of democratization in countries of origin, even among those who immigrated as children, and even among the young adult children of immigrants born and raised here. The intergenerational persistence of origin’s effect leads to an obvious question: How is it that we see political origin’s influence many miles and a generation away from its source? An institutional argument based on the notion that rules within source countries are responsible for moulding attitudes and behaviour is clearly inadequate on its own, since source country institutional arrangements are firmly beyond the direct experience of many of those affected. Are differences in behaviour attributable to different ideological commitments and group-specific ‘landscapes of meaning’ regarding political participation and politics? Should we look, instead, to group-specific forms of civic organization\(^{12}\)? Or is it simply a matter of differing sets of practical skills or knowledge? And how is transmission and reproduction of political belief and behaviour accomplished? Understanding the processes of transmission across the generations requires that we identify the substance of political cultural difference at the group level, and the socialization processes that sustain these difference some distance outside of the contexts where they arise.

\(^{12}\) I was unable to analyze the influence of associational engagement in the statistical study (Chapter 2). While the dataset I used (the Ethnic Diversity Survey) contains quite a bit of information about this topic, there was an extremely low rate of membership among immigrants. And due to a peculiarity of the questionnaire design, only those who reported their ethnic identification as very high were asked whether they were members of ethnic associations. Given the importance of ethnic associations in much of the empirical research concerning immigrants, this is a serious flaw. However the interviews analysed in this chapter allowed me to gather data on the organizational and associational lives of my respondents, and to find out how these engagements contributed to political development and participation.
To address these questions, I analyze data collected in 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with first and second-generation immigrant voters and non-voters. The results of 30 interviews cannot prove anything, in the sense that we cannot know whether the findings are generalizable to larger populations or not. Nonetheless, interviews allow us to ask questions that explore respondents’ experience in ways that surveys do not, to explore new ideas, and crucially, to pay close attention to sequence within individual lives. The narrative consistencies I found allow me to construct an evidence-based microfoundational account of the transmission processes that underlie the statistical associations presented in the previous chapter. The fact that the consistencies across accounts were dramatic increases confidence in the findings, though, given sample numbers, the resulting model of learning remains hypothetical.

Abstract

Strong consistencies in political behaviour within families have been explained in political socialization research by the effects of parental discussion and example on children. At the same time, we lack good models of how, exactly, voters are made. This study makes use of in-depth interviews with first and second generation immigrants to examine beliefs surrounding democratic politics, and to weigh the role of discursive and observational learning in the transmission of political practice. Findings suggest that children’s and young people’s observation and especially their memory of parental voting (or non-voting) is a key predictor of their own actions, consistent with social learning theory. This is a pivotal event in what appears to be a strongly path-dependent process. Findings suggest that family discussion and the level of political interest of parents are complementary, but possibly less decisive factors. Experience of political action in non-family settings can also inspire voting. Surveys designed to predict or explain political participation should ask respondents about their childhood memories of parental political behaviour, and about concrete experiences of political action – their own, and those of others within intimate networks.
Introduction

Evidence continues to build that childhood political learning is remarkably ‘sticky’, and that intergenerational consistency in political beliefs and behaviours – for example, whether one votes or not, and how - is strong (Jennings, Stoker & Bowers 2009). Despite this, the processes and mechanisms through which the transmission of political belief and practice occur within the family remain largely unknown, a void that experts in the field have described as creating an important challenge for turnout scholars (Blais 2007). Continuities in political behaviour and preference within families have generated explanations based on genetic inheritance within prominent social scientific journals (Fowler, Baker & Dawes 2008, Fowler and Dawes 2008, Alford, Funk & Hibbing 2005), but competing non-biological models of family influence remain under-developed, despite calls for greater study of childhood political socialization (e.g. Sapiro 2004) In fledgling democracies, and in established democracies experiencing declines in turnout and/or undergoing demographic shifts through immigration, the question is pressing: How exactly are democratic practices and values acquired?

This study focuses on the basic political activity of voting. Leaving aside arguments based on genetic inheritance, it is thought that voting is learned through some combination of discursive learning (involving talk, text and instruction) and observational or social learning (learning by observing the behaviour of others). Survey research has confirmed that discussion of politics at home and parental political participation are both correlated with transmission. Common-sense assumptions hold sway in the interpretation of these findings – parental actions help draw children’s attention, but it is primarily the uptake of beliefs, values and ideas that form

\[\text{For exceptions, see Verba et al (2005) for a networks approach, and Nickerson (2008) for an experimental study of ‘contagion’ of behaviour within families.}\]
the basis and motivation for action. According to this model, we vote because we believe in democracy, are aware of our political choices, and hold the opinion that registering our preferences through voting makes some kind of difference. Such assumptions inform the focus on attitude, opinion and values among most researchers studying political behaviour.

In contrast to this straightforward account of action formation, rational choice theorists, beginning with Downs (1957) have long tied themselves in knots trying to understand why people vote at all. In addition, there is strong evidence that for most people, electoral participation is based on something of a “standing decision” established in early adulthood, with voting and non-voting becoming habitual thereafter (Plutzer 2002; Gerber, Green and Shachar 2003; Green and Shachar 2000; Miller and Shanks 1996; Campbell et al 1960; Brody and Sniderman 1977; Beys 2006; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1985, Lewis-Beck 2007; Kanazawa 2000; Fowler 2006) 14. This means that after the first several opportunities for electoral participation, individuals persist in voting or non-voting regardless of the circumstances surrounding particular elections. As a result, change to turnout levels, whether attributed to changing electoral contexts or changing electorates, occurs principally among new voters (Franklin 2004, Blais et al. 2004, Lyons and Alexander 2000, Miller and Shanks 1996, Johnston et al 2007).

Consistent with evidence that voting has a habitual component, the assumption that consciously held beliefs and values drive action is increasingly questioned by social theorists who argue that habit and emotion, rooted in unconscious cognitive processes, are powerful, alternate foundations for much of our behaviour (Camic 1986, Vaisey 2009, Lizardo & Strand 2010, Gross 2009). Consciously considered discursive ‘reasons’ and values often seem to serve

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14 The substantial literature supporting the idea of voting as habit has also inspired formal theoretical models of turnout that move away from a rational model of choice towards a behavioural model of choice, based on principles of “reinforcement” or “adaptive” learning (see Sieg and Schulz 1995; Kanazawa 1998, 2000; Bendor et al 2003; Fowler 2006).
as after-the-fact rationalizations, rather than motivators (Swidler 1986, 2001). Nonetheless, if the
decision to vote or abstain, once established, is strongly governed by habit (and thus by
definition, *usually* unaffected by reflective evaluation), we are still in the dark about how,
exactly, the habit is learned. Perhaps, as most political socialization research assumes, reflective
deliberation – perhaps taking into account collective, as well as individual interest - is decisive
when we first have the chance to vote. Practice theorists have been largely silent about the key
question of how transmission and reproduction of practice occurs (Turner 1994). Recently,
however, theories of practical learning have been advanced that focus not on the internalization
of meanings, but on the acquisition of skills and habit through observation and imitation (Lizardo

This paper asks some very basic questions about how voters are made. Since the habits of
voting and nonvoting are generally acquired within the window of opportunity represented by an
individual’s first few opportunities to vote (Franklin 2004, Miller and Shanks 1996), the question
of what drew (or failed to draw) my respondents to the polls in their first few eligible elections is
explored in detail. Do voters and non-voters hold distinctive views of politics, democracy and
civic engagement? What is the role of knowledge, reflection, and persuasion against that of
observation in the acquisition of practice? Finally, which circumstances disrupt or promote the
learning of this political skill? The construction of models of learning and political development
at the individual level requires a close focus on temporal sequence and context. Accordingly, my
data consists of 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with first- and second-generation
immigrant citizens from a wide range of cultural, national, and political backgrounds, who
provided detailed narratives of their political beliefs and development. This focus on immigrants
makes use of what has otherwise been called an important and largely “missed opportunity” to
study socialization processes following the large influx of immigrants into established democracies in recent decades (Jennings 2007).

I find that voters and non-voters in the immigrant first generation do sometimes hold very different evaluations of democracy and of political participation, which correspond with whether they vote or not. However, in the second (native-born) generation, the differences in views between voters and non-voters are trivial. Nonetheless, parental voting is an extremely strong predictor of voting. In other words, there is evidence that continuities across the generations in action commitments are not necessarily matched by continuities in discourse and political orientation.

Consistent with this finding, the narratives support a model of political learning that finds that voting is a practice in which observational or “social learning” (Bandura 1969, 1977, 1986) plays a key role. It seems that children’s and young people’s observation and especially their memory of parental voting strongly predicts their own actions. The transmission of knowledge regarding voting and the level of political interest of parents are complementary, but possibly less important factors. A strong path-dependence is evident. People whose parents vote and who voted early in their voting careers generally see voting as worthwhile and pay more attention to politics than non-voters, but these beliefs usually appear to follow from political participation, rather than motivating it. Action structures future action, not only individually, but also within intimate networks. Observation of concrete activity is also crucial to explaining the initiation of voting among the small group of voters who come from non-voting families. In each case, it is experiences of political action (for these people, in non-familial realms), that lead to electoral participation.
Discursive persuasion and knowledge are sometimes more directly causally influential, specifically when the action commitments of role models within intimate networks are ambiguous (parents are sometimes voters, or one parent votes and the other does not). However, the dominant or ‘taken for granted’ model of political socialization – in which the inculcation of belief and conviction precedes and motivates action – may put the cart before the horse. From the evidence here, it appears that social learning theory provides a useful and comprehensive mid-range theoretical framework for empirical study of the mechanisms and processes of transmission of practical knowledge.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I review the existing evidence concerning continuities of political behaviour and opinion within families. A case is made for the need to study attitude- and skills-formation separately. A review of existing models of observational learning yields a number of questions for investigation. The data and methods section explains the rationale for the study’s sample and research design, and the focus on sequence. The findings section begins with a summary of results regarding interviewee’s opinions about democracy and civic responsibility. It then provides an account of the learning processes of the modal respondent, and highlights the stages through which voters are typically made. Exceptional cases are also examined closely. A final discussion draws out the implications of these findings for our understanding of voting and of immigrant political integration.

Theory

The early political socialization research

The best-known early work in political socialization concerns the inter-generational transmission of attitudes and commitments within the family (Greenstein 1965, Hess & Torney
1967, Dawson & Prewitt 1969, Easton & Hess 1969). These studies from the 1960s, outlining the processes through which obedient and loyal citizens are made, have not aged well. At its worst, the literature reads as a Freudian manual of citizenship training; by the late 1980s it is bluntly described as an account of indoctrination rather than of political development (Sears 1989).

This early work found its principal theoretical home in structural-functionalism, and its chief concern was with systems maintenance. The great upheavals and dis-continuities of the late 1960s and 1970s and the rise of critical, feminist, and Marxist approaches provoked a vigorous backlash. A consensus formed that the evidence was flawed, and that the literature as a whole was fatally biased by an ideological preference for stability and reproduction (Conover 1991).

From the early 1980s onward, the field of political socialization did not disappear, but it languished (Conover 1991, Sapiro 2004). Attention switched to the more exciting questions of conflict, transformation and change. While the early political socialization texts acknowledged the role of schools and associations (“secondary groups”) as agents of socialization, they were considered weak forces beside the influence of “primary groups” like the family. However, in response to the sustained critique of the 1970s, most researchers abandoned the focus on childhood and family, and the ‘stickiness’ of political norms and practices absorbed during childhood was a topic that sank largely from view. Work on civic education in schools grew, but the bulk of effort was channelled by an enormous multi-disciplinary surge of interest in civic organizations and associations as sites of attitude formation and arenas for mobilization.

**Revisiting the role of family**

There is now strong evidence that the 1970s backlash against familial influence in the political socialization literature was badly overdrawn. In a thorough review of an enormous
variety of cohort, longitudinal and experimental studies conducted up until the late 1980s, Sears (1989, see also Zaller 1992) argues that the strong claims of “persistence” (of early socialization within the family) were standing up. To the surprise of researchers, neither TV nor military service nor change in social location could be shown to greatly alter political attitudes. Where substantial mutability was detected, it was concentrated in the late adolescent and early adult years; after childhood, this is the stage of life when people are most susceptible to attitudinal formation. Sears concludes that “…some combination of the ‘persistence’ and ‘impressionable-years’ notions best describe the life course of that subset of political and social attitudes that are most important to ordinary people and most consequential for society (1989, p. 89).”

Research published since that time has continued to support the hypothesis not only of life-course, but also of inter-generational persistence. Criticism of political socialization research concerning family’s influence invariably had proclaimed social class to be a more likely explanatory variable than parental opinion. However parental political attributes turned out to be better, and in some cases far better, predictors of their offspring’s basic political orientations than parents’ socio-economic status. This result is obtained in national and cross-national studies (Dalton 1982, Glass, Bengston, and Dunham 1986, Jennings 1984), as well as in smaller case studies (Coffe and Voorpostel 2010). There is nothing close to a one-to-one correspondence between children and their parents in attitudes and behaviour, but parental example remains perhaps the best single predictor we have of how people think and act politically.

Jennings and Niemi’s research, coming out of the University of Michigan’s political socialization project, had initially been part of the strong qualification of claims of parental influence in the late 1970s. With the benefit of methodological advance, a lifetime of study, and a fourth wave of data (adding a third generation for comparison), Jennings has recently re-
emphasized the importance of family transmission in a comprehensive review of the large body of research now connected with the project. Certainly, there is a substantial role for other influences. Overall, however, the congruence in attitudes and partisan attachment remains striking across the three generations surveyed between 1965 and 1997 (Jennings, Stoker & Bowers 2009).

**Belief and Behaviour, or Symbolic Worlds versus Practical Capacities**

In most of the political socialization research, attitudes, opinion and partisan attachment are the dependent variables. Political participation has been studied much less. Where it has been studied, it shows the same kinds of generational continuities. In a three generation sample of Vietnam-era protesters and non-protesters, the impact of both lineage (the influence of parents) and of generational cohort (the influence of history) are clear in cross-generational comparisons (Jennings 2002). Contrary to the popular discourse of ‘rebellious youth’, and in line with earlier (much criticized) studies, the activists hailed more often than not from liberal-leaning, politically active homes. Moreover, the offspring of the respondents originally surveyed in the 1960s, born into less tumultuous times, show an even stronger tendency to align with their parents in terms of both attitudes and behaviour than the original respondents did.

The fact that ideas (attitudes, attachments, values) and political participation – the enactment of concrete skills - are both transmitted within families does not explain the causal relationship between them. Researchers generally bundle them all together, with measures of participation (where they are available) added to attitudinal items as further evidence of political interest and engagement. In the following section I argue that it makes sense to try to untangle ideas from actions, and to examine the relationship between them.
In this study, I employ three frames through which to look at the interview findings, with the aim of examining the separate and joint influence of ideas and actions. The first frame is provided by the study of political culture, the second comes out of the study of political socialization, and the third makes use of theory concerning associational life. Each of these perspectives provides hypotheses regarding the basis for cultural difference across groups and the mechanisms that reproduce these differences, which are now outlined in turn.

**Differing Symbolic Worlds**

The assumption among most scholars of political culture is that the foundation for differences in behaviour is based in the influence of distinctive symbolic worlds or ‘landscapes of meaning.’ Some study these differences through attitudinal surveys (e.g. Verba and Almond 1963, and all of the work that has come out of the World Values Survey). Others make use of discourse or narrative analysis, through which group-level patterning in themes and motifs, or logics of argumentation, evaluation and justification can be traced. For example, Robert Bellah (1985) and Robert Wuthnow (2008) have collected extensive evidence of rampant individualism and low-levels of collectivism in the discourse and narratives of Americans. The emphasis on attitudes and discourse in this research suggests that the differences in understanding and values underlying behaviour are accessible to us by asking people to describe their views, or simply by listening closely to the way that they talk about a subject like politics.

The goal in discourse analysis is to identify which cultural tools (eg metaphoric references, buzz-words, figures of speech or logics of argumentation) emerge with greater salience among different groups, under the assumption that discursive practices help structure social relations. The method may, for example in Michelle Lamont’s hands (Lamont 2000, Lamont and Thevenot 2000, Lamont 2002) involve study of the way people in different groups
justify and evaluate their own and others’ actions, positions and beliefs. Socially constructed
moral and symbolic boundaries (between good citizens and bad, for example, or between just
and unjust forms of governance) are brought to light by way of comparative contrast.

**Mechanisms - Cultural Immersion**

A ‘symbolic worlds’ approach holds that the transmission of attitude and understanding is
accomplished through an inculcation of distinctive views and semantic styles across the
generations, but there is little consensus about exactly how this occurs. Many cultural analysts
believe symbolic worldviews are imposed on individual consciousness through all-enveloping
discursive or narrative contexts. Culture imbues and is communicated through everything from
academic texts to television shows to newspaper articles and advertisements to comic books. The
agents of socialization are identified as dominant groups such as ruling classes and elites of
different kinds, and transmission is diffuse and downward (vertical). This contrasts with the
political socialization research, which emphasizes the importance of early influences –
particularly in the family, and horizontal (temporal) transmission, especially intergenerationally.

**Hypothesis I**

The first set of expectations are informed by a ‘Symbolic Worlds’ perspective.

We expect to see distinctive conceptions of democracy, politics and of self- and collective-
interest among voters and non-voters. Within groups where continuities in behaviour exist,
we expect to also see continuities in belief and discourse.
A Focus on Voting as Practice – Political Socialization

Recent developments in the study of voluntary associations and civic participation provide evidence that the ways and means through which practical capacities develop is a subject that warrants separate study. The emphasis in much of the associational research is on the building of social solidarity and trust, but scholars who are particularly interested in concrete practices and skills have made important contributions. Their work has helped to explain why some kinds of organizations are more effective in encouraging democratic political engagement. In explaining civic decline in the United States, Theda Skocpol (2003) has pointed out that broad-based, constitution-bound, membership organizations that fostered cross-class interaction have been in dramatic decline in North America since the 1960s. In these older organizations, members learned how to hold meetings, regulate discussion, keep records, and elect numerous officers not only at the state and national level, but also within local affiliates, which ensured that everyone regularly had a chance not only to vote, but also to serve in office. These skills are not enormously complex, nonetheless we do not readily gain familiarity with them in other settings. Jennings (2002) also highlights the importance of skills in reviewing the mixed results shown by youth volunteer work and service learning with regard to encouraging political participation. For nurturing political skills, concrete involvement in political action seems to be crucial. Values and practical capacities, it seems, are not necessarily acquired together or in the same way. They should not be equally weighted in terms of their practical consequences, and the relationship between them may be different from the one that we generally assume.

There is a tendency to view the practical aspect of actions like voting as trivial, where the action is composed of basic skills most adults already have (reading, walking, lining up, etc.). However the sequences and particularities are still learned; learning is effortful, and requires,
initially, that we put ourselves in the uncomfortable position of ‘not knowing what we’re doing.’ The observation that we are more likely to engage in activities we have already gained familiarity with provides one explanation for experimental findings that voting once – in response to a request to vote – substantially increases the probability of voting in subsequent elections, *independently of any measurable change in attitude or opinion*. Or perhaps active involvement produces a shift in identity, so that one is more likely to see oneself as ‘a voter’. Either way, it is engagement in the practice which produces the change (Gerber, Green & Shachar 2003).

Beyond helping to determine our future activity, and altering our sense of self, our acquired capacities sometimes drive our beliefs. In her well-known essay *Culture in Action*, Ann Swidler (1986) argued that values, beliefs, narratives and ideologies are far less important in explaining social action than are culturally-shaped skills, habits, and styles. Practical capacities may develop in tandem with a set of beliefs, but the skills are often far sturdier than the beliefs associated with them. A reliance on hard work and self-discipline among Protestants, for example, were originally the means to an end of spiritual salvation. Over time the practices endured, but were tied to new justifications and values. Practical habits are ‘sticky.’ So long as our existing behavioural habits prove effective in new circumstances (or do not severely handicap us), there will be a tendency to retain them. Our thinking and interpretation of our actions are more fluid and mutable than are our practical capacities themselves.

What this means is that the shifting meanings attached to our habitual ways of interacting with each other and the world are not necessarily a reliable guide to our actions. People animate the same values differently. They may hold divergent opinions while behaving similarly. They may hold beliefs that are not put into action at all.
The fact that beliefs and actions often diverge places those with an interest in concrete actions at a disadvantage, as the most clearly articulated models of transmission in the political socialization literature center on the sources of intergenerational agreement in opinions, attitudes and values, and practices are not explicitly considered (eg Dalton 1982). If the development of positive attitudes towards democratic norms and behaviours does not necessarily lead to voting, then how is a practice like voting learned? Is corporeal or somatic enculturation (involving bodily practice) distinct from symbolic enculturation? What are the processes involved?

The one-way model of family transmission from elder to younger members was amended during the 1980’s to acknowledge the existence of reciprocal influence, especially as children and parents age (Glass, Bengston, and Dunham 1986). It is this addendum to the main body of political socialization theory that has proven to be of most interest to recent scholars, who have enthusiastically (re)discovered reciprocal influence since 2000. While these studies do focus on socialization processes within the family, they do not engage with the main findings of the political socialization literature, of substantial rates of transmission of belief and practice from parents to children. There has been some scattered, recent interest (eg Coffé and Voorpostel 2010), but once again, the correlation between parents and children is established without giving attention to the socialization processes through which influence is exercised. However, social learning is one theory of learning that focuses explicitly on behaviour.

**Mechanisms: Observational or social learning**

In industrial and post-industrial societies, learning is generally associated with instruction and the acquisition of discursive knowledge and understanding. In contrast, the

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oldest and more ubiquitous form of learning is through observation (Rogoff et al 2003). Where instruction always has explicit goals, the lessons learned through observation are less structured and often less intentional. A host of unintentionally acquired practices and attitudes are rooted in observation and emulation within families, from trivial things like how dishes are washed, to highly important things, like how people of different kinds are treated, to how days are structured. These practices may or may not be verbally explained, justified, and elaborated. Discussion often enriches or reinforces the transaction in various ways, but it is peripheral to the main story. Observational learning – also sometimes called vicarious learning or practical learning (Archer 2000) - explains and is concerned principally with behaviour.

The best-known and most comprehensive model of this kind of transmission is the psychologist Albert Bandura’s (1969, 1977, 1986) theory of social learning, which highlights emulation of the behaviour and attitudes of socially competent models. Positioning his theory as an alternative to stricter behaviourist models, Bandura writes:

…..it would be difficult to imagine a socialization process in which the language, mores, vocational and avocational patterns, the familial customs of a culture, and its educational, social and political practices were shaped in each new member by selective reinforcement without the response guidance of models who exhibit the accumulated cultural repertoires in their own behaviour (Bandura 1969, p. 213).

We could add that it is equally difficult to imagine that such patterns, customs and practices are shaped solely or principally by discursive instruction and persuasion.

In social learning theory, three basic conditions must be met for behaviour to be reproduced. First, the practice must gain the observer’s attention. We are more likely to attend to events that seem novel or interesting in some way, enacted by models we identify with or find attractive. Second, the action must be remembered – coded into images or procedural descriptions or ‘maps’ to be recalled later on, when they will serve as a guide for action. The
emphasis on cognitive process most strongly differentiates Bandura’s theory from behaviourism, which sees learning as solely a result of reinforced practice. Neurocognitive research into mirror neurons has recently provided a picture of the biological mechanisms through which the symbolic coding – in effect, the physical appropriation - of the observed actions of others may be accomplished (Lizardo 2007, 2009).

