The Ties That Bind: Changing Demographics and Civic Engagement in California

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Foreword

One of the most troubling and poorly understood trends in America today is the decline in civic participation. I say "poorly understood" not from the lack of research, but from the frustration that arises as we see citizens avoiding participatory activities that have always seemed to be the heart and soul of democracy. Voting, civic organizations, and political engagement are activities that now seem embedded in a mid-twentieth-century lifestyle—never to return in anything like the scale and intensity we knew in that era.

Two trends in California make declining civic engagement especially worrisome. One, of course, is the vigorous use of the ballot initiative as a means for making public policy—at both the state and local levels. The second is the shifting demographic profile of the state. Because voting and other forms of civic engagement are highly correlated with education and income, older white voters go to the polls in disproportionate numbers. A majority of all voters in California are white, even though the 2000 Census tells us that the state is now home to a majority-minority population. California is at a stage in its history where a minority white population is in the position of making key policy decisions for a highly diverse society of 35 million people.

S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Mark Baldassare started with this stark reality and investigated the question of whether minorities are engaged in civic activities even if they are not proportionately represented at the polls. One of their conclusions is sobering: "Whites are overrepresented in California in almost every political activity, particularly when it comes to contributing money to political campaigns and writing to elected officials. Thus, the option of participating in political activities other than voting actually tends to reinforce the dominance of whites at the ballot box." The authors then observe that a lot of the underrepresentation at the polls is due to a more youthful

population of minorities, but that it will take decades for the age differences to equalize.

Low and unequal rates of civic engagement mean that low-income and minority families are likely to be at a disadvantage in dealing with social problems through their own volunteer activities. And the voices of the young, minority, and low-income families are less likely to be heard in the overall political process. The authors conclude that California is heading into uncharted waters—the most diverse population in American history, voting rates lower than those in the rest of the nation, and disproportionately low rates of voting and civic engagement by low-income minorities. All of these factors present the prospect that the more civically active white population might have a disproportionate role to play in public policy decisionmaking for decades to come.

However, the authors believe that this need not be the case, and they offer a number of recommendations for reducing the disparities evident in political participation and volunteerism across income and racial lines. They first of all underscore the importance of civic engagement as a precursor to vigorous voting behavior. It is clear from their findings that the two go hand in hand for whites and will likely have the same pattern for minority families as they undergo a civic awakening. But California faces a formidable challenge—how to educate and facilitate the emergence of new generations of civically engaged, politically active residents. In this volume