Finally, motivation must exist for the behaviour to be re-produced. Learning does not always result in performance. We are motivated by expectations of reward, including concrete incentives, our observation that others find the activity rewarding, and the fulfillment of internal criteria, such as goal-setting. Another factor that can influence these processes is the observer’s sense of self-efficacy – the perceived ability to exercise influence over events. A low sense of self-efficacy disrupts learning processes. In its simplest form, then, the model looks like this:

EXPOSURE $\Rightarrow$ Attention + Retention + Motivation $\Rightarrow$ REPRODUCTION

Political socialization scholars frequently use social learning theory to interpret their findings. For example, Jennings finds that transmission rates are much higher when issues are discussed more frequently in the home, when parents’ attitudes are stable across time, and when parents participate actively in politics (Jennings, Stoker & Bower 2009). There is also greater transmission when parents agree politically (Sebert, Jennings and Niemi 1974). These factors are all described as making parental opinion more prominent and/or ‘readable’ to children, increasing the salience of modeling and the probability that attention will be paid.

Lower turnout among those whose parents divorced during their childhoods is explained in similar fashion. Post-divorce reductions in parental current events discussion and voting rates are named as the most important factors, along with the stress and dislocation of geographic mobility (Sandell & Plutzer 2005). Similarly, high levels of political discussion at home during
formative periods are held to provide the explanation for the significantly higher levels of political activity of African-Americans who were teenagers during the civil rights era, compared to those who grew up in other historical periods (Verba et al. 2005).

This tallying of factors correlating with ‘successful’ transmission gives the impression that we should weight parental discussion and action more or less equally. Indeed, parental attitudes and discussion generally take a front seat in explaining transmission, and the overall focus on ideation is reinforced by the fact that the outcomes of interest in the majority of these studies are also opinions, attitudes, or partisan attachment. The overall effect is to push social learning theory’s focus on action into the background, and to bring it into service looking very much like a theory of discursive instruction and persuasion. I do not mean to imply that scholars misrepresent or misunderstand the theory. For example, Jennings is careful to say that both discussion and participation should be considered cues that direct a child’s attention to the attitudes, ideas, or practices in question.

However, the interests of the researchers in knowledge, attitudes, and values, together with the limitations of survey data, make it is easy to forget that social learning is principally concerned with parental action and reaction – with behaviour. Recalling the importance of action helps explain why emotion-laden opinions or orientations – concerning religion, race, and partisanship, for example – are more salient and therefore more reliably transmitted (Jennings, Stoker & Bower 2009). Strong emotions literally move us. They trigger action and reaction, and vigorous defense of our beliefs, and (to paraphrase one of many clichés that express these ideas efficiently) such actions speak volumes to those who observe them. All of this suggests the possibility that it is what is seen to be done, rather than what is said, that lies at the foundation of transmission processes.
Hypothesis II

The second set of expectations are informed by political socialization research and social learning theory.

These literatures lead us to expect family to be an important site of political learning, childhood memories of parental voting to predict participation, and observational learning to be important in the processes that lead to first voting.

Civic Engagements

Despite the strong evidence for the importance of family life in moulding political orientations and behaviour, many scholars also consider associational life a crucial site of political socialization.

‘Associational’ or ‘civic engagement’ theory, associated in modern times with de Tocqueville (1969[1850]), has been steadily influential in the last half-century of social scientific study of political culture (Banfield 1958; Verba and Almond 1963; Nie et al 1969). Most recently, it received a large boost from Robert Putnam’s study of Italian government (1993) and his popular dissections of American civic decline (2000). The argument has two parts. In the first, associational membership is seen as an important predictor of civic and political participation because associations serve as ‘schools for democracy,’ nurturing democratic values (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). The second arm of the ‘associations argument’ establishes the importance of mobilization in the historical processes that led to immigrants’ political incorporation in the past, by making immigrants accessible to political entrepreneurs and partisan mobilization (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Gerstle & Mollenkopf 2001). The approach has recently inspired a large literature examining the role and potential of voluntary associations in immigrants’ political lives (for example Moya 2005, Portes et al 2008).
Despite great interest, the causal link between associational membership and political participation has been difficult to prove empirically. Organizations may not garner the attention and interest of politicians and parties (Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad 2008), and even highly-resourced and determined political mobilization is not always effective (Manza and Brooks 1997, Abramson et al. 2002). Different types of organizations have different effects (Van Deth 2000), and the relationship between values and concrete political skills and behaviour remains unclear (where service learning is concerned, see Perry & Katula 2001). Finally, it is often very difficult to tell whether associational involvements create democratic values and behaviour, or simply reflect the pre-existing orientations of those who join them.

Nevertheless, using associational theory as a guide, it can be argued that group-specific tendencies to form and/or join associations of particular kinds may help to explain variations in turnout. From this perspective, it is variation in the quality and quantity of associational life among members of different groups which extends the reach of political pasts into new contexts.

**Hypothesis III**

The third set of expectations are informed by associational theory.

We expect to see differences in the associational lives of voters and non-voters, and evidence that political skills and commitments are acquired as a result of associational membership.

**Data and Methods**

This study’s findings and arguments draw on in-depth interviews with first and second generation immigrants, using a purposive rather than a probabilistic sample. The sample consists of 30 individuals in all, six first generation immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults, ten 1.5 generation immigrants (who arrived under the age of 18), and fourteen second generation
immigrants (born in Canada). This study is part of a larger project in which immigrant turnout is found to be influenced by origin – not only in the first (foreign-born) generation, but also in the second (among the native-born offspring of immigrants). The goal was to understand how the influence of origin reaches across both geographic dislocation and the generations, into entirely new contexts and individuals.

Respondents were initially solicited by means of an internet-based request for volunteers circulated to several listservs serving graduate students at a large urban university in Toronto. The original request was limited to immigrants considered part of the 1.5 generation (who immigrated as children) and the 2nd generation (the native-born offspring of immigrant parents). It stated that the study was in part about political participation. This drew a disproportionate share of political enthusiasts and activists, so it became necessary to recruit more politically ‘average’ people among friends and acquaintances, as well as through cold contact in the public spaces of the University’s largest library.

The survey is limited to those of voting age and above. There was a concentration on young second generation adults between 25 and 40, with modal age in the late twenties, but the final sample included respondents who ranged in age from their late-teens to their early-sixties. With twenty-four out of thirty people either holding or seeking a university degree (many of these at the graduate level), the sample was heavily skewed toward the highly educated, although there was wide heterogeneity of educational level among respondent’s parents. A decision was reached to recruit a few people from radically different socioeconomic backgrounds and also to include first generation immigrants. They were included to see whether different processes of socialization and learning were reported among these other groups. During analysis, data collected from the highly educated sub-group were initially considered separately from the rest.
of the data, and results were also divided by immigrant generation. In neither case were systematic differences found in the processes of political development across these sub-samples. Nonetheless, selection effects, especially with regard to the high levels of education among respondents, are given consideration in the study’s conclusion.

A wide range of origins was sought, and in Toronto, easy to find. The reason for this was to lower the chances that culturally-specific learning styles were at play. Respondents or their parents came to Canada from China, Columbia, England(2), Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong(4), Hungary, India(2), Indonesia, Iran(2), Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Palestine, Poland, Serbia, South Korea, Taiwan, Tanzania, The Netherlands, Trinidad, and Vietnam. The sample contained more women (21) than men (9).

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to two and a half hours, with the average interview lasting about ninety minutes. Transcript data was initially ordered into twelve subject areas which were then further coded thematically during exploration of the data, as well as for ‘base data’ (demographic and categorical information) using the N6 analysis program. There were two broad analytic frames used in the collection and analysis of the interview data.

The first frame concerned democratic and civic belief and orientation. I asked my respondents questions which aimed to find out how people justify and evaluate decisions regarding political participation. I looked for different conceptions of democracy, and of ‘common good’, and of self- and collective-interest used to differentiate and valorize their own behaviour and that of others. I wanted to know whether and how ideas and evaluative criteria differed according to whether one votes or does not.

The second frame focused on obtaining narratives of political development. Respondents were asked to explain, in great detail, the influence of their experiences with political action and
ideas within different settings, such as in their childhood homes, among friends, at school, at work, and in associational settings. The highly detailed accounts provided richly textured information. I did not simply ask whether someone had, for example, learned about politics at school. Follow-up questions, where necessary, asked not only when, how, who was involved, and what exactly was learned, but also about approximate age, and about the neighbourhood and school. This level of diligent interest strongly promoted thoughtfulness and accuracy among respondents. People sometimes substantially modified, and in a couple of cases reversed their initial statements, in response to requests for more detail.

While a reliance on retrospective accounts is not ideal, one key advantage of in-depth interviews and narrative accounts – beyond the way that requests for detail encourage accurate reports - is that the narratives provide an explicit temporal time-line of individual histories. By treating temporality as important, narratives provide us with a means by which to construct models of causal sequence, which help to identify pivotal events and clarify the meaning of correlations (Abbott 2001). In addition, narratives allow us to understand voting not as a discreet event, but as an activity that is sustained over time. People have a voting career, and by talking to people about early voting experiences and later ones, we capture the variability in motivation and understanding that may exist over time (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

Findings

Hypothesis I – Symbolic Worlds

Broadly speaking, a symbolic worlds approach leads us to expect to see variations in discourse corresponding to variations in patterns of participation. Two set of groups are contrasted: voters with non-voters, and first with second generation immigrants.
Immigrants born and raised abroad (first generation immigrants) expressed a wide variety of beliefs regarding democracy and politics. There was strong support for democratic forms of political decision-making among many respondents, ambivalence among others, and in a few cases, strong doubts were expressed. Among a minority of non-voting immigrants, there was an openly expressed distrust of electoral institutions and processes, disapproval of ‘excessive’ or ‘damaging’ freedoms associated with democracy, the belief that democracy may be an ineffective form of governance, or the opinion that more successful people should have a greater say in how the country is run than less successful ones.

Among the native-born second generation, this variability in belief concerning democracy simply did not exist across voters and non-voters. All felt that it was a superior form of governance to which there was no good alternative, and that the different perspectives of individuals and groups – even marginal ones – all deserved voice. In the second generation, there were some small and subtle differences in conceptions of civic involvement and self- and collective- interest depending on whether one voted or not. For example, a few non-voters spoke of a greater commitment to ‘every-day’ politics – speaking out against racism or sexism encountered in daily life – rather than to ‘formal’ political expression, which “just doesn’t do much for me”. However, several voters also mentioned the importance of ‘every-day’ political engagement, although they saw it as a complement, rather than an alternative, to formal participation. Despite high levels of education, several people had no ready explanation for why they did or did not vote, the question being met, initially, with a shrug of the shoulders. Among non-voters, this response was often combined with the statement that the respondent was simply too busy to vote.
Although one committed non-voter spoke at length about the futility of voting given the immense power of special interests in policy outcomes, if anything, voters were actually a bit more cynical about democracy than non-voters were, alluding more frequently to specific issues such as ‘wasted votes’, government corruption, and lack of options. This could simply be a consequence of the fact that voters expressed slightly more interest and awareness of politics and political issues than non-voters, in line with previous research which finds that political interest and a sense of duty about voting are the strongest predictors of voting we have (Blais 2007). However, as Blais has pointed out, this does not tell us much in the absence of models of how political interest and feelings of duty develop.

The contrast in opinion concerning democracy and civic engagement in first versus second generation immigrant voters and non-voters has several important implications. First, this finding provides some support for the notion of a ‘vertical’ model of cultural reproduction, where cultural ideas and meanings are carried within and transmitted via the larger cultural contexts that envelope us. Whereas a significant minority of first generation voters justified non-voting with serious doubts and criticisms about the utility of democratic institutions, in no case did this occur among second generation non-voters. In the latter group, the favoured explanations for non-voting focused on the ‘time crunch’ of busy lives, or in a few cases, on the greater relative importance of ‘everyday politics,’ echoing popular contemporary issues. However the modal response was that the respondent felt they should vote, but just hadn’t. In other words, to the extent that the first and second generation grow up in different cultural contexts, they often attach very different ‘landscapes of meaning’ to their choices and actions. This is also supported by the fact that many second generation respondents told me that they and their parents held very different political beliefs, for example parents were described as more conservative, more
submissive to authority, and more dismissive of marginalized (unsuccessful or ‘dysfunctional’) groups. This suggests that, had I interviewed the parents of my second generation respondents, their views would probably have echoed those I found among the first generation immigrants I did interview for the study.

The second (more controversial) implication is that differences in belief and opinion are not always terribly consequential to our actions. Despite discontinuities in belief, there nonetheless appear to be strong continuities at the level of action. As the section immediately following this one shows, parental voting and non-voting seem to have a powerful effect on behavioural outcome – on whether the respondent votes, whatever the surrounding beliefs. This suggests that the transmission of the behaviours of voting and non-voting may be based on something other than the passing on of substantive discursive beliefs and opinions. Importantly, it also suggests that change to ideas and belief is not always sufficient to change behaviour. Nonetheless, if belief and meaning do not always exert a reliable influence on behaviour, there are some cases where it appears that their influence is amplified. These cases are discussed below, where ‘exceptional cases’ are discussed.

Hypothesis II – The Influence of Parents, and of Observational versus Discursive Learning

Family – Parental Example

As asked about key influences in their political development, and in whether or not they voted, in the overwhelming majority of cases respondents felt that one or both parents’ influence was strong and central to understanding their own political positions and actions. The easiest way to demonstrate that they are correct in this is to compare the frequency of voting among respondents to the reported frequency of their parents’ voting.

Table 1 confirms that parental example has an enormous influence.
Table 1 Frequency of voting by frequency of parental voting, all respondents

N=30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents Vote (N)</th>
<th>always</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent votes always</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents Vote (%)</th>
<th>always</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent votes always</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family - Discussion**

This does not tell us how parental influence is exercised. In contrast to the findings of most political socialization research, and perhaps owing to their immigrant origin, my respondents often reported substantial disagreement with the political opinions and beliefs of their parents. But what if the content of opinion is less important than the level of interest parents show? Interest was gauged in three ways: by asking about parental intensity regarding politics; by assessing the degree of knowledge respondents had about family political histories; and by
asking about the frequency of political discussion at home. As Table 2 shows, frequency of discussion appears to be an important factor.

**Table 2 Frequency of voting by frequency of political discussion in childhood home**

N=29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of discussion (N)</th>
<th>Rare</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent votes Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of discussion (%)</th>
<th>Rare</th>
<th>some</th>
<th>frequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent votes Always</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the fit here is not as tight as that between parent and offspring behaviour. And other indicators of political interest on the part of parents showed very little predictive power.

For example, knowledge of family political histories showed no correlation with voting. Dramatic stories of political conflict and competition affecting family fortunes were told by both voters and nonvoters. Nor does parental intensity about politics reliably predict electoral
participation. In eight cases, a parent (always the father) was described as being intense about political issues, but in two cases, he did not vote himself. In these two cases and in one other (that is, nearly half the time) the offspring of these politically intense parents did not vote regularly.

It is important to note that there were several cases where people were regular voters despite rare discussion of politics in their childhood home. This suggests that frequency of discussion, and parental political interest in general, may be less directly influential to outcomes than parental practice. The lack of importance of discussion in some cases shows that parents who were observed to vote were felt to take voting seriously, whether or not they talked about it. Nor was the content of discussion very important. One respondent said that family discussion of politics and elections consistently treated them as a joke, but everyone always went to vote anyway (as did the respondent herself). It seems that parental actions may speak louder than words, whether we look at the frequency or at the content of discussion. This is consistent with one of the very few studies that includes parental voting as a predictor variable – which finds that of a long list of family characteristics, (including parental education, income, occupational prestige, political interest, political knowledge, political trust, and strength of partisanship), parental turnout had the strongest influence, giving a boost of 20% to the probability of first voting (Plutzer 2002).

**School**

The importance of attending to sequence is seen in weighing the overall influence of school. Half of those interviewed felt that experiences at school had significantly influenced their political development. The earliest memories were from grade 4, but most people mentioned events from grades 8 through 12. Half of these respondents cited influential teachers who were interested in politics and took the time to explain issues and discuss current events. The others
considered school-wide or classroom-based elections, debates, as well as curricula dealing with political events most important. Only three people described university as important in any way to their political development. Two people who reported politicization at university were non-voters who said that their commitment to non-electoral political activity had been encouraged. Indeed, where electoral politics in particular is concerned, a couple of people mentioned that university attendance coincided with a loss of interest or awareness and a reduction in electoral participation. One said that her knowledge of the ‘bigger picture’ made her cynical about the potential for effecting change. Another felt that university had isolated her.

Ever since University, I don’t follow it....when you’re in university it’s kind of like a bubble. My first year, when moving into residence, you’re just not aware of what’s going on. At home, I always read the paper – and I just don’t have a paper.....I know I could read online, but I just don’t......part of it is no time because you’re just stressed about school and part of it is because your life just doesn’t interact with the rest of the world.

However, the influence of high school (in contrast to university) is, on the surface, reasonably strong.

What is remarkable is that with only one exception, the influence of school was reported exclusively among respondents whose parents vote. Other people said that there had “probably been some discussion” about politics at school, but that it had not interested them, and they had no specific memory of it. It is of course possible that variation in the quality of teaching could play a part, but given the strength of the pattern just described, it seems more likely that parental voting made students receptive to discussion of politics at school, and encouraged them to remember it. Experiences at school deepened and broadened a pre-existing interest, but the foundation for that interest – the pivotal event - is observation of parental political participation.
What appears to be *most* important, then, in the majority of cases, is whether parents actually vote or not. But why is this so important? What are the mechanisms by which the actions of parents influence those of their offspring?

**Childhood Memories of Voting**

Social learning theory holds that reproduction of behaviour requires that we attend to and remember the behaviour of important role models. This fits the narrative of political development described by respondents well in several ways, but most dramatically with regard to the role of memory. The most consistent pattern in the data is that voters with voting parents had memories of elections and voting from childhood. In contrast, among those respondents who did not vote, not one person had a childhood memory of elections or of going to the polls with parents, even if they knew that their parents were voters. It is perhaps worth mentioning that these memories were often unsolicited, and surprised me (at first). After such memories were offered by several respondents when asked to describe how they learned about politics and voting, I began to ask everyone about whether or not they had such memories.

All but two of the respondents whose parents voted had specific memories of elections and voting from childhood. Remarkably, these two exceptional cases are also outliers in terms of transmission - they are the two cases in which respondents said that parents always voted, but the respondents did not. In both cases, no concrete memory was available for recall, with one saying that she became aware only as a teenager that her parents vote. These two people both had reasons for not voting – one said she found the modern world too depressing to pay attention to, and the other felt that voting was ineffectual. However, according to the tenets of social learning, the fact that parental voting had not been observed and/or remembered was the crucial ‘reason’. From the point of view of social learning theory, these are not outliers at all. Simply “knowing” that parents vote is not enough.
In some cases the memory of parental voting is of an event a little out of the ordinary, though not of anything very special. Several people talked about enjoying a visit to their old schools, when these were used as polling stations, or the thrill of getting a look at a building in their neighbourhood, for example a church, normally not accessible to them. For others, the memory is of an exciting occasion and of a mysterious rite:

*It was just such a different thing that you ever saw anywhere else as a kid.....*

*I absolutely remember election night from when I was young. We used to go to the voting stations with them. I just found that going with them was such an event.*

*As a child, I remember being so curious as to where it happened and what it looked like. I would always ask my mom to describe what it looked like. For me it was so mysterious but so important. It first started interesting me in probably grade four when I was around 8 or 9. They never took me, so that just kind of added to it. It wasn’t until I was of age that I actually got to see for myself.*

*I remember growing up, my sisters would follow the election. We would watch it on TV in my parents’ bedroom, and I remember I asked my parents: “Who did you vote for?” They wouldn’t tell me, and then I said, “Do you guys even know who you voted for?” They said, “No, we don’t tell each other.” I thought that was so interesting. Probably that was the thing that most peaked my interest in voting and how I feel it’s really important to vote.*

*My first experience with the concept of voting was at about four. I know I was four because it was Rajiv Gandhi who was about to get elected to be Prime Minister. It was kind of like the Obama election. The whole country was in an uproar about this man because he was the son of Indira Gandhi, who had been murdered. He had a beautiful family.... the country was in love with him. My godmother was living with us at the time, I went to her, “What does it mean to be voting?” And she said, “Well, they put you in this booth.” And I still remember the image of the booth in my young mind....I pictured this dank little cell with blue curtains all the way around and you’d be in there for hours trying to make a decision. She said, “Okay, well now I’m going to go and then in the afternoon, your mom’s going to go and in the evening your dad’s going to go.” And just this whole process of it and I remember my mom coming back from her afternoon voting session and I said, “Mom, Mom, how did it go? Did you vote for so and so?” And I very distinctly remember her saying, “I cannot tell you who I voted for. That is a secret. You have to make your own decision.” And I was four!*

*I saw my father, he went out, his ten fingers were fine, then he came back and his finger was stained and he showed it to me like this. He said: “I went to vote and that’s how you vote.” It made quite an impression on me. Plus when your party won, in those days, it was a rejoicing and you have meetings, rallies, and so on, and people gather to listen...my father would be*
mindful of the fact that there were large crowds and people sort of got carried away sometimes and the opposition would sometimes be up to mischief. But he would take me.

I just remember being super curious about it, especially if there were signs up on the lawn. I made them take me once, I remember, just to see. I remember they had to line up, and then check your name, and then go to the partition.

It is striking that these memories center on the embodied practice of voting, rather than on its purpose or rationale. With the exception of two mentions of particularly charismatic leaders (Pierre Trudeau and Rajiv Gandhi), there was almost no mention of candidates or issues. Children want to know: what happens when you go there? How is it done? This is consistent with Omar Lizardo’s (2009) account of observational learning, in which cognitively coded procedural “know-how” is crucial to practical transmission.

The trappings and ceremony that surround voting attracted children. They are also aware that it is an adult experience that contains elements of secrecy which heightens its appeal. As social learning theory predicts, all of this increases the salience of elections and of voting, increasing the chances that children will come along and remember – or ask about and try to imagine - the event. Either way, a memory is formed. It is worth noting that the vividness of these memories may be related to the (young) age, on average, of the people I interviewed. It is not clear that such memories would necessarily be retained over long periods of time, unless they are especially vivid (as in the case of the Indian-origin and Jamaican-origin voters described above).

According to Bandura’s model of social learning, there are three processes required for imitation to occur: first, the practice must gain the person’s attention. Second, it must be remembered. We have just seen that in every case voters both attended to their parents’ voting, and had concrete memories of it, while nonvoters did not have these memories. To complete the
process of reproduction, motivation to vote must exist. We turn now to the question of the circumstances under which early voting occurred.

**Early Voting**

For most people, voting was described as a marker and symbol of belonging not to a nation, but to the adult world. Many explained that voting made them feel grown up and responsible. Parental expectations (explicit and inferred) had a strong part to play in the early visits to the polling booth in many cases.

*There’s some novelty in it, too, you’ve never voted before, “okay, I’m going to go vote, whatever that is, I’m going to go check a box, I don’t even know what’s going on, but whatever, I’ll vote and my old man will be happy.”*

*The day where I was able to go for the first time, I remember my father had my voting card on the kitchen table for me in the morning, ready for me to take and go. With his look, there was an expectation that I was going to go.*

*My father always encourages me to vote. Even though they’re across the country, they’re calling me and telling me, this is where you’re supposed to go vote. He’ll know where my polling station is and who the candidates are. It was always my dad – and it was also a family thing...you have to go vote.*

*I never really learned about political parties or individual candidates or who to vote for from them, I learned it on my own eventually. But I think my parents see voting as something you should do....*

*I don’t think [my father] would necessarily be angry if I didn’t vote. I mean, he made sure that he did and he figured that at some point, I’d vote too, and I've voted in every election since I’ve been here.*

*I just thought it was important to them that I vote.*

*The obligation could be societal or it could just be familial, I have to do this because if I don’t mom will be angry – especially when you first start voting.*

*Why did I go to vote the first time? They sent me a card in the mail, telling me I could.*

Once again, it is the act or practice of voting that takes center stage in these descriptions of early voting. People think it is important but in nearly all cases they cannot say why, and
admit that they are ‘going through the motions’. They are learning a skill as an apprentice or initiate, rather than a scholar (Archer 2000), performing a role, partaking of a ritual. They feel it is expected of them. Often parents express such expectations explicitly, but almost as often, the expectation is inferred. Early voters impute value to the act, but only because they take their parents’ word for it – or more accurately, because their parents actions indicate to them - that the act is valuable.

**Voting over time**

However, this is not the end of the story. For nearly everyone, voting becomes more conscious and meaningful over time.

*I have voted consistently, although with much more confidence about the decisions in recent years.*

*When I was a teenager and just getting the right to vote I was doing it pretty much randomly.*

*I remember the first time I voted, I think I was 19. I was young... I didn’t know who I was voting for... I had no idea...*

*I just voted for anything.... usually for the ironic candidates or the crazies. But I also remember feeling anxious and disappointed with myself for not knowing more about it, looking at all the boxes without a clue. I pay a lot more attention now.... I mean there are many constraints, but it is also true in an important way that in a democracy, you have to take responsibility for the way things are.*

*I vote for a reason now whereas before I felt I got to do this and I’d just go out and check a box. There wasn’t as much thought put into it then.*

*I think at the beginning, it might be that you’re used to people going voting, so you figure this is something I’m supposed to do. But after that, you realize when you get older that this is really important.*

A large majority (83%) of those who began to vote – most in a decidedly uncertain and haphazard fashion - did eventually satisfy themselves that voting was worthwhile. Nearly everyone registered some doubt about the efficacy of their actions, and ambivalence about the
whole process, and the rationales for voting they eventually developed were not necessarily complex. A very few referenced the historic struggle to obtain the vote, or the differences between democracies and dictatorships, but most simply expressed a now established conviction that voting was important. However simple or elaborate the reasons, all of these people did manage to ‘make sense’ of their behaviour in ways that supported continued voting. For this large majority, discursive rationales do appear to follow automatically (though not immediately) from participation itself. Where voting is concerned, in the time and place of my study, it seems that most people come to believe in the things they do, rather than to do the things they believe in.

However there are some exceptions (‘outliers’ in a sense) that challenge this conclusion. Examination of these cases helps us identify the circumstances with power to derail what have just been described as the ‘normal’ pathways of generational reproduction of practice. Two groups are relevant here. The first group are those with no memories of parental voting who became voters despite this. This group’s experience is examined in the context of the results pertaining to associational membership.

**Hypothesis III – Associations**

*First generation voters*

The first group of exceptional cases features voters coming from non-voting families. These people did not hold opinions about politics or democracy that made them stand out from non-voters. What was common to these cases was a particular kind of history of organizational involvements, involving explicitly political organization: contact with unions, paid employment in an anti-poverty NGO, and political activities promoted and paid for by the government. These kinds of organizations apparently do function as ‘schools for democracy’. Not every kind of
organizational experience was influential. For example, membership and activity within religious and ethnic associations was credited in a couple of cases with encouraging ethical commitments that later on contributed to political interests, but activities within non-politically oriented organizations appeared to have very little direct influence on political participation. Among the very few (two) people who reported that ethnic or religious associational involvements had contributed to their political development in any way at all, the influence was of a kind that emphasized ‘hands-on,’ or ‘everyday’ politics, and did not include or lead to voting.

**Political, NGO, Union, and Community Organizations**

Six people reported involvement with politically active NGOs and/or unions and political organizations. In some cases these involvements were described as the result of pre-existing politicization – the experiences connected with food coop or environmental group or social-welfare association was described as an exercise of political commitments already firmly in place. However in four cases, experience within such organizations was credited with important political learning. In one case, work at a non-profit organization with underemployed people in Ontario at the time of the social service cutbacks of the Neo-Liberal Harris government was counted as a highly politicizing moment. In another, an injury sustained on the job at a paper mill in British Columbia, and subsequent union support, inspired an interest in workplace health and safety which shaped subsequent career decisions and political commitments. In the third, a stint of election-week wage labour for Elections Canada contributed to the respondent’s interest in voting, as did contact with local activists working at a local community center. A second-generation immigrant from Ghana, now at law school, describes the positive influence on his awareness and understanding of political issues:
For me, I was mostly inspired by community workers. They talk about a program, Harris cuts or something, and how it’s going to affect marginalized low income people basically. That would be where I talked about politics, and issues that are important or that resonate with people who tend to live in lonely communities and marginalized communities are issues dealing with poverty and violence. I grew up in community centers – where we went to socialize after school and during the summer time when our parents were at work...play sports, go on trips to the science center, what have you......we would have semi-town-hall style meetings that the recreation center would organize – I remember one supervisor, she was very engaged in our lives. She was an advisor for the rec program. Toronto Community Housing paid them and these people tended to be recruited from within the community, so that was good. So these community leaders would organize talks....posters would go up at the rec center and in the apartment lobby, and they’d talk to us about what was going on, why we have to do this and do that.

Finally, a respondent who is herself a non-voter reported that a sibling became a voter after politicization inspired by unionization efforts at a bookstore where she was employed. It is important to note that in three of these four cases, these experiences were crediting with provoking electoral participation among individuals who came from families where parents did not vote. This makes ‘workplace’ or ‘association’ one of the largest influences outside of family that was identified. Experience with politically involved organizations is the only influence – outside of the family – that was independently causally effective in encouraging voting among my respondents.

Informal Associations

While not an important factor in respondent’s narratives about their own political development, some talked about informal socializing with a political flavor within their communities. Among people who reported high levels of interest in politics in their origin group, local bars and coffee shops where immigrant men socialize with fellow ex-patriots were cited as hotbeds of political news and argument within their origin communities. Mixed gender get-togethers and social gatherings – holiday celebrations, birthdays, or summer BBQs - were also mentioned as places where politics would be regularly discussed. One respondent reported the existence of an
extensive telephone network used to spread the word about political candidates of interest to her origin community – specifically to mobilize voters. Among those coming from origin groups where interest in politics was lower, rarely did informal socializing include political discussion. Occasionally a boyfriend, a girlfriend, or a wealthy acquaintance was mentioned as a source of political information, or as an influence on political development. An evening ethnic-language school, where parents talked as they waited for their children, was noted by another as a place where political advice and opinion had occasionally been shared. Political association in informal civic realms appears to reflect and reinforce pre-existing political cultural characteristics.

**Party Mobilization**

While one-third of those interviewed could recall some experience of party mobilization, in only two cases did this occur in the context of associational membership. The other experiences were mostly of political figures speaking at schools (three cases) or doing a meet-and-greet in public spaces (three cases), or of canvassers coming door-to-door (three cases). None of these experiences were cited as influential. Several people mentioned street rallies making an impression on them, with all of these experiences occurring outside of Canada (pre-migration).

**Outside the norm – Symbolic Worlds Revisited**

The second group who fell outside the norm were those respondents who had voted at least once but whose commitment to further voting is weak.

**Failure to launch**

Three people did have memories of their parents voting, did vote at least once when they were first eligible, but either did not continue to vote, or were seriously considering stopping.
Their ‘reasons’ were varied. One person felt ‘forced’ to vote by her father, and did not vote again, because she did not care or know much about politics. Another felt similarly that her voting had been without strong motivation, and she felt that other kinds of contributions were more valuable. Yet another person complained about the lack of variety on offer. These people, it seems, had evaluated their participation after the fact, and found that voting did not make sense to them. As a result, they had already stopped voting, or expressed doubt about whether they would continue. Here we see greater evidence that what is usually referred to as ‘culture’ – discursive ideas, arguments, and reflective consideration of meanings – may be influencing outcomes. However, it is interesting to note that there is nothing about the reasons given that stand out. Many voters also admitted to knowing nothing about politics at first, but continued voting anyway. Many voters also said they did not feel that their individual vote made much difference to outcomes, or complained about lack of choice, but continued voting anyway. Why were these widespread reservations effective in discouraging further voting in these particular cases? There was no evidence of any ‘extra’ effort to investigate or research the topic. The doubts were no more vehemently expressed than among voters. It is just that in these cases they seemed to carry more weight. Why?

Among those who stopped voting, or were considering stopping, parents were all ‘sometimes’ rather than ‘always’ voters. In other words, parental example was less than completely clear. For two people who gave it up, one parent always voted, but the other never did. In another case, parents both voted, but this was a relatively new development post-migration, around which some uncertainty stood. In other words, the behaviour was far more likely to be discarded among those who had received mixed behavioural signals from their parents. This suggests that cultural discourse may gain causal power when parental example is
unclear. Although there were few such cases in my sample, this was certainly in part a result of selection effects. In a sample in which parents are less congruent with each other in political practice, or where divorce is more prevalent (post-divorce, parental voting is often disrupted), many more such cases – where the outcome can go either way, and outcomes may be more affected by reflective deliberation - would be expected to be present.

If it is true that having parents who show no firm action commitment either way (to voting or non-voting) opens a window to influential discursive reflection, obviously this influence could go either way. That is, it could lead to further voting as well as non-voting. I am unable to pick up on this outcome, because post-facto rationalizations and causally influential arguments look identical from the outside. However there is longitudinal survey and experimental evidence that voting once increases the chance of voting again, a result that obtains even in the presence of an enormous number of controls which take into account changes in both socio-demographic and psychological factors, including political opinion, orientation, and feelings of political efficacy (Gerber, Green & Shachar 2003; Green & Shachar 2000; Fowler 2006). This is what makes these particular cases, where voting is initiated, and then abandoned, particularly interesting. Of course, identifying the particular influences responsible is impossible. Cultural cues of a discursive or symbolic kind – the messages and meanings we are exposed to at school, through conversation with acquaintances, or from the media – are not the only possible influences. Perhaps it is a question of being more strongly influenced by one parent than the other. Or if parents are ‘sometimes’ voters, perhaps that will be how things end up for these respondents as well, with the decision to stop voting overturned at some later date.

However, the idea that symbolic messages and meanings exert no influence whatsoever on our actions is implausible. What is argued here is that symbolic or discursive culture plays a
smaller role that is usually thought in encouraging voting in the ‘normal’ course of events (that is, under ordinary, historically unremarkable conditions). Beliefs and meanings may play a supporting, rather than leading, role in the socialization process that produces voters in settled times. Nonetheless, the meanings we attach to voting serve to powerfully reinforce, and provide shape to, the observed actions of others, and where these observed actions betray ambivalence, the evidence here suggests that symbolic culture’s power to influence outcomes may grow.

Discussion

Research finding strong intergenerational consistencies in political belief and practice highlight the importance of political learning within the family. However, the pathways and processes through which voting is learned have remained largely a ‘black box.’ A common assumption is that voting is an expression of consciously held knowledge, beliefs and commitments, and that the extensiveness of knowledge and the content of these beliefs predict whether people vote or not. In other words, beliefs and values form a foundation for, and spur to, action. This paper provides evidence to support an alternative, more materialist, model of political development and skills-formation.

According to the model proposed here, voting is an embodied action or practice, learned in most cases by means of observation and apprenticeship, rather than scholarship, to use Archer’s (2000) terms. Previous research has shown repeatedly that one of the best (if not the best) predictor of individual turnout is whether a person voted in the previous election. The present study suggests that we can fruitfully go back even further – to look not only at one’s previous actions, but also at the actions of important adults within early, intimate networks.
One of the principal conclusions of this study is that while ideas and discussion often reinforce lessons learned through observation, they tend to play a supporting rather than a leading role in encouraging voting in unexceptional times. Consistent with models of social learning, holding concrete memories of parental voting is what is critical. Once a child has taken note of parental voting, they are primed to take an interest in political discussion both at home and at school. Without the behavioural cue - that something actually moves adults to action - discussion may not be effective (thus confirming the futility of the parental advice to “do as I say, not as I do”). In the majority of cases, voting is often initiated before any real understanding is gained of what it is about or for. In established democracies in ‘unexceptional times’, early voting is, in the majority of cases, based on a desire to take on adult roles and an expectation of parental approval, not on convictions reached through the exercise of reason. Meaning-making occurs later, and in the historical moment in which this study occurs, and among those sampled, it does not appear to exert any reliable, independent influence on events in the majority of cases.

If ideas appear in a distinctly epiphenomenal role in this account, in some circumstances reflectivity or conscious evaluation of the options appear to have more causal power. In those cases where the action commitments of parents are harder to read – when parents vote sometimes, rather than always or never, or when one parent votes and the other does not, our thoughts regarding voting’s value seem to carry more weight. The importance of action –of concrete parental modeling of behaviour – is still key, but what is important is that ambiguity in that modeling boosts reflective evaluation’s power to influence outcomes. In my sample, these cases are rare, but in the general population this scenario is almost certainly more prevalent. In fact, the patterns identified in this study are, if anything, too strong and consistent, and the influence of family too decisive.
If the inter-generational transmission of political practice were as consistent as it appears to be here, we would see almost no change to turnout levels over time. This is likely because my sample is one that maximizes transmission beyond what would be found in the general population. First, all but one of my respondents were raised in ‘intact’ (non-divorced) families. We know that divorce tends to disrupt voting, leading to more ‘sometimes’ voters (Sandell & Plutzer 2005). Second, it may be that university students are more likely to be especially receptive to parental cues and expectations, and more likely to imitate parental behaviour. Bandura argued that feelings of self-efficacy – which would presumably be relatively high among the highly educated – predict a higher likelihood of transmission of behaviour through social learning. Perhaps the immigrant sample also predicts that parental expectations and traditions will be taken more seriously than usual. It is possible that the experience of immigration makes for stronger than usual family bonds, with families often experiencing some degree of at least transient isolation from the communities around them.

However, it should be kept in mind that this chapter is not concerned with rates of transmission, nor with predicting transmission, but with explaining how transmission occurs. That it does occur, across all levels of income and education, is well established by existing research. So even if transmission does occur more reliably among the highly educated, this is not troublesome to the model of transmission developed here. Indeed, it is an advantage, as I have more instances of successful transmission to study.

More problematic is the possibility that transmission processes vary with education. The sample was selected primarily with the aim of making sure that the processes identified were not particular to different cultural groups. The very wide range of origins among respondents does support the generalization of the findings in this respect. Although no differences were seen
within subsamples divided by education level (and immigrant generation), the small number of respondents with low levels of education does not allow me to say that learning and transmission processes are the same regardless of educational attainments. In other words, the sample’s limitations do not allow me to directly address the possibility that transmission occurs in fundamentally different ways according to level of education.

However, while it seems intuitively obvious that highly educated respondents may learn differently than less educated people, this objection is less compelling in the context of these particular findings. The argument made here is that the key event in transmission of voting practice may be observation and modeling, not discursive learning involving talk, text, reflection, argument and persuasion. Given the greater discursive resources and greater exposure to political information of more highly educated people, it could be argued that a sample of highly educated respondents provides the most stringent possible test of this study’s thesis. Observation of concrete models remains key - even among the highly educated.

The findings of this article throw light on the socialization and learning processes that support inter-generational transmission of political practice. Obviously many other factors – beyond the behaviour of parents - influence the decision to vote. The presence of charismatic candidates and of contentious issues, the extent and type of mobilization, and especially the degree to which people feel their vote can influence political outcomes - a function of electoral competitiveness - have all been shown to be influential, especially among new voters (Miller and Shanks 1996; Lewis-Beck et al 2008; Franklin 2004; Johnston et al 2007). However, new voters are not influenced by contexts uniformly. If they were, we would not see the intergenerational consistencies that we do. This paper has presented evidence that the extent to which new voters reject their ‘inherited’ repertoire of practices, and are open to change, depends
in large part upon the consistency and salience of the action commitments of important models in childhood.

The picture of voting that emerges here is of an activity that has devolved into a kind of familial custom, heavily dependent on precedent and tradition, rather than on utility or hope for advantageous political change. This should not lead to the conclusion that voting is a nonrational activity. Emulation may start most of us on the path to the polling station, but habit alone would not keep us going, if there really was no sense in it. Moreover, it seems that reflective evaluation assumes greater importance over time where parental example was or is ambiguous. In these ways, rational consideration of stakes can affect new voters, but also (to a lesser extent) older voters, which in turn affects the behaviour and size of the pool of role models available to each new generation of voters. Perhaps most importantly, the depth of our commitment will affect the expectations directed towards youth and newcomers. If we vote ourselves, but do not really believe in it enough to do it with enthusiasm, or to expect and urge our children to do it, that crucial ‘first vote’ may never happen. Social Learning theory stresses the need not only for familiarity with the activity, but also of motivation to trigger action. Efforts to boost turnout in the long term must concentrate on increasing children’s familiarity with the process, but also on the kinds of electoral and political reforms that tilt the balance of reasons for and against voting further, and more decisively, in favour.

Nor is family the only social site of importance – indeed, its importance may be in part because of the absence of meaningful political action in other arenas. People raised by non-voting parents can also be encouraged to vote by concrete, physical experience and involvement in political activities in governmental and non-governmental organizations. This corroborates research that finds that when comparing the influence of different kinds of organization, it is
experience with overtly political kinds of organizations, like unions, which leads most reliably to further political participation (Jennings 2002). In this respect, it is pertinent to note that the continued sharp decline in unionization in North America, particularly in the private sector, removes an historically important route to political socialization and electoral participation among immigrants (Rosenfeld 2010). Once again, however, it is important to stress that it is political action – not discussion – that is decisive.

The findings presented here have extensive practical implications. They suggest that it would be a mistake to focus all our efforts on promoting solutions to electoral disengagement such as encouraging organizational involvements of all kinds and raising levels of political knowledge. If the model of political learning developed here is correct, such approaches will not directly address the main pathways and processes through which the skill and practice of voting is learned. Instead, concrete opportunities for observation and exercise of political action should be considered the decisive features of the learning environment. At the same time, once the habit of non-voting is entrenched, it may take extraordinary efforts to effect change. In these cases, we need to do more than just clear away obstacles to voting. We also need to think about how our electoral systems deliver, or fail to deliver, strong incentives for participation.
Chapter 4 - Action as Structure: Meaning and Agency in Embodied Practice

Foreword

Whether scholars interested in political culture or behaviour study attitudes or discourse, the focus is on what is going on in peoples’ minds. In part this is simply a reflection of researchers’ interest, but it is also motivated by the assumption that what is going on in people’s heads explains their behaviour. The assumption is often a valid one, but as Chapter 3 shows, discontinuities in discourse combined with continuities in behaviour suggests that the relationship can sometimes break down. We have seen that first and second generation respondents can disagree fundamentally about the value of democracy, but show strong congruence in patterns of participation. We have seen second generation immigrant respondents who are, without heroic interpretive efforts, nearly indistinguishable in their views on democracy, politics, and voting. And yet some vote, and others don’t. We see the influence of history in patterns of action across groups which surely must be described as ‘cultural’, but do not appear to be based in differences in symbolic landscapes. This chapter argues that sometimes, if we are interested in how cultural practices are acquired and reproduced, it is more advantageous and revealing to put the spotlight squarely on action and the reproduction of action itself, rather than on the cognitive correlates that accompany action or the discursive texts that support it. “How they do” may be more telling than what they think or say. Symbolic factors are of course far from irrelevant, but that is a point that does not needs making. Rather it is a reining in of ‘the cultural turn’ that seems more appropriate in this instance. Hence my insistence that meaning sometimes plays a complementary, rather than a leading role, in explaining outcomes.

It is important to say several things clearly at the outset. First, the evidence that this dissertation provides for seeing voting as habitual is just one more piece of evidence, added to a
great many previous studies using cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental data. However it is a somewhat vague claim, with ‘habit’ being used in a variety of ways, and resisted in some quarters (I believe) mainly because of the connotations of the term itself. In an attempt to address these problems, I provide a quick review of the relevant research in political behaviour, and use research in cognitive neuroscience to provide a clear and specific model of habit, which is then used to explain the particular ways in which voting qualifies as habitual behaviour.

Second, nobody claims that voting is a practice that is habitual at all times and places for all individuals. If we take the example of eating, there are people who agonize about almost every morsel that passes their lips, subjecting each food decision (about what to eat and whether or not to eat) to sustained inquiry based on complex, evolving criteria. We also know people who give food very little conscious thought – who eat as is their habit. And we know that most people fall somewhere between these two poles, having longstanding preferences and habits, but occasionally jarred into consciousness and efforts to change by a sudden inability to do up their pants, or a tragic news-story about the collapse of global fisheries. In terms of how consciously engaged we are with it, voting is a lot like eating.

The analogy is obviously not perfect – we cannot do without food completely, the desire for food is for most people far more compelling than the desire to play a part in political decision-making, etc. However the same story can be told in terms of exercise regimes, or housework, or the observance of holidays, or just about anything else that we do repeatedly in our lives. We need to acknowledge the variable levels of habituality and reflectivity with which we engage in different activities, depending on the practices in question, the relevant actors, and the contexts in which they act. Even actions like voting, which appear on the surface to be highly conscious, evolved behaviours, are often governed largely by habit. This will be the case with
any embodied skills, repeatedly exercised. The generalization will hold true for most people, most of the time. The challenge is to figure out who, what and where.

We run into problems concerning not only how habit is understood, but also how actions are understood. Using words like action, behaviour, practice and skill interchangeably is problematic. After all, voting is not an embodied skill like wiring a house or performing a triple-axel. It is more like making soup - it involves actions that nearly all adults already can perform, but familiarity with the particular sequences and outcomes, and an ensuing sense that making soup is something that one properly does or doesn’t do - seems to play a large part in whether one ever undertakes the activity or not. Nor is voting a simple ‘behaviour’ in the sense in which the term is often used – an action, reaction or reflex in which conscious thought and deliberation play little or no part. As already explained, depending on actor and context, reflective conscious thought may be extensively present, and sometimes effectively exercised. People with one kind of activity in mind will talk past those who are thinking of a different sort. If we are to understand the extent and workings of habituality in various actions, it is important to make clear distinctions between behaviour, practice and event. This chapter deals with this issue as well.

The first theoretical argument I found that provided support for a focus on embodied skills as an important component of culture was Ann Swidler’s. In her theoretical innovation (1986), culture provides people with a “tool-kit” of symbols, beliefs, stories and rituals, which are drawn upon to construct “strategies of action”. Culture in action is differentiated less by preferences than by available behavioural styles, which are associated with certain skills and habits. If we want to explain the distinctive behaviour of individuals and groups, Swidler argues, we should look not for variation in how people think or talk about things, but for differences in what they do and how they do it.
The main lesson of her work, for many people, is that culture is a messy, jumbled, and often contradictory patchwork of ideas and beliefs. However, the incoherence of your average cultural toolkit is only part of the story. Values, beliefs, narratives and ideologies (realms of meaning) are, for Swidler, far less important in explaining social action than is usually supposed, because the strategies of action that develop in tandem with a set of beliefs will often be transposed to serve new ends; indeed the habits are much sturdier than the beliefs themselves. Persistence is explained by the fact that any given strategy of action requires and creates certain capacities and skills in those who adopt it. Our competencies lead us to value ends for which our cultural equipment is well suited. To put it differently, we tend to join games that we know how to play.

Immigrants, then, will often retain familiar habits in new circumstances simply because it is an effort to learn new ones, and they will often put themselves in familiar settings if possible. This helps explain why early Greek immigrants to Canada preferred sea-side cities to land-locked ones, and why Italians gravitated to stone-work rather than to sales. It explains, in short, why different origin groups will behave differently in more or less the same structural situations. Resources are also important - they determine not only which strategies are rewarded, but also the ease with which people can retool. It is only once strategies of action have proven counterproductive that they will (eventually) be dropped. The remarkable persistence of voting and non-voting intergenerationally among immigrant groups can be explained from this perspective as the result of the absence of immediate or clear consequences attached to electoral participation and nonparticipation – in the absence of clear signals, behaviour tends to remain unchanged.
It is absolutely central to Swidler’s broader argument that meaning and action are fundamentally separable, and that there will be many cases in which one is not a good guide to the other. She is blunt about this in her own subsequent applications of the theory. The inconsistencies and incoherence in people’s stated beliefs about love lead Swidler to argue that “values are not the reason why a person develops one strategy of action rather than another.” (2001:86-87). Cultural meaning is used selectively and opportunistically to justify and rationalize behaviour after the fact. This means that ultimately the causal link between meaning and behaviour is greatly weakened. People may do things for very different reasons, and still be enacting shared cultures. Alternately they may express similar values, but vary greatly in what they actually do.

These ideas provide a tidy framework through which to view the findings of chapter 3. Nonetheless her theory raises new questions. First, Swidler does not really tackle the question of how skills or strategies of action are acquired. In the 1986 article, she emphasizes that strategies of action and beliefs, world-views, stories etc. are intertwined, because people draw upon culture to construct strategies of action. Symbolic culture retains an independent causal role precisely through its shaping of strategies of action, which help determine the acquisition of skills. But ideas and ideology are mostly influential in “unsettled times” when new strategies of action are being constructed, and it seems that unsettled times are rare. This suggests that most of the time (in settled times), people pick up skills without being much influenced by symbolic culture, consistent with the insight that sometimes culture does not shape capacities so much as capacities shape culture (what we think and say is shaped by what we do). But she shows little interest in the question of how the transmission of skills occurs.
She does say that unsettled times exist not only at a collective, but also at an individual level, so that during times of transition in the life-course, for example after divorce, or during the transitions of adolescence, cultural texts may have more influence over us than they normally do. Many writers similarly get around the discomfort of thinking about voting as a habitual action by assuming that while it becomes habitual over time, attitudes, beliefs and rational calculus have a strong influence on whether people start voting to begin with. Since first voting occurs at the cusp of adulthood, it definitely qualifies as an unsettled time at the individual level, suggesting that reflective consideration may play a heightened role when the decision to vote or abstain is first taken.

Such a theory of skills- or habit-formation is one that is enormously appealing given various findings in political socialization and political behaviour. Meta-analyses of attitude formation research finds that the two most important periods in the life course are during childhood and then again in late adolescence/early adulthood (the ‘impressionable years’). Where measurable movement away from family socialization occurs, it tends to occur during this transitional period into adulthood (Sears 1989). This also accords with research in turnout, which finds early voting (consisting of the first 2-3 elections) as setting a mark on further participation. Early voting coincides with the transition to adulthood, raising the interesting possibility that the mechanisms at work have less to do with engaging in one’s first few elections, and more to do with engaging with them at a particular time in the life course. As already explained, the fact that Chapter Three’s analysis of interview data did not find clear evidence of contextual influence is very likely the result of a sample in which transmission was maximized. However it must be pointed out that the effects of context, even among early voters,
do not by any means erase the strong generational continuities that so many studies have found. And it is these continuities that this dissertation seeks to explain.

To sum up, then, not only is voting a habitual practice for the majority of people, the practice may normally be learned initially through observation of action, and the transmission of practical, rather than discursive knowledge. As counter-intuitive as this finding may be, it finds support in the only voting study I am aware of that looks specifically at the determinants of first vote – which finds that whether parents voted in the previous election was a much more powerful factor than any of the other predictors in the model save for parental education, including parental political interest, strength of partisanship, family discussion of politics, and a score of others (Plutzer 2002).

At this point, our ability to use culture as an explanatory variable appears to be seriously undermined. People’s motivations and self-understandings fog up the picture, rather than illuminate it. Meanings are often detachable. Practices are often learned principally through observation of action. What role is left to culture? Several prominent, young, ‘up-and-coming’ theorists have tackled this question, and in different ways, each has recommended that we must continue to make the study of cultural meaning central to our efforts – to study not only the cultural soup in which we swim, but also the conscious, unconscious and semi-conscious calculations, mental habits and ‘moral intuitions’ that support habitual practice. I argue for a slightly different approach: while the study of meanings, discourse and unconscious schemas is an important part of our investigations of cultural practice, where habituality is extensive, direct study of action itself is also highly recommended. This requires that embodied actions and skills are given a secure, separate compartment in the cultural toolkit, rather than seeing them purely as a product of the symbolic tools that otherwise fill the kit.
Abstract
Two recent, prominent theoretical projects – one employing a cognitivist, the other a pragmatist, framework - highlight the dominant role of habit in action outcomes. While these projects move a practice-theoretical agenda forward in important ways, they demonstrate a problematic aversion to practice theory’s materialist roots, seen in the prioritization of mental content and symbolic representation over embodied practice and habit. Three examples illustrate the argument that actions themselves – one’s previous actions, and observation of the actions of others - contribute directly to action outcomes in ways that are profoundly under-appreciated theoretically. An outline is offered of the tremendously variable influence of habit and reflective agency for explaining action, across different actors, contexts and practice arenas. Consideration is given to the question of theoretical revisions that would promote the study of concrete modes of cultural transmission and variation.

Introduction
There is a growing consensus that dominant models of causation in the social sciences rest on action-theoretical formulas that require too much in the way of reflectivity, rationality, and conscious intentionality from human beings. In combination with other theoretical perspectives, scholars increasingly invoke practice theory to emphasize the large role that habitual thought and behaviour play across many kinds of human activity. Two recent attempts to take better account of people’s extensive reliance on habit – one by Stephen Vaisey (2008, 2009) and Omar Lizardo (Lizardo and Strand 2010), the other by Neil Gross (2009) – concentrate on making these insights accessible to practical social research. My effort to rethink the relationship between cognition, culture and action builds on and has many affinities with, but also diverges from these efforts in certain respects. I highlight two issues. The first concerns the weight granted to reflective, versus habitual, thought and behaviour in each account. Neither account adequately captures the immense variability in the influence of reflectivity on our actions, particularly at the individual level. The second, related issue concerns the much greater attention paid to cognitive than to embodied dimensions of action in both theories. I will argue
that a full appreciation of habit’s foundations and purview requires, at times, that we get outside of people’s heads.

Building on increasing interest in dual-process models of cognition among sociologists (for a recent, insightful empirical application, see Auyero and Swistun 2008, 2009), Stephen Vaisey, Omar Lizardo and colleagues differentiate between the two very different modes of cognition and consciousness that support human thought and behaviour (Vaisey 2008, 2009; Lizardo and Strand 2010). In their description of the dual-process model, the habitual mental processes of automatic cognition (‘practical consciousness’) operate underneath our awareness and dominate and override reflective thought (‘discursive consciousness’). I agree strongly in the value of differentiating these cognitive modes, and follow these authors’ lead in using evidence from cognitive neuroscience to clarify concepts and terms. However, the role of reflectivity is too limited in Vaisey and Lizardo’s models. Neil Gross’s pragmatist approach provides a corrective. While emphasizing that habit is ubiquitous in human activity, there is equal stress on the interplay of reflectivity and habit, and on the influence of identity and value commitments. Where Gross’s pragmatist account goes too far, however, is in its insistence that meaning and interpretation – the realms of reflectivity - must always remain at the forefront of our efforts to understand causation. While reflective agency plays a larger role in outcomes than is suggested in Vaisey and Lizardo’s account, we need more flexibility on this issue, rather than an indiscriminate foregrounding of reflectivity and meaning (Camic 1986, 1998).

The type of action to be explained matters. We acquire a large class of embodied habits and practices unconsciously and unintentionally through observation and imitation, relying for transmission and reproduction on processes characterized more by apprenticeship than by scholarship (Archer 2000). Such practices, involving what Richard Biernacki calls “nonverbal
enculturation of the body (Biernacki 1999, p. 75),” rest primarily on tacit, unconsciously held schematic knowledge, rather than on discursive knowledge. Both the revisions of action theory examined here share a reluctance to take corporeal enculturation into serious consideration. Only the most cursory attention is paid to the embodied actions and practices through which people engage with the world. Instead, we are encouraged to skip immediately ahead to focus on these actions’ assumed and/or abstracted cognitive correlates. However, the schemata, over-arching values, and mutable meanings associated with embodied practices are not always, I will argue, central to an understanding of these practices’ enactment and prevalence. Indeed, a focus on meaning may mislead us. Three illustrative examples are considered in order to develop this argument: the practices of banking, cutting class, and voting.

Examination of such practices, which encourage agnosticism about the causal importance of both meaning and reflective agency, helps to make a crucial theoretical point. An insistence on the enormously variable relevance of meaning and reflective agency for explaining action, not only temporally (Emirbayer and Mische 1998), but also across contexts, actors, and practice arenas, should continue to find strong and explicit support within any practice-theoretical approach, for two reasons. First, it honours practice theory’s materialist understanding of sub-symbolic, embodied experience as an important source and foundation of our knowledge and dispositions. Second, it takes seriously the insight that embodied practice is durable but fickle, in that practical capacities can easily slip their ideational moorings to serve new discursive ends (Swidler 1986).

The empirical cases I review show that causal investigation of the sources and spread of habitual, embodied practice will sometimes benefit from an empirical focus on action that brackets the meanings actions carry, while continuing to regard these practices as expressions of
culture. Resistance to such a move has deep theoretical roots. The subordination of action to ideation within practice theory, and dominant formulations of culture since the 1970s, have limited the study of culture to symbolic vehicles of meaning. Both contribute to the long-standing marginalization of behavioural habit within sociological inquiry. A return to older, more extensive definitions of culture, which take in all aspects of different ‘ways of life’ is one simple way to encourage social research that grants greater space to an explicit interest in the way that embodied practices structure our consciousness, actions, and lives. A more inclusive notion of culture will allow us to acknowledge the direct contribution of material aspects or modes of cultural transmission and variation to action outcomes within practice-theoretical frameworks. Culture resides not only in its representations, not only in the relations between practice and representation, but also in embodied practice itself.

**Issues and terms**

Practice theory’s great promise resides in its ability to transcend inflexible action-structure oppositions. This is accomplished in part by linking micro- and macro-levels of analysis, for example by establishing the connection between habitual behaviour at the individual level and social location (Bourdieu 1998, 1977; Giddens 1984). Practice theory urges a reconsideration of the long-standing and problematic disciplinary division of labour in which the study of habitual, embodied behaviour was ceded to psychology (Camic 1986), leaving sociologists to study what is increasingly felt to be an excessively rational and/or reflective actor (Archer and Titter 2000).

A difficulty follows, however, from practice theory’s tendency, in its social scientific elaborations as in its Wittgensteinian philosophical roots, to predict reproduction, or
conservation, and to lean toward material or structural determinism (Ortner 1984; Crossley 2001; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and von Savigny 2000). The challenge of acknowledging the centrality to human beings of habitual practice while avoiding determinism has been taken up by many distinguished scholars, including John Dewey ([1929] 1981); Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1965, 1962), Hans Joas (1996), and Margaret Archer (2000). The challenge is to provide space and power for normativity, reflectivity or creativity, as well as change, within a practice-theoretical account.

Determinism is avoided in Vaisey and Lizardo’s ‘implicit culture’ argument by emphasizing the creativity of our unconscious cognitive processes and dispositions, as in Bourdieu’s original formulation. While many see some degree of agency present in the enactment of habitual response, if only in the form of corporeal effort (Emirbayer and Mische 1998), pragmatists rebel against the diminishment of conscious, reflective agency in the Bourdieusian account, and subscribe to a more robust conception of creativity. But even ardent admirers of Hans Joas’s (1996) authoritative explication of pragmatist theory have noted that the practical utility of the approach is hobbled by a lack of conceptual precision, most glaringly in the absence of definitions of the central concepts of creativity and habit themselves (Camic 1998, Campbell 1998).

In various re-workings or ‘deepenings’ of the Bourdieusian and Joasian theoretical frameworks, there is a tendency to deal with the issue by dissolving the binary - by seeing reflectivity as a habit (Crossley 2001) or as arising from habit (Dalton 2004). My argument here is not meant to challenge attempts at comprehensive theoretical syntheses; what I counsel is that we take our time getting there. If we are not careful, what is lost in such otherwise satisfying resolutions is an appreciation of the practical social-scientific gains that can accrue from
continuing to distinguish between, and untangle, the varying contributions of reflectivity and habit to action outcomes.

Cognitive neuroscientists continue to find evidence that ‘automatic’ and ‘controlled’ cognitive systems and processes are qualitatively distinct, separately evolved, involve different parts of the brain, and are activated in different contexts. Habitual or automatic thought is not simply a quieter, faster version of the reflective or controlled process, but an entirely different one. I am in agreement with Vaisey and Lizardo that this evidence of distinctive mental architecture and processing style provides strong support for continued analytic differentiation of habitual and reflective consciousness and thought. Accordingly, the key terms of the argument in this article aim for consistency with the most recent neuroscientific research into dual-process social cognition (Lieberman 2002; 2007; 2010). Given the proliferation of terminology across the many disciplinary fields with something to say about these issues, the clarity and consistency offered by such grounding is welcome.

**Habituality vs. Reflectivity, or Automatic vs. Controlled cognition**

The definitions of habituality and reflectivity established below will be adhered to for the remainder of the chapter, and therefore require close attention if subsequent arguments are to be followed successfully. I define the contributions of the purposeful, creative actor as those of reflective agency. The focus is on reflectivity that influences, rather than merely decorates, embellishes, or otherwise provides window-dressing to outcomes (although there is often no easy way to tell whether reflectivity has been influential or not). The processes of reflective agency

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16 See Stanovich (1999, p. 145) for a review of accounts of dual-process theories of reasoning. These describe the automatic system as associative, heuristic, tacit, implicit, interactional, experiential, quick & inflexible, intuitive, and recognition-primed, and the reflective system as rule-based, analytic, explicit, rational, and intellective. For a highly readable review of this research, see Wilson 2002), for another comprehensive treatment see Gilovich et al (2002).
are open-ended, in the sense that they are not fully reducible to the demands of the situation. In other words, reflective agency is characterized by a conscious intentionality that transcends immediate contexts, so that we are not talking about a Bourdieusian situational plasticity of disposition, but about purposeful interventions able to guide and sometimes over-ride dispositions, whether these are the result of socialization or evolutionary adaptation. In sum, reflective agency refers to open-ended, intentional, conscious, causally effective, symbolic or discursive thought.

Habitual behaviour, conversely, is based in habitual thought, which is unintentional in the sense that it does not itself conceive of any purpose beyond that of guiding the actor (often on a kind of ‘auto-pilot’) through the immediate situation. When we vote habitually, each opportunity is approached in a practical manner directed at how we are going to accomplish the act. The automatic processes on which habit rest make use of the unconsciously retained residue or sediment of previously experienced contexts, actions, and associations, internalized in the neural architecture of the (primarily) older areas of the brain. Habit relies on tacit knowledge, which is highly efficient, pre-reflective, sub-symbolic, and oriented toward practical involvement (thus is concerned with the potential dangers and rewards – of many different kinds - that one’s involvement in a situation may entail). Tacit knowledge is not at all like the discursive knowledge of the reflective subject. It is as if the body, not the mind, understands, where habit and habitual thought are concerned.

Tacit knowledge, in this sense, is embodied knowledge. To distinguish different kinds of thought, knowledge and action as more, or less, corporeal or embodied is at one level nonsensical. Despite this, the usefulness of this term, in its ability to convey the essence of tacit knowledge, justifies its use. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, habit “….. is knowledge in the hands,
which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort (1962, p. 144).” It is knowledge not only in the hands, but received from all the senses, so that seeing something ‘with our own eyes’ establishes a certainty that is of a different order than that of certainties reached through speculation or logical deduction. We can describe, reflect upon and otherwise intellectualize habitual, embodied practice and tacit knowledge, but this is a separate endeavour, taking us outside of the realm of habit itself.

While the differentiation of automatic and controlled cognitive process is relatively easy to understand when considering embodied actions like riding a bicycle or baking bread (where the “know-how” dimension of not-easily-articulable tacit/practical/habitual knowledge is engaged), the differences between automaticity and reflectivity in the realm of belief and judgment (“know-that”) are more challenging to convey and to grasp. There are several key differences. First, tacit understanding and ‘mental habit’ are based on a very simple associative (non-directional), ‘pattern-matching’ logic, in which the most salient, accessible, and strongest associations dominate outcomes. Discursive consciousness, in contrast, can avail itself of a much larger fund of logical rules and deliberative strategies, including more sophisticated understandings of causation, and can intentionally combine remote thoughts and memories with more easily accessible ones. Secondly, unconscious, automatic judgment processes are affect-based, so that we ‘feel’ something to be true. These feelings and the beliefs based upon them are not easy to shake, even in the face of apparent contradiction. Affect also influences conscious judgment, but other criteria also come into play. Finally, automatic processes are extremely fast, parallel-processing vast amounts of data beneath conscious awareness. Reflective consciousness is, in contrast, slow and costly to the brain, and therefore much more sensitive to fatigue.
Reflective consciousness is reliant on serial processing. We can keep only one thought (or in some cases, two) in consciousness at a time. To prove this to yourself, try to think about how to improve this paragraph and at the same time decide what to have for lunch. When feelings run high, motivation is low, or cognitive load is heavy, reflective judgment may simply consider and accept the default judgments offered by automatic processes. This means that ‘outputs’ alone are not decisive for a determination of reflectivity’s presence or activation (Lieberman 2002, Gilovich et al 2002, Wilson, T. 2002, Stanovich 2009).

Two types of activities that are habits in a common-sense way, but under the definitions developed here are not, are briefly considered in order to sharpen distinctions: the rote performance of reflective tasks, and a ‘habit’ of rationality or reflection.

As we become more proficient at reflective cognitive tasks, we achieve a degree of automaticity. However, the routinization found in such tasks as repeated calculations, for example, do not make these tasks habitual according to the definition developed here. Their execution remains reliant on logical rules as well as on singular attention, however efficient we become. A different kind of attention is required from the ‘in-the-zone’ attention a proficient musician gives to his playing, or the football player gives to the field. In symbolic, reflective work, we cannot parallel process, but must attend to each task serially, and accuracy requires we remain fully conscious of what we are doing. In contrast, reflective thought interrupts and often sabotages proficient embodied performance. At the same time, unconscious processes do not consist exclusively of ‘lower-order’ capacities. They involve not only perceptual abilities, but also interpretation, evaluation, and a simple type of goal setting, as when associations trigger activity (Wilson, T. 2002). These examples (mathematical calculations versus proficient piano-
playing) give examples at the far end of the spectrum in order to sharpen distinctions – obviously most tasks involve a greater combination of habitual and reflective thought.

Confusion can also arise if we talk about ‘habits of reflectivity or rationality’ within a cognitivist-inspired conceptual framework. Experimental research using functional neuro-imagining shows reflectivity to be more regularly engaged among some actors than others, tendencies tied to personality (neurotics and introverts, for example, show higher levels of automatic processing) (Lieberman 2010). Variation is also tied to factors such as education and occupation, which can be expected not only to affect the regularly with which reflectivity is engaged, but also the shape and sophistication of these efforts (see Knorr Cetina’s discussion of the non-habitual practices of knowledge workers (2000)). The main point here is that we must differentiate a ‘habit’ of reflectivity from habit as I have defined it. Habitual thought refers to thoughts and beliefs formed through association and made more accessible through repetition and recency, not to greater or lesser tendencies to reflect.

**Voting as Habit**

This is a good point at which to review the evidence from the political behaviour research regarding ‘voting as habit’, and to ask exactly how voting is habitual in the terms just outlined. The claim that voting has a strong habitual component is based on several different kinds of evidence.

Consistencies in levels of turnout over time across groups have long been noted by observers, with references to the “habit” of voting present in voting research since the 1920s. Beginning in the 1950s, longitudinal panel data, which tracks the same people over time, showed that such consistencies exist at the individual, as well as at the aggregate level. The majority of people either (nearly) always vote or (nearly) always abstain (Campbell et al 1960, Miller and Shanks 1996, Huckfeldt and Sprague 1985, Fowler 2006). Indeed, voting in the previous
election is one of the strongest predictor of future turnout that we have (Green & Shachar 2000, Gerber, Green and Shachar 2003, Denny and Doyle 2009, Geys 2006, Nickerson 2004, Brody and Sniderman 1977). As Brody and Sniderman put it:

Regularly of (past) voting emerges as the most important direct cause of electoral participation……It towers over the only other factor directly related to turnout, the individual’s level of political involvement. All other background factors (most importantly education) operate indirectly through their relationship with either or both levels of involvement and regularity of past participation (Brody and Sniderman 1977, 347-8).

A number of experimental studies find that stimulation of voting (through a plea to vote) in one election dramatically increases the likelihood of turnout in subsequent elections above and beyond any measurable change in attitudes, opinion, or further exposure to mobilization (Gerber et al 2003). Evidence of habit formation is also demonstrated with latent growth curve analysis of turnout (Plutzer 2002). An early study that took variability in reflectivity and habituality into account found that issues affect turnout only among the minority of voters who are not consistent voters or abstainers (Brody and Sniderman 1977). There is also evidence that context (especially how competitive electoral contests are) affects turnout principally among early voters (in whom voting/abstaining is often not yet habitual), and that the effects of context during this period extend throughout the life-course of the average voter (Miller and Shanks 1996, Franklin 2004, Johnston et al 2007). Finally, it seems that habituality is established within an individual’s first two (Johnston et al. 2007) or three elections (Miller and Shanks 1996, Franklin 2004).

Habit is defined differently by different writers, and some use another word entirely, hoping to escape negative connotations by substituting the archaic term “consuetude” (Green and Shachar 2000), or referring to voter “inertia” (Plutzer 2002). Those whose empirical work focuses on short-term influences tend to talk about the self-reinforcing, or even the “addictive” nature of voting. Over time, the more often one votes, the stronger the taste for further voting
grows. Here, the claim is that one’s behaviour itself has an independent effect on one’s subsequent actions. The difficulty these investigators face is proving that the effect is truly independent - that what appears to be an effect of previous voting is not truly a result of some unobserved or unspecified change or difference in the respondent or in the contexts they encounter.

Green and Shachar (2000) and Gerber, Green and Shachar (2003) have gone furthest in attempting to overcome doubts on this score. First, they have included a heroically extensive and comprehensive set of predictor variables in their analyses – in effect, just about everything available in election surveys. In addition to controlling for demographic variables, and such factors as residential mobility, registration requirements, region, and weather or transport difficulties, they include measures of exposure to campaign contacts and influences, respondents’ evaluations of candidates and platforms, perceived closeness of contests, as well as many measures of social psychological orientations toward politics, including level of political interest, interpersonal trust, and civic duty. They use both survey and experimental data, and a variety of methods, such as a non-recursive ‘instrumental variables’ approach and two-stage conditional probit models, designed to eliminate the influence of other, unknown factors that might have encouraged voting in both elections. Findings regarding the influence of past participation remain dramatic.

Those whose empirical work focuses on the long-term, specifically on consistencies in voting behaviour over the life-course, across generational cohorts and voting populations, talk about habit in both a more general and a more specific sense – as a standing decision established early in one’s voting career, within the first several elections. To relate the foregoing discussion of cognitive habituality and reflectivity to these findings, it is habitual consciousness that keeps
our behaviour constant over time. We see the presence of habituality in the evidence that factors influential to the likelihood of voting early on in one’s voting career, through the engagement of rational calculation, seem to have a much more muted effect once habit is established (Miller and Shanks 1996, Franklin 2004, Johnston et al 2007, Brody and Sniderman 1977). It is important to stress that this does not mean that established voters and abstainers are not aware of contexts and issues, or do not give them thought – only that these reflective efforts are not causally effective in terms of whether voting occurs.

When a voter says that they feel strongly that it is important to vote, but they cannot explain why (or can do so only tentatively), this is a good indication that the activity is under the sway of automatic or habitual cognition. This is activity we might describe as guided by the heart, or the gut, depending on where we are from. Alternately, we might also say that we have very good reasons, carefully considered, which we have now forgotten. Past influences – both contextual and reflective, translated into and stored as unconscious cognitive associations that trigger attraction or repulsion - is exactly what habitual consciousness consists of.

Similarly if a non-voter has nothing but good things to say about democracy, but somehow never gets around to voting, we can infer that habitual cognition does not favour participation, whatever the opinions of reflective consciousness. The unconscious associations and triggers that attract the voter to the activity simply are not present. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible for people who act habitually to justify their decisions convincingly and at length. The only clue we have that the reflective brain is not in charge is that the outcome is always the same. The voter may vote with more or less enthusiasm, even loudly complaining and asking why she bothers, but where habit is entrenched, she will nearly always go. This provides
one possible way to understand my finding that second-generation immigrant voters are often a little more cynical in their views than non-voters are.

At the same time, as will be explained in the following chapter, however valuable it is to differentiate the different modes of cognition and consciousness, we have to be careful not to suggest that once habit is established, reflective efforts can never influence outcomes. We are never subject to just one mode or cognition or the other. It is a question of which dominates, and depending on actor and context, there is always the possibility that the balance of power can change.

Understanding the strong part habituality plays in turnout injects a dynamic element into our understanding of voting. The opposite assumption - that each opportunity to vote inspires a fresh decision about whether or not to go to the polls, encourages a static understanding of political participation in which the influence of history, both at the individual and the group level, is largely ignored.

The greatest opposition to the idea of habitual voting comes from those who feel that the label cheapens or degrades both the activity and participation in it. Most people who vote or abstain habitually do not feel that they are in the throes of habit. There is much talk in the scholarly literature of identities, political interest, moral commitments, values or duties, all of which seem on the surface to be opposed to habituality. This belies a simplistic view of habit. Habitual practices can be (indeed normally are) accompanied by strong identities, values, and commitments. These may be unconsciously held, as Stephen Vaisey argues (to be discussed below), but they may also be quite consciously reflected upon. The idea of voting as habit is perfectly consistent with the notion that voting is accompanied by deep feelings and thoughts
that are difficult to measure or express – like our sense of ourselves as a particular (responsible, informed, serious) sort of person, or our sense that an activity is worthwhile.

The more important issue is whether such feelings, values or commitments precede or follow upon voting. I would say this remains very much an open question, and much of the remainder of this chapter is concerned with establishing the plausibility of the idea that our actions - those we and others important to us engage in - often determine what is in our heads. Before we get there, however, the next section provides a comparison of Vaisey and Lizardo’s implicit culture argument and Gross’s pragmatist one, focusing especially on the role of reflective agency and habit within each. The overall argument in this section is that one account restricts reflective agency too severely, while the other gives it too much rein. In both cases, the emphasis on cognition leads to a neglect of embodiment.

**Reflective agency in the implicit culture and pragmatist theories of action**

**Implicit culture**

Stephen Vaisey and Omar Lizardo want to refute approaches to causality that reduce culture’s role to provision of tools of post-hoc sense-making, with culture “rationalizing, making sense of, or (at most) allowing action rather than motivating it (Vaisey 2009, p. 1680).” To this and other ends, Vaisey and Lizardo use cognitive theory to challenge the ‘toolkit’ model of culture’s role in action (Swidler 1986, 2001, 2008), which is criticized for its blinkered focus on discursive realms (Vaisey 2008, 2009; Lizardo and Strand 2010). The ‘strong’ practice theory approach these authors defend highlights the extensive role that unconscious, automatic cognition, from its seat in practical consciousness or habitus, plays in ordering and providing coherence to our behaviour, through what they call ‘implicit culture’.
To explain the dual-process model of cognition and consciousness, Vaisey uses Jonathan Haidt’s (2006) metaphor of elephant and rider. Reflectivity is represented by the rider, who sits atop the animal and putatively controls the reins, but has very little control over the elephant in any direct contest of wills. The rider often finds herself second-guessing, explaining and justifying the elephant’s actions, just as work in the tool-kit tradition finds. Vaisey describes the unconscious processes of the elephant with the favoured metaphors of cognitive anthropologists, explaining that practical consciousness operates through neural structures that excel at recognizing patterns corresponding with schemas of various kinds. This is accomplished via an enormously influential ‘recognition software’ that is built up through experience, and which allows us to parallel process and act upon vast amounts of sensory data efficiently, quickly, and without interference from the conscious mind (D’Andrade 1995). The flashes of attraction and aversion or repulsion that follow from schema activation are difficult to resist, affecting our judgments and behavioural responses in insidious and decisive ways. All of this is by now familiar to us as the operation of automatic or habitual cognitive process.

Vaisey (2009) seeks to reclaim a more robust causal role for culture (and normativity) by recognizing the intuitive preferences of practical consciousness as providing us with a set of motivating values. The affective reactions arising from unconscious processes provide us, he says, with a moral compass, which can be captured by a few general ethical orientations or worldviews that predict our future actions. This suggests that unconsciously held values motivate behaviour. He leaves to another time the critical question of where the values of practical consciousness come from. However, in cognitive scientific accounts, the schemas of automatic cognition build up automatically in the course of our experiences of the world. If values arise as automatically from experience as schemas do, then we may be talking about lagged-effects,
individually tracked situationalism, but it is still variability in experience that generates diversity in habitual thought and values. There is little evidence of conscious, reflective agency here.

An ironic consequence of these theorizing efforts, at least given Vaisey’s stated desire to escape ‘situationalist’ logics, is to arrive at a position in which people have very little in the way of reflective agency as I have defined it. In the first arm of the ‘dual-process’ model, the toolkit or discursive cultural actor is a mostly deluded brandisher of tools engaged in rationalizing and justifying behaviour over which he has little conscious control. Meanwhile, in the second, ‘strong practice theory’ arm of the model, we see a subject who is largely a slave to his experiential history, with ‘implicit culture’, formed through his experience of the world, controlling him beneath conscious awareness. The proposed theoretical synthesis therefore provides space for both a ‘Quixotic Tool-Waver’ and a ‘Deeply Programmed Practitioner’, but very little room exists here for the creative transcendence of habitus by what we might call a ‘Conscious Game-Changer’.

The simplified dual-process model Vaisey and Lizardo and Strand portray successfully brings the enormous role that automatic processes play into plain view, but at the price of leaving the impression that behaviour will be governed by either discursive or practical consciousness (with one of the other, nearly always the latter, strongly dominating outcomes). For example, Lizardo and Strand (2010) provide a model of the contexts which predict a dominant influence of practical or alternately, of discursive consciousness in people’s thoughts and actions. They outline different levels of stability in external, objectified institutional realms, which prescribe or endorse certain actions over others. In conditions of moderate stability (or in their terms, when institutional domains contain gaps where externalized cultural scaffolding has broken down), discursive or ‘explicit’ culture flourishes superficially in the attempt to justify behaviour, but
practical or ‘implicit’ culture remains more influential in shaping response, making creative (but unconscious) use of established patterns of association and action to find solutions. It is only when instability becomes extreme, especially when expectations are continually disappointed, that practical consciousness finally admits defeat and reflective agency is empowered. Through conscious plan, we adopt new beliefs, enact new rituals and routines, and eventually re-train practical consciousness.

There is no doubt that the schemas of practical consciousness are not tools we swing around blithely. However, we must be careful not to exaggerate the extent to which they control us. Some people are quite good at ignoring their ‘gut’ reactions, or at least at maintaining an attitude of distrust towards them. We see this most dramatically among people who successfully manage addictions and various anxiety disorders, but also among people who are aware of their biases and try to compensate for them in various ways. The either-or quality of the model is problematic, not just intuitively, but also in light of the evidence of cognitive neuroscience itself, to be discussed shortly.

When we must respond to something very quickly, or when engaged with a matter that does not interest us or draw our conscious attention, automatic cognition rules, and has a direct pipeline to centers of motor control. But where motivation exists, ‘cognitive load’ is not excessive, and reflectivity is triggered, we may stop to think about things, intentionally imagining a problem or situation from different angles, seeking further information, and employing various deliberative strategies (Wilson, T. 2002). The either-or cognitive model, as portrayed by Vaisey and Lizardo, does not adequately capture the complexities of our cognitive processes in real time, particularly the interplay of the two modes of consciousness, and the way that this interplay varies across individuals.


Post-positivist causation

In contrast, the pragmatist approach Neil Gross draws upon in constructing his model of causal mechanisms puts the interplay of habit and creativity at the center of its understanding of how humans operate in the world. Gross argues that social mechanisms can be understood as being comprised of actors responding to problem situations with habitual responses (cognitive and behavioural, individual and collective) to fashion responses of different kinds, but “always with the possibility, greater in some circumstances than others, that a novel way of responding to a problem could emerge for any of the actors involved, potentially altering the workings of the mechanism (Gross 2010, 369).” While reflectivity and creativity are not the same thing, they clearly bear strong similarities in a pragmatist account. In Gross’s words, “(o)nly when preexisting habits fail to solve a problem at hand does an action-situation rise to the forefront of consciousness as problematic. Then…..humankind’s innate capacity for creativity comes into play as actors dream up possible solutions (Gross 2010 366).” Thus conscious and creative reflectivity assumes its most substantial causal power during times of severe instability, when the old ways (customs and habits) are manifestly useless, but it is not limited to such contexts. This contrasts with Lizardo and Strand’s (2010) contention that, in all but the most extreme circumstances, practical consciousness (the seat of habit) excels at the creative transpositions or ‘regulated improvisations’ demanded by moderate contextual instability, which occur beneath conscious notice.

Interestingly, social psychologists engaged in research on dual process cognition sometimes cite philosophers in the American pragmatist tradition when explaining that a lack of coherence in the automatic system’s perceptions or ‘solutions’ sets off an alarm that alerts and activates reflective consciousness. Note that the alarm is not under the control of the conscious
mind, which remains unaware of what is going on, until (and if) called upon. In Gross’s account, in contrast, problem situations seem to be defined in part through the interpretive work of the conscious mind (2010, p. 367). However, some reconciliation of the two accounts on this point is possible through consideration of evidence that the reflective system can adjust the alarm’s threshold by registering its interests and concerns about any given situation at the outset (Lieberman 2002). This suggests that the conscious mind can set a lower alarm threshold when it anticipates problems, or sees an opportunity to move toward important goals, and wants to be ‘in on the action’.

The point here is that in the most recent work on dual process cognition, the two systems not only work together under most circumstances, they are fully recursive. The engagement of reflectivity is not rare, and does not occur only when the dust settles. Aside from influencing the threshold of alarm, studies show that activation of the parts of the brain involved in reflective thought can regulate automatic processes in significant ways. For example, it seems that giving a name to our fears can indeed help reduce them. The detection of danger and conflict, and the release of adrenaline, are a specialty of the automatic, pre-reflective system, which is inhibited (to some degree), simply by the activation of reflective thought (Lieberman 2002). We can indeed educate habit, as Dewey and other pragmatists and phenomenologists have long argued, with research on neuro-plasticity confirming that effortful reflective thought can alter the neural circuitry of the brain (Schwartz and Begley 2002).

None of this guarantees that reflective consciousness will have a large influence on outcomes, since reflective efforts may be desultory. It seems that we routinely overestimate how much we engage in reflectivity, since reflective thought - like the refrigerator light – is always ‘on’ when we check. Also, people vary in the degree to which they value reflectivity, innovation,
and tradition, and this affects how diligently they will apply themselves to reflective efforts (Stanovich 1999). However, the pragmatists’ claim that reflective agency may appear in response to many different types of problem situations, not only in extremely disordered ones, appears to find strong support here. Gross argues persuasively that there are many outcomes that require we acknowledge not only “the sheer force of tradition or institutionalization (2010, p. 268)” but also the influence of identity commitments and the values on which these are based. This need to provide space for transformative agency is reminiscent of Swidler’s suggestion that what is missing from Vaisey’s model is a place for the purposeful actor who enhances or short-circuits her inherited practical legacy of habits by intentionally seeking out new contexts and skills (2008, pg 616). It also recalls Archer’s descriptions of the manner in which the ‘internal conversation,’ guided by identity’s commitments, mediates between structure and agency (2000), as well as Emirbayer and Mische’s conception of agency’s ‘projective’ and ‘evaluative’ capacities to imagine and orient the actor toward alternate possibilities (1998).

However I will argue that Gross goes too far in this direction, judging by the prominence given to cognitive habits, interpretation and meaning in his elaborations of his action framework. He insists that despite the ubiquity of habit, pride of place goes to identity and meaning (p. 368), that a pragmatist specification of mechanisms is “interpretive all the way down (p. 369),” and that the “the study of social mechanisms must be undertaken alongside a project of cultural interpretation (p. 369).” What is problematic here is the unconditional and imperative nature of these statements. There is no question that cultural lenses mediate our interpretation of situations, and that values and identity commitments sometimes influence the acquisition and enactment of practices. What is troublesome is the suggestion that they always do so, in explicable, influential, and traceable ways, making cultural meanings the prime focus for causal
explanation in every case. Where habit is behavioural, or highly embodied, its enactment will always occur in specific cultural contexts, and we should not ignore these contexts, but neither should they always be at the forefront of our analyses. At times, a focus on action itself – on the embodied processes of acquisition and consolidation of physical skills - may reward our explanatory efforts more, as will be demonstrated shortly.

Gross stipulates that habits at the individual level can be both cognitive and behavioural, but undercuts this with a lack of interest in the concrete (behavioural) aspect of embodied habits. He gives cognitive habits priority and greater prominence. He defines ‘cognitive-affective’ habits as “habitual ways individual actors have of understanding and responding emotionally to situations in general, resulting from their psychosocial experience or their biological endowments or propensities (370).” One example he gives is of a depressive’s habit of defeatist thinking. We have already seen that the tendency toward reflective or automatic cognitive process varies with personality (neuroticism, introversion) and occupation. Similarly, tendencies towards more or less reflectivity correlate with scores on flexible-thinking and dogmatism scales, measured by levels of agreement with statements such as “no one can talk me out of something I know is right” and ‘a person should always consider new possibilities’ (Stanovich 1999). It is fair to describe such tendencies as the result of biological endowments and psychosocial experience. However, as explained above, I think it preferable to describe such global differences as pertaining to actors, rather than to different types of habits, in order to keep the category distinctions sharp (to avoid the oxymoronic idea of ‘habitual reflectivity’).

However, if we want to get specific about the cognitive content of habitual understanding and response, then cognitive-affective habits can revealingly highlight the mental schemas that different actors employ, such as a ‘glass half-empty’ tendency to associate failure with every
sub-optimal outcome. Further examples of cognitive habits supplied by Gross seem to fall into this category of habitually activated thought-patterns, such as ‘orientations toward sexual conquest’ or consumerism, focusing attention on the schemas which, among some actors, associate sexual or acquisitive behaviour with a wider range of situations than is normally the case.

What is problematic here, where embodied activities are concerned, is the overshadowing of physical activities by their cognitive aspects. If we are not careful, we can forget that trying to have sex as much as possible, or consuming a lot, are corporeal practices, supported by thoughts or cognitive associations (to which our access is limited) but not consisting of them. Actions always have cognitive support, but the unconscious associations and triggers that support action are by definition unavailable to us. This does not mean that we cannot study them and their relationship to action. Experiments have found, for example, that men who score high on sexual aggressivity are more likely to see women as sexually attractive if they have been primed to think about power and authority first (John Bargh’s work described in Wilson, T. 2002, p. 34).

For these particular men, it seems plausible to link sexual activity with something like a habitual orientation towards sexual conquest. Even in this limited case, however, the abstract, discursive description of an unconscious association may presume too much, injecting a certain kind of intentionality into the equation that is unwarranted.

Gross is certainly not alone in steering attention toward representations of action and away from action itself. The electric insight that Ann Swidler’s 1986 article delivers is that the legacy of Puritanism is not effectively preserved in a high regard for ‘thrift’ or ‘industry’ (part of discursive knowledge), but in the survival of concrete, embodied habits. It is relatively easier to obtain discursive knowledge (for example to subscribe to the belief that self-discipline is helpful
to success) than it is to put such knowledge to use (by actually staying focused and getting things done). Practical skills are in critically short supply among actors because example, repetition and opportunity are all required to acquire embodied capacities and the tacit knowledge upon which they rest.

But Swidler ends up downplaying the role of embodied practices and skills in her theory. Despite their importance to her arguments, she steps away from them, calling for analysis of strategies of action, rather than of actions themselves, to determine culture’s causal effects. Strategies of action are “persistent ways of ordering action through time (Swidler 1986 p. 273).” These skills (for example decision-making strategies), refer to and are abstracted from activity. We identify them by examining the discourse that accompanies action or we simply infer their existence when we observe certain consistencies of behaviour. They describe habitual behaviour or practice, but also (like “an orientation toward sexual conquest”) assign coherence and larger purpose to activity. Examples include “moral work on the self,” or “relying on selling one’s skills in a market (Swidler 1986, P. 275 and p.277).” The problem is that such symbolic representations of practice involve translations and interpretations that prejudge activity, slotting it from the start into symbolic categories of interest to the observer. Obviously interpretation and definition of activity occurs any time we talk about it, but smaller and larger leaps can be distinguished.

Gross gives us only one example of a behavioural habit, and the criteria by which to class habits as cognitive or behavioural are unclear. Referencing Bittner’s (1967) study of the policing of skid row, he describes a police officer’s habit of dealing with some problem situations without formal invocation of the law as behavioural habit, a result of on-the-job training and “exposure to the police subculture.” But high levels of sexual activity and
consumerism are also supported by exposure to subcultures, and the relevant behaviours are similarly situationally evoked and composed of a variety of related practices built up through experience. And police officers dispensing discipline in the field use schemas to guide them just as avid consumers or the sexually obsessed do.

We should therefore always explicitly acknowledge that embodied habits have both behavioural and cognitive aspects, both of which are deserving of study. By over-emphasizing the cognitive, we risk making an intellectualist category mistake (Ryle [1949] 2009). Our labelling and interpretation of these activities in discursive terms may misrepresent the behavioural end of these activities and mislead us about their foundations.

The crux of the matter is this - focusing attention on the meanings of embodied practices or habits, and downplaying the corporeal element of action, implies that to find the underlying cause of of actions, or of cultural difference, we need to focus on what is in people’s heads. In the following section, I question this assumption with three examples – one from Gross’s work, one from Vaisey’s, and one from my own investigation of the practice of voting. All three examples, in different ways, build the case that action exemplars are more directly influential to actors’ subsequent action than a focus on meanings would lead us to believe.

Three examples of action as structure

Example One: Contagions of action – Banking

To illustrate the necessity of a rich analysis of meaning within his approach to causality, Gross says that a pragmatist approach “would insist that meaning is not reducible to belief in Hedstrom’s sense of propositions (e.g., that a bank is or is not solvent) (Gross 2009, p. 369).” A ‘belief-formation mechanism,’ (according to which a run on the bank is explained by a contagion of belief arising from observation of others’ actions), requires, Gross says, a cultural analysis of
all the assumptions and beliefs that underlie the insolvency belief, concerning the nature of banks, monetary systems, financial interests, and so on. The reason? Because the mechanism “presupposes that actors understand” all this.

But what if the supporting beliefs that underlie a run on the bank among many of the people involved are even more rudimentary than Hedstrom and Swedberg’s ‘belief-formation’ mechanism implies? Describing action from the outside, as intellectuals, we too readily infer the existence of a propositional belief of the kind necessary for logical explanation. Among many or most of the relevant actors, the underlying cognitive action may be much simpler (something like *money in danger! get money!*). Reflectivity may be only cursorily involved, and severely hobbled by high levels of anxiety.

In other words, it might be more useful to think of the mechanism underlying a run on the bank as consisting of a contagion of action, rather than of belief, among some of the actors involved. This implies that emotional convictions leading to action sometimes rely on unconscious cognitive processes that bypass (or more accurately, make very partial and highly idiosyncratic use of) the ideational cultural system Gross describes. If we are writing a history of financial institutions and looking for the mechanisms behind the actions of politicians or pension fund managers, an analysis of the entire cultural system surrounding financial institutions makes sense. We expect such actors to have high levels of knowledge about such matters, and to be able to justify their actions discursively.

In contrast, many non-experts use banks without really understanding anything much about them or about how they work - the same way they use microwave ovens. The use of a bank is for many people an embodied practice and habit passed along within families, supported mainly by tacit, rather than discursive knowledge. Putting money in the bank is what you do with
it to keep it safe. You learn how by watching your parents, and then you do it, too. Of course some people are more interested in banking that this, but many are not.

Certainly, there is an immensely complex web of associations called into play by the unconscious brain to make sense of a vision of people fleeing anxiously from a bank with their money, but by definition, we have very limited access to these associations. By putting all emphasis on belief-formation, we neglect consideration of the mechanisms through which observation of others’ actions sometimes inspire our own actions more or less directly. The next example illustrates the importance of action histories.

**Example Two: Practical capacities - Cutting class**

Vaisey (2009) claims that consistencies in action produced by automatic cognitive processes reflect ethical orientations or worldviews, and that these worldviews appear to predict future action. When forced to choose, he shows, people can identify which orientation best describes their unconsciously held preferences (for example, a tendency towards rule following or pleasure seeking), and that these orientations have an association with future behaviours independent of church attendance or a variety of other factors. But what if our previous actions structure our future responses more directly than either the thoughts or values associated with those actions do?

If this were the case, the values Vaisey identifies may simply track continuities across actions past, present and future, not only within individuals, but also within groups of people who identify strongly with each other. For example, ‘cutting class’ (to take an example of deviant behaviour Vaisey is interested in) might appear to be a new behaviour for teenagers, but it may turn out to be a variation on taking ‘sick days’ from school in childhood. Our acquired competencies structure our future situational responses, and the ‘values’ that appear to support
these competencies may be rationalizations, just as the toolkit model predicts. That they are *unconsciously held* rationalizations does not change this. From this point of view, it doesn’t necessarily matter how parents understand or explain their indulgences with regard to their child’s staying home – whether they simply allow it frequently, without comment, or dispense ‘mental health days’ with strident talk about the excessive demands of state-organized education. Either way, if a child’s teachers stress the importance of never missing school, the child who is frequently allowed to stay home is likely (at some point) to begin to think of herself as not very rule-oriented, but this discursive or ideational representation of the tendency to act in certain ways is *not necessarily* at the root of future action (though in some cases it may be). And even if parents have not allowed the child to miss school, the precedent may be set in a different way – through observation of parental practice in analogous settings, for example, their work-related habits.

What this example shows is that the mere presence of a cognitive antecedent to action does not make values or beliefs the prime movers where action is concerned. If the unconsciously held values of Vaisey’s respondents precede the occurrence of the particular behaviour, it may simply be an artifact of the temporal bracketing imposed on the inquiry. However, there is a ‘chicken or egg’ quality to the argument at this point, with actions and beliefs or values all combined in a recursive tangle. Actions certainly give rise to sensibilities, values, beliefs, and views of the world. Is a focus on these not more interesting than a focus on actions themselves, mute as they are? Is it simply a question of the investigator’s tastes and interests?

The answer is that a focus on meaning can mislead us if what we are trying to explain is the occurrence, prevalence, or spread of embodied practices themselves. Meanings are
sometimes more temporary and ephemeral than practices, which have a tendency to persist beyond their original material and ideational contexts. Swidler argues that we use discursive culture (primarily ideology) to construct strategies of action during turbulent, unsettled times. However, practical capacities are promiscuous – over time, they will often slip away from the meanings originally associated with them. Transposed to new settings, practices often serve new discursive ends (Swidler 1986). It follows that the influence of discursive culture on embodied practice will often be untraceable, and continuities and discontinuities in discursive or symbolic representations will have no necessary connection to continuities and discontinuities in action. The causal link between meaning and action will often be weak. This brings us to our final example, which demonstrates the promiscuity of action, as well as the importance of modeling and imitation within practical careers over time.

Example Three: Imitative Learning - Voting

As chapter 2 showed, an important predictor of the likelihood of voting among immigrants is the level of democratization in their countries of origin, a finding that adds to increasing evidence that voting is habitual. What is surprising is that the relationship between origin country political culture and post-migration voting holds not only throughout the voting lives of foreign-born immigrants, but also among the native-born offspring of immigrants, whose parents’ origin continues to affect the probability of voting. The intergenerational persistence of origin’s effect raises an obvious question: how is transmission and reproduction of the practice of voting accomplished across time and space? How is it that we see political origin’s influence many thousands of miles and a generation away from its source? How, exactly, are the habits of voting or non-voting passed on?
I initially expected continuities at the level of meaning to help explain the processes of cultural transmission inter-generationally. I looked for distinctive symbolic orientations, beliefs and narratives about democracy, the state, or political participation. These were indeed present among first generation immigrants raised abroad. This group expressed a wide variety of beliefs regarding democracy and politics, including (among a minority of non-voters) a distrust of the state and/or of electoral institutions, disapproval of ‘excessive’ or ‘damaging’ freedoms associated with democracy, the belief that democracy is an ineffective form of governance, or the opinion that only successful people should have a say in how the country is run. Native-born voters and non-voters, in contrast, always viewed democracy broadly favourably. The reasons given for non-voting had reduced to two: a lack of time or interest; or (in a few cases) a preference for ‘every-day’ civic/political engagements. Variation in beliefs had pretty much ceased to exist, despite the fact that parental origin still predicted the likelihood of voting. Swidler’s insights about how easily practices shake off old – and take up new - symbolic footholds finds strong support here. If discursive continuities do not explain transmission of practice, what does? Where should we look? Stephen Turner’s (1994) critique of practice theory has highlighted the lack of a satisfactory account of the processes through which socialization transmits dispositions and habitual practices within social groups.

Swidler (2001) says we can observe discursive culture’s influence on action directly, during ‘unsettled times’ in which the old ways no longer serve. While this refers primarily to periods of dramatic upheaval, we can also observe the process directly during turbulent or unsettled periods within individual lives, for example during adolescence or after a life-altering event such as a divorce. At these times, Swidler says, we are prone to reach for discursive cultural materials to help us learn new skills and consider our options. Even if we cannot observe
a particular skill’s historical genesis, we can observe culture’s role in the process at the individual level, studying the ‘uptake’ of practices among individual practitioners. This possibility motivated the examination of narrative accounts in Chapter 3, gathered in 30 in-depth interviews with first and second-generation immigrants from a wide range of national origins, who were asked about the influence on their political development of associations of all kinds, media, work, school, and family. What I found, in line with previous research (Horwitt 1999, Jennings, Stoker & Bower 2001), was an enormous influence of family, and in particular a strong correspondence between parental and offspring turnout.

To explain the transmission of voting practice between the generations, I found that discursive instruction plays a part, confirming existing political socialization research (Jennings, Stoker & Bower 2001; Sandell and Plutzer 2005; Verba et al. 2005). Frequency of political discussion at home during childhood and adolescence is quite highly correlated with turnout among my respondents. However, the fit here is not as tight as between parental and offspring behaviour. There are several cases where, despite rare or non-existent (or cynical and mocking) discussion of politics at home, both parents and offspring vote regularly. Moreover, both voters and non-voters were aware of their families’ political histories, and both voters and non-voters spoke of parents who were intense about politics. Political interest, in other words, was not quite as reliable a predictor. An advantage of narrative-based accounts is that they provide us with a time-line, helping to establish temporal priority and causal sequence. Discussion at home appears to reinforce interest, but observation of the activity of parents more strongly structures the future activity and interests of the child (Plutzer 2002). Actions, it seems, sometimes do speak louder than words.
Further evidence for the importance of parental example appears with regard to the influence of schooling. Half of those interviewed felt that schools had significantly influenced their political development. This made education an important factor, on the face of it. However, with only one exception, the influence of school was felt exclusively among respondents whose parents voted. Other people said there had “probably been some discussion” about politics at school, but that it had not interested them, and they had no memories concerning it. Given the strength of the pattern, it seems likely that parental engagement in electoral politics made students receptive to discussion of politics at school. A strong path dependence is evident in my respondents’ developmental histories, with observation of parental action being the crucial, pivotal event.

The importance of concrete modeling is consistent with Archer’s models of practical learning, as well as with Bandura’s (1977) model of social learning, in which emulation of the behaviour of socially competent models is key to understanding the acquisition of skills. In Bandura’s model, three conditions are necessary for imitation to occur. First, the actions must gain the person’s attention. Second, a memory must be formed. Finally, some motivation must exist for the behaviour’s reproduction. Confirming this model, all but two of the respondents whose parents voted had specific memories of elections and voting from childhood. Remarkably, in these two cases where no memory existed, the parents were said to always vote, but the respondent does not. The sometimes extraordinarily vivid memories center exclusively on the act of voting itself, rather than on its purpose or meaning. Whether or not they actually accompanied parents to the polls, children want to know: what happens when you go there? How do you do it? They are also aware that it is an adult experience containing elements of
secrecy, which heightens its appeal. To repeat, among those who did not vote, not one person had a childhood memory of going to the polls with parents or of parental electoral participation.

Parental expectations (sometimes explicit, often inferred) played a strong part in spurring initial visits to the polling booth in late adolescence, as did the attractions of trying out a new adult behaviour. Once more, it is the act or practice of voting that takes center stage in descriptions of early voting. Political choice or purpose or candidates were almost never mentioned. People do it because they think it is important but they cannot say why; they describe ‘going through the motions’. They are learning a skill as an apprentice, rather than a scholar, performing a role and partaking of a ritual. They impute value to the act, but only because their parents’ concrete example instructs them that the act is valuable.

However, this is not the end of the story. As in the case of other rituals, meaning comes later. Meaning making occurs, in most cases, not before or during acquisition of the skill, but as it is consolidated into habit or dropped. Sophisticated and coherent arguments about democracy’s value need not be present; the activity merely must ‘make sense’ to people, on their own terms. Where voting is concerned, it seems that the deck is very strongly stacked in favor of reproduction. The huge majority (83%) of people in my sample whose parents voted sometimes or always not only themselves voted at an early age, they also went on to develop a commitment to it over time. Nearly everyone admitted to ambivalence, but a large majority of those who began to vote to do something ‘grown-up’ or to please parents did eventually satisfy themselves that voting was worthwhile.

However, there were a few exceptions, and it is important to note that sometimes discontinuities occur. In these cases, meaning-making is not simply a matter of de-facto justification or rationalization of behaviour. What is most interesting is that among the four
people who had voted in the past, but were not sure they would continue (or had stopped voting already), in every case parental commitments were not very clear (one parent voted, but the other did not, voting occurred sometimes rather than always, or voting had been taken up by parents later in life, after migration). In other words, the behaviour came into serious question exclusively among those who had observed mixed behavioural signals within their early, intimate networks. Conversely, in the very few cases in my sample where parents never voted, but their offspring did, it was the result of engaging (without interest, initially) in overtly political actions, for example, after being hired to work at a polling station on Election Day, being exposed to a workplace unionization drive, or working for a politically active organization. In all of these cases, exposure to such influence was accidental – no pre-existing interest in politics influenced job choice. Once more, it is action histories that are crucial.

Swidler (2001) outlines a model of direct learning: (discursive) culture influences us most in times of uncertainty and transition when we aware of our need of, and are inspired to go searching for, new skills. We seek advice, take classes, and consume media that instruct us on how to proceed. However, this contrasts with the model of practical learning that Margaret Archer (2000) describes, which more closely reflects the narratives of my respondents. Archer maintains that we acquire practical knowledge outside of discursive realms, and through different means. The practical order is concerned with performance and competence; it involves an embodied process of apprenticeship (learning through observation) and not scholarship. Scholarship is the means to propositional, not practical knowledge. Of course, often the two approaches to learning combine. However, even a combined model presents too voluntarist and intentional a view of learning to apply across the board. While it may describe the acquisition of some skills that we set out to acquire, it does not cover the large class of practices and habits that
we learn largely unintentionally. And in this class of practice, which seems to includes voting at the place and time of my study, acquisition seems to involve discursive or reflective processes very minimally in the vast majority of cases. However the marginal presence of reflective agency is almost certainly owing in part to the particularities of my sample, since several respondent characteristics maximized transmission.\footnote{One limitation of the sample was that no respondents were from divorced families. Children whose parents are divorced (as well as divorced adults) vote at significantly lower rates (Sandell and Plutzer 2005). Another was that average educational attainments were very high – transmission is also boosted by the feelings of self-efficacy which high attainments presumably encourage.} It also may be owing to the character of elections in Canada, where my data was collected, where electoral competitiveness has tended to be quite low in the period relevant to my study. Research has confirmed that new voters respond favourably to competitive elections with greater turnout – one of the contextual factors that seem capable of overriding inherited habits (Johnston et al. 2007).

Despite these caveats, it seems that in early 21st century North American contexts, voting is a part of habitus for many people, and the habit and custom is transmitted within families. Some people become more thoughtful about voting at some point, but where parental example is very clear opinions quite reliably follow action, taking the form of post-hoc rationalizations of behaviour. Many people, including highly educated people, struggle to articulate any beliefs and opinions about voting, often quite obviously and strenuously giving them shape on the spot. This was observed as often among highly articulate, highly educated people as among others, showing that where voting is concerned, in contexts that do not especially encourage the engagement of reflectivity, most people appear to be Deeply Programmed Practitioners. Discursive consciousness is only secondarily involved. However, the cases in which it does assume influence (those cases where people evaluated their behaviour and changed course or were considering it) are suggestive. The Conscious Game Changer makes an appearance where
socialization has been somewhat weak – that is, specifically when the action commitment of parents to the practice is questionable. While voting appears to be characterized mostly by inertia in some contexts, the exceptional cases provide us with some clues about which aspects of context predict the breakthrough of discursive consciousness, and with it, the possibility of consciously intended change to the individual’s ‘inherited’ practical repertoire.

**Discussion**

Variation in reflective agency is present not only across contexts (Lizardo and Strand 2010), but also across actors and practice arenas. The following section sketches an outline of the factors of consequence. Though I have substituted ‘context’ for ‘problem situation,’ and ‘practice’ for ‘habit,’ I am adopting Gross’s useful A-P-H-R framework, in which he argues that causal mechanisms take the form of (A)ctors confronting (P)roblem situations with (H)abits, from which they fashion a (R)esponse.

**Actors**

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that our conceptualization of actors’ capacities for agency must have a temporal dimension, since people’s changeable understanding of their relationship to the past, present, and future affects the extent to which reflective intelligence is brought to bear on their actions. Consistent with this view that personal histories matter, Swidler (2002) describes adolescence as a time of individual upheaval and turbulence when discursive cultural influence will be relatively strong. Voting appears to be an exception to this rule. People have a great many new skills to learn at this time, and where the skill in question does not enjoy salience, young people may be prone to fall back to a default position, which is to adopt the behaviour of those most closely and repeatedly observed within intimate networks. There may be an enormous effort during adolescence to distinguish oneself from parents in terms of
some practices, but we may have erred on the side of making too much of generational discontinuities. This idea finds support from political socialization research that emphasizes the importance of parental influence and generational continuities where political participation and opinion is concerned (Jennings et al., 2001; Jennings, 2002; Verba et al., 1995).

Where unintentionally acquired practices and habits are concerned, deliberation may occur a little later in the life-course, when we have a little more leisure to take stock of our lives. This accords with Margaret Archer’s account of the accomplishments of maturity, which include a prioritization of concerns and commitments in the process of attainment of personal identity (2000).

Reflective agency is unevenly distributed not only across time, but also across actors. A situational predictor is stress levels, with reflective processes inhibited by fatigue, stimulated with moderate arousal, and inhibited once more as arousal levels rise (Lieberman 2002). Other differences extend beyond immediate contexts. As discussed above, people who score high on scales measuring introversion, neuroticism, and dogmatism or absolutism make less use of reflectivity than others, and education and occupation matters as well (Lieberman 2007, Stanovich 1999).

**Contexts**

Some elaboration and alteration of Lizardo and Strand’s (2010) model of how contexts influence the dominance of discursive versus practical consciousness is required. First, the interplay of automatic and reflective cognition should be more prominent. Conscious attention, which can disrupt or modify the automatic enactment and transmission of practical knowledge and habitual behaviour, can be triggered, and become influential, when instability is moderate as well as severe, local as well as generalized (that is, within one’s personal circles, as well as in
society-at-large). Secondly, as the findings regarding voting demonstrate, contextual stability follows from consistency of concrete behavioural example, as well as from consistency within symbolic realms. Where transmission of embodied practice is concerned, an important aspect of structural stability is the prevalence of particular practices within intimate circles - since the pool of role models in this realm strongly affects the transmission of skills, and how strong our attachment to a practice is (how deeply embedded it is in practical consciousness). As Lizardo and Strand predict, the questing, Conscious Game-Changer is not highly visible as we survey the crowd in settled times. However, it is theoretically important to acknowledge his presence, especially since we can expect the prevalence of reflective agency to vary substantially across different practice arenas and actors. Finally, contexts should not be evaluated only in terms of the consistency in symbolic realms. The voting literature provides evidence that strong incentives, such as are present in more competitive elections (in which individual votes carry more weight) are also able to influence the relative dominance of habitual and reflective consciousness on our actions, at least among those whose habits are less entrenched.

**Practices**

We need to distinguish those skills for which directly observable models are readily available from those where they are not (because the activity is rare among the people we know, performed behind closed doors, or enacted cognitively). Where skills are not observable, we are more likely to consult discursive cultural resources, and to make a conscious effort to acquire them, even if we must eventually learn through trial and error. Such skills and practices are distinct from those we acquire unconsciously and unintentionally. This latter class – of unintentionally acquired practices - is a rather large one, including such things as how we talk, walk, interact with different kinds of people, eat, keep house, and whether we vote, pray,
exercise, do our homework, work hard, sing in the shower, read for pleasure, or keep our money in the bank (to name just a few). Of course, any of these activities can become important to us, and fall under our reflective scrutiny, at which point we may consider our options, and effortfully and intentionally reject the practices familiar to us, training ourselves a different way. But we cannot simply assume that reflective scrutiny and interest exists.

We can expect to see greater reflective engagement where there is an intentional adoption of practices. This occurs not only when practices are difficult to observe, but also where the cultural salience of practices are high. Cultural salience, which can rise and fall depending on the incentives attached to practices or the attention paid to them in the popular media, is a crucial factor. As one of my non-voting respondents said in response to a description of my findings: “well, yeah….if your parents don’t vote, why would you care and where would you even hear about it?” The relative cultural quiet surrounding democracy – as a practical project, as opposed to an ideal (or a circus) – almost certainly contributes to the relatively low influence of discursive culture on voting practices.

If we were to undertake a study of the acquisition and spread of grooming habits, for example, which are both more materially consequential to individuals and more culturally salient than voting, the influence of both discursive resources and of reflectivity would, I suspect, be much higher. The enormous contemporary cultural emphasis on appearance ensures that few people nowadays continue to dress just like their parents dressed them after reaching adolescence, or stop changing their hairstyles upon reaching adulthood, which used to be the norm. But, again, cultural salience is a question of concrete example and modeling, as well as of prominence and coherence in symbolic realms. More often than is currently acknowledged,
embodied practice and example – rather than discursive persuasion - is the primary conduit to subsequent action.

**Behaviour, Practice, Outcome**

If we ground an inquiry into culture’s effect on action with a focus on action itself, rather than on the discursive or cognitive correlates of action, one of the first things that we discover is a need for more precision concerning the unit of analysis. I will argue that practices – that is, habitual or customary performance of a set of skills - are a more promising focus of attention than are any of the following (all of which tend to be discussed interchangeably at present): isolated ‘behaviours’; diverse activities grouped together thematically; or climactic events and outcomes that represent the culmination of long sequences of activity.

Activities can be sorted in an endless number of ways, but one crucial issue concerns how they are delimited temporally. I define ‘behaviours’ as activities, like smoking a cigarette or giving a hug, which are relatively quickly executed and conceptually isolated in time. Behaviours can be singular or multiple, but we do not know whether they are habitual, or how they link to other actions. Employing a longer timeframe, ‘practices’ come into view. These are activities of variable complexity and duration that contain linked behaviours that are ongoing or habitual, like showing affection, celebrating Christmas, voting, or performing lawn maintenance. Finally, we may focus on ‘events’ and ‘outcomes’, which can be simple but tend to be complex in genesis, and which may rely on the efforts of some or many people, like summiting a mountain, getting a divorce, or overthrowing a government. These are best understood as cumulative activities. Although we may do them more than once, for most people they are not habitual, so they are not practices. Finally, we can also throw open the gates, and try to explain
some class of actions, joining a diverse set of activities together because they are all linked in some way to a topic of interest.

Depending on the unit of action that is our focus, we will come to think about both motivation and justification differently. Vaisey, while using all kinds of action illustratively, concentrates analytically on actions that are conceptually isolated – that is, on behaviour. Theorizing based on behaviour is problematic, given the artificiality of behaviour’s isolation from larger sequences of activity. Vaisey states that he is interested in “patterns of conduct that occur over time (2009: 1675).” However, the use of a survey that asks teenagers about the frequency of particular behaviours in the previous year, and repeating the exercise over a three year period, does not allow us to distinguish new behaviours from long-standing practices, to relate new to old behaviours, or otherwise to distinguish patterns of conduct with care. Swidler’s empirical work in Talk of Love (2001) goes to the opposite extreme, and analyzes discourse related to a variety of diverse kinds of action grouped together thematically, including climactic events and outcomes that represent the culmination of long sequences of activity. The practices she is interested in are all those associated with attraction, sex, romance, courtship, love of different kinds, commitment, marriage, fidelity, adultery and divorce. It isn’t surprising that Swidler comes to emphasize the importance of styles and strategies of action, for example the ways in which people habitually approach problems and challenges, as these provide some way to identify continuity across heterogeneous swaths of ‘amorous’ behaviour. Complex sets of diverse activities and path-dependent outcomes and events are a problematic focus for mid-range theory-building, composed as they are of so many different actions that build one upon the other. There is simply too much there, both to apprehend and to examine.
Practices occupy a middle ground between behaviour and complex event. They have a career that we can look at over time. They are composed of particular skills, but go beyond these by virtue of their consolidation in custom or habit, so that if someone exerts themselves often and regularly, we may eventually speak of a yoga practice, or of criminality. Once skills become practices, they exert a strong influence on our lives. This is why practice is the unit of action that has received the most attention from social theorists. Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1993), Anthony Giddens (1984) and Margaret Archer (2000) all consider practice and practical consciousness central in their attempts to traverse the conceptual divide between subjectivism and objectivism in social theory. Cognitive scientists also recognize that it is only through practice and habit that practical consciousness can be influenced and trained (Haidt p. 159-161). Thus the question of how practices are acquired is a pivotal one from a theoretical perspective.

It is worth noting here that practices should be defined by their immediate practical purposes, so that no interpretive link with underlying purpose or meaning is associated with them at the outset. Thus looking after the yard is simply that, not an exercise in projecting a middle-class persona, or boundary construction, or maintaining a link with the natural world. Whether these larger purposes are effects or causes or even correlates of a practice is an empirical question, and if it is activity that we wish to explain, it is imperative to avoid conflating these activities with such speculation at the outset. This is actually quite hard to do, so accustomed are we to interpretation of action.

If there are theoretical precedents for making practice central, there are equally compelling practical considerations. Confusion results when theorists and readers having different kinds of activity in mind. For example, Vaisey argues that Swidler’s emphasis on the sticky nature of skills and practices is problematic because it does not explain change – he asks,
for example, why someone who has mastered the skills involved in presenting a heterosexual persona would decide to ‘come out’ as homosexual. But ‘coming out’ is not a singular activity. It is a culminating and cumulative one. Sexual identity is disclosed, performed and consolidated gradually, to oneself and to others, in many different ways in different contexts. Rather than inhibiting them, it is quite possible that these proximate or incremental disclosures of homosexuality are facilitated by knowledge of the skills involved in projecting a heterosexual persona. And while ‘coming out’ activities may climax in an event that represents something like full disclosure, focusing on the event that marks this symbolic milestone (for example a verbal admission to parents or co-workers) highlights the problems associated with analyzing isolated and orphaned actions. It neglects the fact that any particular admission of homosexuality is preceded by countless separate decisions, actions, experiments and admissions that have been weighed, considered, and most crucially, practiced over time.

**Concluding Remarks: Theoretical challenges**

Despite their many strengths, both of the recent cognitivist and pragmatist re-orientations of action theory examined here leave us with the impression (intentionally or unintentionally) that behaviour is a relatively straightforward reflection or externalization of mental activity, whether conscious, unconscious, or some combination of the two, and that understanding these links is where our attention should be directed. Certainly cognitive content and process shapes our actions in culturally mediated ways. A rich vein of research in cultural and cognitive sociology explores how this works (Cerulo 2010). However, this represents an embrace of only half of the paradigm of the ‘embodied cognition’ school, a corpus of work and theory that
emphasizes, first and foremost, that action shapes practical consciousness. Growing out of the work of William James and Jean Piaget, this approach considers cognition to have deep roots in sensorimotor processing, in contrast with the social constructionist models of Vygotskian psychology\textsuperscript{18}. What this body of work makes clear is that, while we definitely need good models of cognitive process, there is also much to learn from working from the outside in. A generalized commitment to the study of meaning over concrete action leads us to underestimate the structuring nature of action itself. The influence of action exemplars may be very strong, depending on the particularities of practice, actor, and context.

Theoretical precedent in sociology does not encourage the study of embodied culture and practice. Practice theory certainly views action as important, but dominant interpretations of Bourdieu’s work take meaning and action to be inseparable components of a unified habitus. For example: For Bourdieu, Geertz, Giddens, and Sewell “…the ‘key argument’ of practice theory is that the material world (the world of action) and the cultural world (the world of symbols) interpenetrate, and are built up through the immediate association of each with the other (Breiger 2000: 92)”. The idea that meaning and action are ‘mutually constitutive’ and for all practical purposes inseparable, has come under strong criticism (Archer 2000), largely because such “central conflations” frustrate practical social research. But the idea that practices themselves, stripped of connections to meaning, contain culture, remains, as Jasper states, a radical rethinking of what culture is (2005, p. 125).

Can such a radical rethinking be justified? My goal has been to justify an empirical focus on embodied habits that remains in principle aloof from the meanings these actions carry, which

\textsuperscript{18} For an overview of the Piaget vs. Vygotsky debate, see Archer 2000, for an overview of embodied cognition arguments see Wilson, M. 2002, for influential work within the embodied cognition school, see Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999
is nonetheless an inquiry into cultural variation. In so doing, I question the assumption that internal cognitive or ideational content must always be front and centre in our understanding of causation and of culture’s influence. Action’s causal connections to meaning are sometimes untraceable and unstable, not to mention obscure and subject to the whims not only of actors, but also of observers, including scholarly ones. At times it is preferable to focus, instead, on what people actually do.

The cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins (1995) has written about the problem with an interest in understanding how culture works through objects. With a minor effort of translation, his comments about how psychologists have previously conceptualized cognition apply just as well to sociological theories of culture. Referring to boundaries drawn between the worlds inside and outside of individual heads, he explains that “when one commits to the notion that all intelligence is inside the inside-outside boundary, one is forced to cram inside everything that is required to produce the observed behaviours (pg 355).” The symbol-processing model of cognition, he writes, results in an ‘over attribution of internal structure’ and a “falling away of the apparatus that connects the person to the world (p. 364).” Thus, “many cognitive scientists take the word ‘cognitive’ as an antonym to ‘perceptual’ or ‘motor’ (364).” Hutchins concludes that the solution is to understand culture not as any collection of things, whether tangible or abstract, but as a “process….that takes place both inside and outside the minds of people. It is the process in which our everyday cultural practices are enacted (354).” Such a move permits us to acknowledge the importance of material aspects or modes of cultural transmission and variation.

Roy D’Andrade’s solution is more modest:

It is not that one cannot define culture so that it consists of just mental structures. One can – and in fact, since the 1950s, with some exceptions, anthropologists generally have. The point is that such a definition legitimizes the study of mental structures but leaves unlegitimized the study of external
structures...... At this point my own solution is to use the term *culture* to characterize the entire content of a group’s heritage, corresponding to Tylor’s earlier use of the term, and to try to be specific when talking about things cultural, specifying *cultural schemas* or *understandings* as against *material culture, cultural practices, cultural talk*, etc. (D’Andrade 1995, p. 146, italics in original)

We continue to believe that our heads control our bodies. However, our embodied experience in the material world also determines what is in our heads, at both conscious and unconscious levels, and more importantly, it largely determines what we do. Sociologists still tend to discover this accidentally. We are inclined to think, for example, that radical activism is the outcome of strongly held beliefs, when the beliefs are often a consequence of activism - initially engaged in because of simple motivations like a desire to expand one’s circle of acquaintance or to “get involved” (Munson 2008, Hart 2008). Theoretical models that provide ample room for the contribution of embodied experience to outcomes will provide a rich source of new insight into causal mechanisms. For example, it easily accommodates the recent finding that children who grow up in homes with books and parents who read for pleasure achieve far more in the way of schooling than others, controlling for parental class, occupation and education. In fact, the presence of a book-rich environment provides twice the advantage of having a professional rather than an “unskilled” father (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman 2010). This is not principally a matter of imparting ‘cultural capital’. Embodied skills and habits matter. The emphasis on habit in recent efforts to re-orient mainstream sociological inquiry goes a long way towards providing a bridge between the inner cognitive world and the world of action, but we need to travel both ways across this bridge in order to more fully acknowledge the structuring nature of action.
Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Change is rampant in the modern world. Understandably enough, grasping and explaining change in all its forms has become a dominant concern in the academy. An unintended consequence of this (I would argue) is a tendency to downplay, neglect, even to distrust evidence of continuity, most particularly if continuities appear to be seated in archaic institutions like the family, which were supposed to have withered into inconsequence long ago. In the social sciences, these tendencies can be seen in the resolute rejection of structural-functionalism and other theoretical perspectives with an explicit interest in identifying sources of stability. We see it also in the neglect of family and childhood (as sites of anything much beyond oppression), in the related neglect of the topic of socialization (many sociology departments do not even offer courses in the subject any more), and in a tendency among immigration scholars to see immigrants as completely reborn when they step onto our shores. As a result, our understanding of continuities of all kinds has lagged. This is unfortunate, because a great deal of conflict is rooted in different rates of change, requiring an appreciation for the sources and processes of stability as well as those of transformation.

This dissertation, while not in any way claiming that stability trumps change, takes a thoroughly unfashionable interest in continuities. It begins with an examination of the persistence over time in patterns of political participation of immigrants in Canada. It then asks how these continuities are reproduced over time, through a close examination of narratives of contemporary political learning. It appears that persistence in the behaviour of immigrants is generally produced in the same way as persistence in the behaviour of everyone else – in powerful processes of observational social learning. In its final, theoretical chapter, the dissertation tackles questions like how we should conceptualize habitual behaviour, how
habituality and reflectivity or rationality interact, and how theory can better make space for an interest in the embodied end of habitual practice. It takes a dynamic approach that recognizes that practices are acquired, established, maintained and broken over time, involving mechanisms and processes that we seem to know very little about. The methods employed in this inquiry have been varied, encompassing statistical research, qualitative research (which was too qualitative for some on my committee, and not qualitative enough for others) but which I hope showed the limitations of a reliance on survey data and statistical methods of analysis alone, and illustrated the valuable grounding that statistical research can find in a close attention to processes at the individual level. There was a foray into the territory of cognitive neuroscience, and a head-long lunge into the esoterica of cutting-edge sociological theory. The over-arching goal, it seems to me now, having come this far, was to identify, account for, explain, justify and provide room for the further study of continuities in human action – specifically, the encoding of history and culture in embodied practice and habit.

The remainder of this concluding chapter ends as it begins, with the issue of immigrant voting. My hope here is to illustrate the usefulness of my findings, to show that what was for me a fascinating intellectual journey also has some payoff in terms of our understanding of the world. I begin by putting these findings into the context of other research perspectives, and then look at a couple of actual, existing elections, to (hopefully) demonstrate concretely what a consideration of origin effects can contribute to discussions of immigrant voting. A few recent North American elections will be considered, with an eye to pointing out the limitations of analyses – both popular and scholarly - that ignore immigrants’ cultural predispositions to vote or abstain. After this, I offer a few suggestions about how to encourage voting among those who lack a cultural
familiarity with democratic institutions, based on my findings. A final note concerns the broader historical context of this study.

**The Influence of Political Origin**

We saw, in Chapter 1, that people who study immigrant turnout find pronounced differences in participation across origin groups, even after controlling for socio-economic and contextual variables. These differences have, until now, remained largely a matter of speculation. The possibility that homeland traditions or political socialization in source countries may have some influence is often mentioned, but rarely given serious or sustained attention.

A recent comprehensive summary of different approaches to the study of immigrant political participation pays some attention to cultural explanations, but points out that such explanations meet frequent criticism:

Tillie (1998) in his work on migrant voting in the Netherlands, Wüst (2002) in his study of Germany, and Togeby (1999) in her work on migrant groups in Denmark, have also found that there are highly distinctive patterns of political participation and vote choice across ethnic groups within a single country or even city. Despite these findings, ethnic approaches to political behaviour are often criticized, mainly because they fail to explain variation in political participation within certain ethnic communities, and among members of the same ethnic groups in different societies of settlement (e.g. Freedman 2000; Garbaye 2005; Ireland 1994, 2000). (Bird et al. 2009)

If we invoke culture from within a mono-causal theoretical framework, the critique is a valid one, but it is difficult to imagine that anyone would. No variable will exert its effect in exactly the same way across all individuals and places. Such a requirement would wipe out even the most reliable of social scientific findings. Without any doubt, the persistence of origin effects will be weaker or stronger depending on other factors, and the effect of origin can vary at every
level (individual, group, election, year, state). Clearly there would be a problem if it was demonstrated that (for example) recent immigrants from China or Russia vote at low rates in Democracy A, but at high rates in Democracy B, in the absence of dramatic differences between the two places in citizenship regimes, electoral institutions, immigrants’ socio-economic profiles, or other factors. Such a challenge does not exist, not least because cultural explanations have simply not been taken very seriously by most investigators. In the edited volume just discussed, some of the authors do talk about apparent cultural differences between different immigrant groups, but such factors – when considered at all - are invariably presented almost apologetically, as an after-thought. What accounts for this?

Cultural explanations tend to be marginalized among social scientists when they are used to speculate about “remaining” variation across groups in outcomes, as a convenient way to account for all that we do not yet understand and cannot explain. To this point, there have been few persuasive analyses of culture’s influence on immigrant political participation, outside of some excellent case studies, such as Jeremy Hein’s (2006). Vague cultural explanations, which do not identify the source of differences, raise understandable suspicions. However, in my work, culture is not used as a convenient ‘mop’ for cleaning up leftover variation. I locate culture in the persistence of practical capacities and habits across space and time, and find the source of these habits in pre-migration political histories. Moreover, Chapter 3 provides evidence regarding the particular causal chain that supports the relationship between past political experience and present behaviour across immigrant generations. The ‘stickiness’ of practical capacities within social groups is explained by locating the mechanism through which the practice of voting is reproduced within families in observational learning. Chapter 4 further
elaborates by outlining the ways that variation in particular practices, contexts and actors predicts how strongly our behaviour will be governed by habit, and how habits will be learned.

The upshot is that I have made what I believe is a strong case that the effects of political culture tied to origin are – at least in some settings – both strong and persistent. This means that a satisfactory explanation for immigrant turnout needs to take origin effects into account – not as an afterthought, but from the beginning. Assessments that consider the interaction of origin effects with socio-economic and contextual factors will provide a much better account of immigrant political participation than those which ignore effects of origin.

Another reason that cultural explanation is resisted is because of the danger of caricature and stereotype. This is seen in the cautionary ‘slippery-slope’ warnings that tend to follow quickly upon any mention of culture, especially where the behaviour of minorities is being discussed (for a typical example see Bloemraad 2009, pg. 64). The idea that cultural difference is best left out of the discussion – at least where it predicts disadvantage - is a strongly held bias found among many North American sociologists (see Hein 2006 for a discussion). But a determination to avoid any conversation that could conceivably result in the promotion of stereotype is itself dangerous, if it closes off avenues of inquiry that will allow us to understand and address the social problems that different communities face.

I do not defend the importance of context at length within this dissertation because the importance of context is already well appreciated. Instead I feel obliged to make a case for the limitations of too exclusive a focus on contextual factors. Most accounts of immigrant voting concentrate on the ‘opportunity structures’ potential political participants encounter. This includes: how competitive electoral races are; the particular form of political institutional arrangements in place; how immigrants are treated politically and otherwise (taking into account
integration policy, citizenship regimes, and state and civil society discrimination); which issues are prominent in political contests; and whether potential voters see their concerns, and their complexions, reflected in party platforms and candidates. The effects of immigrant group size, resources, and residential concentrations are also noted. Good arguments support consideration of all of these factors. However none of them can explain the often dramatic differences across groups that we continue to see, even after exhausting all of these explanations. Moreover, where attempts have been made to measure the influence of contextual factors on immigrant turnout, context has – with the exception of electoral competitiveness – shown a modest influence on outcomes (Franklin 2005, Ramakrishnan 2005, Bueker 2008). Granted, good data that would allow us to test some of these influences statistically are very difficult to come by, especially where immigrant turnout is concerned. Nonetheless, in contrast to the modest effects most contextual variables have shows in previous studies, I have shown that origin exerts an independent effect of substantial power. Indeed the effect is comparable in strength to the very few “best predictors” of turnout that we have. To ignore this factor is to ignore a very large part of the story.

**Recent North American Elections**

**The United States - The Election of Obama in 2008**

Historically, turnout in the US is higher at times of crisis or trouble, and the effect of escalating war and severe economic downturn in 2008 likely served to boost turnout in the presidential election that occurred in that year. However the case was also extensively made that the candidacy and election of Barack Obama demonstrated the drawing power of a remarkably charismatic, non-White, presidential candidate. Leadership evaluations tend to be most influential to contests when there is a large imbalance in the relative ‘attractiveness’ of candidates, and McCain’s old, white, ‘tough-guy’ charms were widely seen as not able to
compete. Obama’s victory was widely hailed within the media as advance notice of the growing electoral power of the non-White, and particularly of the very large and growing Latino population. The “immigrant/minority vote” is safely Democratic in the United States, at least for now, and is seen as an emergent source of strength for that Party, which has inspired extensive mobilization and activism, particularly within the Latino community.

Hopes with regard to the Latino vote were raised and apparently vindicated in 2008, when the election drew high numbers of Hispanics (along with Blacks, Asians, and youths) to the polls, including many first-time voters in all of these groups (File and Crissey 2010). The electorate gained 5 million voters in that election, nearly all of whom came from minority groups. In this historic election, Whites and Blacks voters turned out at almost the same rate – at 66% and 65% respectively\(^{19}\). While parity between these two groups is unusual and can probably be attributed to an ‘Obama effect’, the gap between White and Black voters is generally fairly small, a fact that is especially remarkable given that African-Americans’ much lower average income and educational levels predict a considerably lower turnout than exists. Asians and Hispanics also both showed large increases in voting rates in 2008 from 2004 – of approximately 4 points in both cases.

Still, the increases in turnout were, in many respects, not as dramatic as they appear at first glance. While it is clearly good news that 5 millions more voted than in the previous election, this seems a bit less of a triumph when we consider that the voting age citizen population grew by 9 million in the same period (from 2004 to 2008). I cannot provide figures about the racial makeup of this 9 million, but we know that more than three-quarters of the population gains in the United States in the last decade consisted of minority members.

\(^{19}\) In 2004, Blacks voted at 61%, and Whites at 67%.
Moreover, the number of registered voters actually fell slightly in this period, from 72 to 71%, and when the dust settled, overall turnout was (in some analyses) only slightly up or (in others) not statistically different from 2004<sup>20</sup>. Nor is it clear whether the enthusiasm and higher voting rates among minorities (to whatever extent created by the 2008 Obama campaign) will translate into a longer-term commitment to voting. The final figures are not in for 2010, but even taking into full account that non-Presidential contests suppress turnout, Latinos were widely reported to have lost interest in voting in 2010, especially among those who were “surge” voters (those who had never voted previously) (Lopez 2010). More importantly, even with the 4% boost, turnout remained at, or below, 50% of the eligible Asian and Hispanic citizen population. The lack of increase in voting overall in 2008 is explained in part by the fact that turnout among White voters was down a little (by 1%), but taking a longer perspective, it is also a reflection of a changing electoral population.

The population is continually being pruned of voters, at the top of the age range, who have a very high probability of voting. These older voters are being replaced by two groups of voters who are much less likely to vote: young people (in general) and post-1960s immigrants and their children. That young voters go to the polls at much lower rates than older people in North America is well known. While most studies predict that some increase in voting will occur among young voters as they age, these gains are expected to be relatively modest, and will not (given current trends) ever bring the voting rates of today’s young people into line with the

<sup>20</sup> The statistics in this and the previous paragraph are taken from US Census Bureau estimates (File and Crissey 2010), which use the Current Population Survey’s self-reports of voting, sampling the non-institutionalized voting age citizen population. While self-reports overestimate voting slightly, the Bureau’s turnout rate for 2008 differs by only 2 points from the United States Elections Project’s estimate (http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2008G.html), based on the voting-eligible (as opposed to the voting-age) population. Use of the CPS data allows differentiation of demographic groups.
current voting rates of their parents – much less their grandparents. The second group of ‘low-voters’ are recent (that is, post 1960s) immigrants and their offspring. Thier contribution to decrease in turnout is much less well acknowledged. Despite the enormous increase in the immigrant population in recent decades, the tendency to vote or to abstain in this group has been poorly understood. This dissertation has argued that low turnout in this group cannot be assumed to be a transient effect, inconsequential in the long run to either immigrants themselves or to democratic institutions. The growing overlap between these two categories – young people and second generation post-1960’s immigrants - suggests a likely intensification of the ‘youth voter’ trend which will be misdiagnosed without an appreciation of the manner in which origin effects contribute to outcomes.

Historic elections tend to make less of a difference than we might expect to turnout. The newly participating ‘Obama generation’ of minority voters, most of them young (because it is mainly early in our voting, or non-voting, careers that contexts have the power to affect us) may retain a habit of electoral participation throughout their lives. However even in this optimistic scenario, an historical event of this kind (the chance to vote for the first Black President), by affecting only one or two cohorts, registers only as a blip in the long run. It is change that is long term – that affects cohort after cohort for many decades – that causes large changes to turnout. Even if initial effects seem small, these small changes will accumulate over time. Increase in the numbers of democratically inexperienced immigrants who vote at lower rates than the mainstream, under conditions of large-scale immigration, is just the sort of long term change that has the potential to be highly consequential to turnout over time, especially since the effect of origin extends into the second generation. As the (on average) lower-voting population slowly and increasingly displaces a higher-voting one, the effect on turnout increases.
Mobilization – ‘Immigrant Issues’ and Discrimination

So what can be done to encourage participation? Extraordinary historical elections are rare. Scholars and activists frequently highlight the importance of issues considered particularly important to newcomers, and capable of affecting turnout in this group, such as immigration policy and reform, affirmative action and integration policy (i.e. multiculturalism). These issues, along with human rights injustices (exclusion and discrimination), are considered fertile grounds upon which mobilization can occur among minorities. Thus when academics complain that governments are not engaging new citizens in the political process, they usually recommend not only that more candidates of colour should be put forward by political parties, but also that issues important to immigrants should be given more political attention. However, such remedies are likely to be insufficient on their own. I have just explained why historic elections (featuring particularly charismatic candidates, for example) do not have large long-term effects on turnout. The promotion of “immigrant issues” is similarly problematic as a means by which to encourage large-scale participation.

There is no question that mobilization can be very effective in drawing people to vote. Many historians believe that previous waves of immigrants coming to North American countries with relatively low levels of democratic experience were drawn into political contests by the redistributive campaigns of the post-WWII era, with mobilization aided and abetted by mass unionization. The likelihood of history repeating itself seems low in the foreseeable future, given that unionization is at historic lows in North America (with trends continuing downward), and large-scale redistributive projects currently enjoy little to no currency among elites. Still, if programs based on a redistributive agenda seem badly stalled, the hope is that large-scale political mobilization will occur around issues concerning citizenship and rights, especially when
the state is seen by many as directly implicated in discrimination against large segments of the immigrant population (as in parts of the United States and in many European countries).

While there is no doubt that perceptions of discriminatory treatment can affect political participation, the historical (and research) record shows that it is very difficult to predict what the effect will be. It has been suggested that the low voting rates of second generation visible minority citizens in Canada may be the result of alienation arising from experiences of discrimination, and I did find some support for this argument.

My investigation of the effects of perceived discrimination on voting among Canadians shows that experiences of discrimination are associated with a decreased likelihood of voting among some second generation immigrants – in particular, among young minority and white second generation immigrants. However, the statistical relationship is not present at all among individuals in the group who experience the most discrimination, among whom the enormous negative effects of poverty appear far more consequential. In other minority groups, discrimination does have a negative relationship to turnout, but among older white groups, and in the third-plus generation, perceived discrimination appears to have the opposite effect – boosting turnout. Clearly, any persuasive explanation would have to take the particularities of economic status, history and culture of different groups strongly into account. While perceived discrimination does explain something about turnout among second generation immigrants, it cannot account for the broad trends in voting that we see.

My Chapter Two analyses, of course, provide another explanation for the low voting rates of visible minority second generation voters relative to white second generation voters (and relative to the third-plus generation: the contemporary second generation is the offspring of immigrants who arrived in a period when the gap between white and non-white immigrants in
democratic experience was large. As Chapter 2 showed, this is no longer the case, with immigrants from all racial groups now arriving with ever-lower levels of democratic experience. Therefore a racial gap in turnout appears in the second generation, but not in the first. Origin effects, combined with other factors that all young people face\textsuperscript{21}, and ones that are concentrated in particular communities, such as poverty, create a very low probability of turnout in some visible minority second generation groups.

We also need to be very careful in our assumptions about which issues immigrants (should) care about and identify with. It is certainly tempting to make assumptions. How could immigrants in the United States possibly support the Republican Party when some of that Party’s members are responsible for repressive policies enacted against irregular migrants, xenophobic outbursts, and anti-Muslim hysteria? But we cannot simply assume a certain kind of solidarity within minority and immigrant communities, nor underestimate the importance of other issues. One report published by the Pew Hispanic Center, which began by proclaiming that stalled immigration reform had turned Latinos off from voting in 2010 also noted – later on - that the survey showed that a majority of Latino voters prioritized many issues, concerning education, jobs, health care – even the budget deficit - more highly than immigration issues (Lopez 2010). It may surprise some people to learn that fully 15\% of Latinos surveyed in the United States favor the expulsion of undocumented migrants. We should not simply assume that immigrants are moved to vote by “immigrant issues,” or that we know where they stand on these issues, for that matter.

\textbf{Canada -Conservative Victories in 2008 and 2010}

\textsuperscript{21} Examples of factors contributing to low turnout among young people in general include such things as the unsettled lives during which first voting occurs, busy childhoods in which parental voting may not even be noticed, and increasing levels of divorce, which suppresses voting among parents.
This point is most dramatically made when we consider the changes being made to Canadian political landscapes as a result of the voting preferences of recent immigrants. Many observers and scholars, over the years, have assumed (or hoped) that the immigrant vote belongs ‘naturally’ to Canada’s Left, social democratic party, the NDP. But the NDP’s socially progressive, pro-human rights, pro-union platform, it turns out, is not universally attractive to Canada’s post 1960’s immigrants. This may reflect another kind of ‘origin effect’. Research suggests that immigrants’ preferences with regard to redistribution may be strongly coloured by redistributive policies in source countries, a cultural effect that has been found, in the United States, to persist strongly into the second generation (Luttmer and Singhal 2010). Such variations have not been found for visible minority immigrants with Canadian data (Banting 2010, Soroka et al 2007) but this conclusion is based on analyses that differentiate only very broadly between immigrant and non-immigrant, and white and non-white (or in official Canadian terminology, non-visible-minority and visible-minority) respondents. As shown with the example of turnout, such aggregations can hide a wealth of variation. Whatever the reasons, it was the centrist Liberal Party, perceived as both powerful and pro-immigrant, that received the overwhelming majority of the immigrant vote in the post-world war II era. But it appears that this is now changing.

There has been a shift in party preference among recent immigrants. The stakes are large. Consistently high support for the Liberal Party among Catholic and among non-European origin, or visible minority, voters together explains the Liberal Party’s long period of dominance of federal politics in the post WWII era (Blais et al 2002, Blais 2005). A dramatic drop in support among both Catholic and non-European origin voters has occurred, with a profound impact on party fortunes. It is the shift among Catholics that accounts more for the Liberal’s defeat, since
they are a larger group, but the shift among visible minority immigrants in absolute terms is larger\textsuperscript{22}. In 2000, well over 80\% of non-European origin or visible minority voters cast their vote for the Liberal party. By 2008, the figure was down to a little over 50\%. Support for the Conservative party over the same period rose from around 4\% to around 28\% (Gidengil et al 2009revised*). The reasons for the shift are unclear (they may be the same reasons that other voters have shifted their support to the PC) but the Conservative Party has been strenuously courting immigrant communities, stressing the ways in which its socially and fiscally conservative agenda aligns well with many immigrants’ views. They have worked hard to overcome the distrust that characterized relations between many immigrant and ethnic minority groups and the party’s political predecessors (the Reform Party and the Progressive Conservative Party). While Soroka et al. (2011) stress that the Conservative Party victory in 2011 was not the result of a massive shift in support among immigrant voters, especially relative to 2008, there is clearly evidence that immigrant allergy towards the Conservative Party is fading.

The problem in many discussions of the immigrant vote is the assumption that there is one. Data limitations are often responsible for our inability to make finer distinctions among immigrants. Government categorization designed to help track discriminatory outcomes encourage us to distinguish ‘old-’ and ‘new-wave’ immigrants racially, on the assumption that the ‘new’, non-European, or visible minority, immigrants share an ‘outsider’ status and identity that is rooted in recognizable physical difference from the mainstream. In reality, immigrants come from highly heterogeneous political, social, and cultural communities, and these origins powerfully affect their outlook and actions- much more in many cases, I would argue, than their physical difference from the (fast-disappearing) “mainstream”. Where origin effects in turnout

\textsuperscript{22} Email correspondence with Elisabeth Gidengil January 2011.
are concerned, colour is not the best guide. Recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union are among the lowest voters in Canada. Constant reference to ‘visibility’ or racial difference not only signals a blind-spot concerning recent immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe (who truly become invisible minorities), it also problematically pre-judges the source of both challenges and preferences within immigrant communities.

If we acknowledge the low average voting rate of many recent immigrants, and the heterogeneity of turnout and preference within different segments of the immigrant population, we will gain a useful agnosticism when considering generalizations regarding the immigrant vote. A final, useful illustration is provided by the discussion surrounding Rob Ford’s mayoral victory in Toronto in 2010.

The Toronto media and blogosphere were alive with indignation and disbelief when a small (R=500) poll in advance of the election showed that the anti-tax, small-government candidate Ford was favoured by 44% of surveyed voters overall, and more shockingly, by 52% of immigrant voters. The reason for this shock was that Ford had made statements during the campaign which were widely condemned in the media as racist and anti-immigrant. It was quickly pointed out that many of the immigrant voters surveyed may have been older, White immigrants, but this argument lost traction when the election results showed that Ford did well in areas of the city with large numbers of visible minority immigrants. Speculative commentary followed about widespread immigrant conservatism, and about the possibility that the other leading candidate’s openness about his homosexuality may have strongly influenced outcomes.

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23 He referred to Chinese as “Orientals” who “work like dogs”, and questioning the wisdom of continued immigration to Toronto when “(w)e can't even deal with the 2.5 million people in this city. It's more important that we take care of the people now before we start bringing in more.”
This discussion can be usefully moderated if we remember that recent immigrants vote at very low rates. Part of the difficulty is that detailed information about turnout across different groups is difficult to obtain. It is usually estimated indirectly, by looking at the demographic make-up of individual electoral districts, and then assuming that the reported vote within these areas was distributed evenly among the various groups residing there. But even a cursory comparison of neighbourhoods with few minorities against those with many demonstrates that the latter have much lower turnout overall – 46% versus 28% in the city election in 2003 (Toye 2006). According to the City of Toronto Elections office, turnout in 2010 was exceptionally high, averaging 50% of the eligible population overall. Of this total, around half voted for Ford, meaning that 25% of the eligible population overall voted for Ford. Since recent immigrants vote at much lower rates than others, less – probably much less – than this proportion of the total post 1960s immigrant citizenry residing in Toronto voted for Rob Ford. Obviously restraint should be exercised when generalizing about what this vote means in terms of “immigrant” preferences. Since some origin groups vote at much higher rates than others, it is worthwhile trying to inject a little specificity into our analyses.

In academic discussions, there is a tendency to alternate between hand-wringing about low levels of turnout among recent immigrants, and reassurances that immigrants and non-immigrants differ only superficially and transiently from one another in voting habits. There is great reluctance to locate the problem of low turnout – even in part – within immigrant communities themselves. This is unfortunate. Targeting obstacles to participation that center on political inexperience within particular origin groups, and among new immigrants in general, has the potential to raise turnout within this demographic much more powerfully than strategies that do not recognize the contribution of this factor.
To Encourage Immigrant Turnout

This leads, finally, to the question of what can be done. My research strongly suggests that obstacles to participation are more serious among many of today’s immigrants than previous accounts claim, and that new strategies may be required to overcome these obstacles. How can we encourage voting among those with low levels of familiarity with democratic practices?

My work shows that for most people, persuasion and expectations, and the gaining of knowledge alone, are not the seat of actions such as voting. They do not get most of us over the hurdle of going out to vote for the first time. More than one of my respondents were concerned about confidentiality, because they did not want to be identified as non-voters. Even among such obedient campers as graduate students, however, knowing that one should vote is not enough for voting to occur. Recalled familiarity with the activity among people we strongly identify with, rather than consciously held values alone, is at the foundation of action.

Our remedies should respect the importance of action and observation of action. This is consistent with research that stresses the importance of building civic and political capacities – along with knowledge – among young people (Kahne and Middaugh 2008). Concrete opportunities for observation and exercise of political action are decisive features of the learning environment.

In most cases, voting is learned at home. It would seem that the best way to gain political skills – to recycle the old sociological joke about how best to ensure one’s educational and economic success – is to choose your parent s wisely. Observing and remembering parental voting predisposes offspring to take an interest in politics in school, and to vote themselves when the time comes. Discussion at home and elsewhere further reinforces this interest and makes
voting more likely, but the expectation that one should vote is largely a result of having a memory of one’s parents voting. If all of this is true, then we need to get parents voting, and we need to make sure that children notice.

In Canada, it has been proposed that immigrants should be allowed to vote in municipal elections based on residency – that is, even before they gain full citizenship (or even if they are in the country without state permission). The idea is to encourage civic participation immediately upon arrival, thus making it an intrinsic part of new lives and identities. This is an excellent idea, but making voting possible is not enough. Where the habit of non-voting is entrenched, it may take extraordinary efforts to effect change. In addition to clearing away obstacles, incentives to participation should be present. For example, the granting of citizenship could be made conditional on one-time participation in elections at all three levels of government. The requirement (even if it was not enforced) would help signal the importance of voting to newcomers, familiarize them with the logistics of polls and polling stations, and hopefully also acquaint them to some degree with the basics of political parties and issues. Of course all kinds of support should be provided to immigrants to help facilitate this. There is some evidence to suggest that simply voting once – for any reason - increases the likelihood of repeat voting (Gerber et al 2003). Presumably, doing it a few times would boost the likelihood further. Not everyone would keep at it, but many might, particularly if special efforts at outreach were to continue beyond the mandatory voting period.

While there is plenty of proof that mandatory voting laws increase turnout, my own views have evolved about this. While at one point I thought compulsory voting would be a good idea, I am now inclined to agree with the argument that allowing turnout to vary preserves an important indicator of the health of electoral systems. As Franklin put it, “to institute compulsory
voting in a low-turnout country would be to ‘shoot the messenger.’ Removing the signal that something was wrong would not make that thing right (Franklin 2004, 219-220).”

All voters, immigrant and non-immigrant, should be encouraged to bring children with them to polling stations. Some investment in making the experience a little more eventful and memorable (without detracting from the main event, the voting itself) would be helpful in drawing children’s attention. School assignments that encouraged children to visit neighbourhood polling stations and describe what goes on there would probably also be helpful. If we take social learning seriously, we will think carefully about internet voting, since it could severely diminish the salience or visibility of political action. Depending on how it is instituted, internet voting has the potential to render children almost completely unaware of their parents’ participation in elections and voting, or at least to radically reduce the distinctiveness of the activity compared to others.

While the family is the main site of learning, some people who have no family history of voting begin to vote after experience within unions and other politically active organizations. This suggests that the family is far from the only potential site for political learning. Possibly, it is the absence of democratic political activity in most social sites, such as at school and work, that make family experience with politics so central to learning at this time. Greater democratic control of workplaces would remedy this. Beyond this (and more realistically) schools could easily introduce more meaningful democratic decision-making – democracy in action – not only into what are currently dismally boring civics classes based entirely on the building of discursive rather than practical knowledge, but also into their everyday operations.

A Final Note – Historical and Institutional Contexts
Finally, I want to close with a brief acknowledgement of the historical context that envelops and informs my research. I do not believe that I have penetrated to any timeless truths about voting. If the historical moment (and/or the institutional landscape) were different, the manner in which voting was learned could very well be quite different, and so would my recommendations.

In a very broad sense, I think we are in a period characterized by a generalized cultural indifference to democracy, and politics more generally, and this has a number of consequences, as described in Chapter Four. A lack of strong commitment to democracy, not only as a practice, but also as an ideal, is more common among recent immigrants than in the general population (Bilodeau and Nevitte 2003). This is not surprising. Migration decisions are generally economic rather than political decisions, and childhood learning remains the default setting for many people. For immigrants as for others, there are plenty of grievances against “the West” that call into question the moral high ground that democracy is assumed to hold vis-à-vis other systems of government. Non-democratic or state capitalism is competing successfully with the liberal democratic variety at the moment, which also calls the superiority of liberal democracies into question. In other words, the perceived legitimacy, geopolitical power, and prestige of democratic capitalist host regimes are seeing some slippage. This alone predicts that integration will slow among immigrants (Collins 2001).

Certainly some of the first generation immigrants interviewed as part of this project insisted that politics and government were the same corrupt game wherever you went, and a couple of people professed a preference for more authoritarian systems of government. However, these ideas did not persist into the second generation among those I interviewed. What does exist in a widespread way, however, is a vague sense that democratic political systems are
seriously flawed, and this concern is found among immigrants and non-immigrants, voters and abstainers alike. It is not so much that one ideology has emerged victorious, but rather that political ideologies have all lost their lustre.

In this circumstance, electoral participation is characterized by a kind of sluggishness. We are coasting, and losing momentum, as people who began to vote when voting itself, as well as the outcome of the vote, seemed to matter more, slowly exit the voting pool. My analyses, and the prescriptions that flow from them, present a portrait of voting as a kind of family custom, heavily dependent on tradition. But there have been periods when historical circumstances have been far more facilitative of electoral participation than they are today. There are times when we have felt more confident about the superiority of democratic systems of government, and more idealistic about their potential, and when mobilization was more energetic. At such times, the dampening effect of democratic inexperience would be more easily overcome.

A different approach than mine would concentrate on recommending change to these contexts. In particular, there is now growing evidence that more competitive elections draw more people to the polls, which make a strong case for certain kinds of institutional reforms. Nor would this be the end of my wish-list. We need more resources devoted to non-partisan mobilization, more interesting coverage of politics in the media, and better candidates and policy proposals. We need to get more serious, and enthusiastic, and perhaps even more worried, about democracy. We should definitely do all of this. In the meantime, however, and in combination with all of these efforts – the subject of different dissertations - it also makes sense to get people voting by simply getting them voting – by encouraging the habit in a greater number of people. It is often nothing more complicated than a lack of familiarity with democratic practice that holds people back. Where concrete types of experience and familiarity are achieved, especially
early in life, voting is much more likely. Without losing sight of other kinds of reform, it should be remembered that increased participation can itself be a potent potential source of democratic revitalization. More importantly, widespread participation, across all segments of society, is the best hope we have for the peaceful negotiation of future conflict. Democracies must work in hard times, as well as in good ones, and they should not be left to erode between crises.
## Appendix A: Democratization Scores

### Appendix C: Democratization Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Democratization Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
<td>24.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
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<td>Bahamas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Barbados</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
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<td>Belize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>14.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herz.</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Brazil</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Burundi</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Cameroon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African R.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<td>Colombia</td>
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<td>Congo</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Dom. Republic</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vanhanen (1989)
Appendix B: Measuring Democracy

Even a cursory review of conceptualizations and operationalizations of democracy reveals a lack of consensus among scholars regarding definition and measurement. The variety of typologies is enormous; one review of some 150 studies identified 550 democratic subtypes (Diamond 1999). Nonetheless, most contemporary interpretations of democracy emphasize a limited number of essential characteristics. Broadly consistent with Joseph Schumpeter’s (1942) and Seymour Lipset’s (1959) definitions, Robert Dahl (Dahl 1982, p. 106-31) identifies two essential characteristics of democracy: the presence of public contestation and the right to participation. Consistent with this, Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Lipset (1990) name three conditions essential to democracy: (1) Meaningful, regular and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups for positions of power within government; (2) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies; and (3) civil and political liberties sufficient to ensure meaningful political competition and participation.

If there is broad agreement on these general characteristics of democracies, operationalizations nonetheless reveal significant differences in emphasis and prioritization. In particular, there are large differences in assessing the relative importance of these three factors (competitiveness, political freedoms, and participation) when judging the presence, extensiveness and quality of democracy. Problematically, (from the point of view of my interests, which center on the participatory aspect of democracy), most measurements emphasize competitiveness and political freedoms over participation. For example, Przeworski et al (2000), in their division of regimes into democracies and dictatorships, regard contestation as the crucial variable, assigning political freedoms and participation a non-essential status. Not only are actual rates of participation not taken into consideration, democracy is considered present even
when suffrage is tightly restricted, so long as elections and multiple parties are present. While these criteria may be sufficient to separate democracies from non-democracies, they are incapable of telling us about varying degrees of democracy. A prioritization of contestation is also evident in the scale of polyarchy (democraticness) developed by Coppedge and Reinicke (1988) on the basis of Dahl’s theories, which relegate consideration of participation to a measure of the extent of suffrage only. Raymond Gaskil’s Freedom House ratings, extensively used by contemporary researchers, in part because of the broad coverage of countries, exclude both contestation and participation in favour of an exclusive emphasis on political rights and civil liberties. Nonetheless the index is commonly used as a measure of democratization. The other most extensively used measure, Ted Gurr’s Polity Democracy-Autocracy scores, look primarily at a large number of institutional variables, which take into account the regulation of political participation, but not the level of participation itself.

In contrast, the index selected for use in this study, Tatu Vanhanen’s (1990, 1997, 2003) Index of Democratization (ID) takes participation more seriously, weighting it equally with competition. Vanhanen criticizes other measures for their complexity, their reliance on subjective evaluations, and the arbitrary weighting schemes used to aggregate scores (along these lines, see also criticisms of the Polity scores in Treier and Jackman (2008)). In contrast, he uses two easily obtainable quantitative measures: (1) competitiveness, as measured by the percentage share of the votes cast in parliamentary and presidential elections for the smaller parties and independents, obtained by subtracting the percentage of the votes won by the largest party from 100; and (2) participation, as measured by the percentage of the total population actually voting in these elections. Vanhanen does not include a measure of civil liberties and political rights because of the lack of reliable, objective, empirical data with which to measure them. He also
argues that competition measures these variables indirectly, and this seems to be borne out by the high level of agreement between his competition measure and the Freedom House ratings (Vanhanen 2003, p. 61).

While Kenneth Bollen (1980: 374) states that “neither high nor low rates of participation are in themselves good or bad for democracy,” Vanhanen argues that such convictions stand in tension with dominant conceptualizations of democracy. Since Vanhanen can find no persuasive theoretical basis on which to rank competitiveness and participation, he weights them equally. Moreover, because he believes both competition and participation are essential to democracy, he multiplies the scores of the two measures, and divides by 100 to obtain his Democratization Index. In effect, this means that a zero on either dimension will result in a score of zero overall. The thinking here is that participation and competitiveness cannot compensate for each other where one or the other is absent, and that high scores on both dimensions are necessary for a high ranking overall. Vanhanen (and others) find the correlation between his index and the Freedom House and Polity scores quite high (around .8, while the Polity and Freedom House correlation sits at around .9) (See Vanhanen 2003, p. 68-78). This shows that in the context of generally high levels of agreement, some disagreement on individual country rankings is nonetheless present, and Vanhanen’s calculations show that these are the result of his greater emphasis on participation, for example when “the degree of participation separates oligarchical democracies from more complete democracies (Vanhanen 2003, p. 63).”

I found Vanhanen’s arguments regarding the advantages of his index persuasive. More importantly, since my interest is in the measurement of democratic cultures within origin countries in terms of how participatory they are, it makes sense to use a measure of democracy that gives strong consideration to participation. Although I would defend an emphasis on
participation as an important measure of democratic health, my work is not concerned with defining or assessing democratic health. Such questions, however interesting, are beyond the scope of my study. My hypothesis, building on research that finds voting to have a strong habitual component, argues that there are very good reasons to suppose that, (whatever its relationship to democratic health in a more holistic sense), participation in origin countries will be predictive of participation post-migration. My theoretical interest in the participatory aspect of democratic regimes therefore explains my choice of measure, from among the few that cover a broad range of countries.

Nonetheless, it is clear that a measure of participation alone would make an unsatisfactory indicator of the strength of participatory democratic political cultures within different national populations. For one thing, Vanhanen was unable to obtain satisfactory data on the age structure of populations for all the countries in his dataset. He calculates participation as a proportion of the total population, which means that (developing) countries with very young populations will appear to have lower levels of participation than (developed) countries with more top-heavy population structures, even where participation rates of eligible adults are similar. Beyond this, a participation measure alone has the serious drawback of not telling us whether elections are meaningful (offering choice and affecting the political distribution of power), nor can it distinguish participation that is free from participation that is coerced. Where participation is coerced (especially where elections are not meaningful), we would not expect participation levels to persist in new contexts where coercion is not present. Taking competitiveness into account ensures that we are predicting participation within Canada on the basis of prior electoral participation in meaningful political contests.
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interviews
Eleven areas of interest were covered in all interviews. The order in which the topics were covered was as indicated below, with the exception of topics 3-8, which were introduced in an order that varied according to the answers given to the question in topic 2. To be precise, the particular factors that the respondent indicated were most influential to political development in topic 2’s open-ended question were covered first. In practice, since family influences were cited as most powerful by nearly all respondents, the order was most frequently as described below. Within each area, specific questions are described, which were asked where relevant, but the wording was frequently varied in order to clarify the question. In addition, further follow-up questions probing the interviewee’s responses were introduced in order to clarify and amplify responses. Respondents were also, and in addition, encouraged to discuss issues or ideas not specifically introduced by the interviewer which they considered relevant or of interest given the general questions that motivated the interviews.

I began the interviews by explaining my motivations as follows:

These interviews are inspired by two interests. First, an interest in learning about how people develop politically, and how they become voters or non-voters. Second, an interest in learning about people’s opinions and thoughts about politics and democracy and political participation, including voting.

1. Background Information

Respondents were asked to provide their name, age, gender, place of birth, citizenship status, their own and their family’s ethnic identity and national origin, details about their own or...
their parents’ arrival in Canada, and about the educational, geographic and occupational history of their extended families.

2. Political Development

Respondents were asked: What would you consider the greatest influences on your own political development?

3. Family Influence

Respondents were asked about political interest within their childhood families – about levels of interest in politics, about whether family political histories were known and discussed, about the content, intensity and frequency of political discussion in general, about whether political news was followed and/or discussed, by whom, and in which circumstances and contexts. They were asked about the extent to which interest centered more or less on issues, candidates, political beliefs in general, or homeland politics. They were asked about childhood and adolescent memories of elections, election campaigns, politicians, and issues, about whether they ever accompanied parents to the polls, and if so, what they remembered of this.

4. School Influence

I asked respondents to recount memories of political discussion and political contests in class, and in assemblies and other school-wide venues. They were also asked to describe in detail the content of any such events or discussions (i.e. whether they centered on elections, issues, and/or candidates and which ones) and about the role of specific teachers and/or
visiting speakers. They were asked about where and when such influences were encountered (for example, whether in grade schools, high schools, or post-secondary schools).

5. Formal and Informal Associations

Questions concerned the influence of informal associations with friends, relatives outside of immediate families, co-workers, and employers, as well as the influence of formal groups such as (for instance) neighbourhood, ethnic, sports, musical or artistically oriented groups or clubs, as sites of mobilization and information sharing. Again, respondents were asked to provide detail about the relevant actors, contexts, and sites.

6. Religious Organization Influences

Respondents were asked particularly about church, temple, synagogue or mosque attendance, experience of mobilization and political information sharing in religious arenas both formally and informally.

7. Media Influences

Respondents were asked to describe whether and how political information was introduced into their homes during childhood and later on via television and/or radio news, other radio and television programming, newspapers, and other media, including blogs, internet news aggregators, and other internet sites. They were asked about parental and own media consumption patterns and how these had changed over time.

8. Partisan Mobilization

Questions concerned experiences of party mobilization via telephone, internet, or face-to-face in any site, including at home, in school, and in public places.
9. Origin

Respondents were asked about whether and how they thought that ethnic, religious, or national origin group membership mattered to political development and concerns, for example, whether furthering issues of specific concern to their ethnic, national, or religious community in political arenas were important within their families, or specifically to them, and whether such group memberships, and political outreach within ethnic communities by political parties, were an important source of political learning within their communities.

10. Family Voting

Questions concerned the turnout history of the respondent, and of the respondent’s parents, siblings, grandparents, and other members of the extended family, when known. Questions were also asked about whether partisan leanings where shared or secret within the family, and whether political conflict was present within the family, as well as whether there was a tolerance for diversity of opinion.

11. Voting over Time and beliefs and opinions regarding politics and voting

The respondent was asked about memories concerning their own earliest opportunities to vote, and about what motivated their decision to participate or abstain from electoral participation, both at the beginning, and over time. They were asked whether they felt a sense of obligation about voting, and if so, if this was to their country, to a group, to their own personal values, or to teachers or parents. They were asked about memorable political events of any kind, and about how these might have been influential to their political development or understanding of politics and political contests, politicians and political participation. They were asked about if and how their motivations and thinking changed over time, and
about their past and current beliefs and opinions regarding politics, democracy, voting, civic and political engagement.
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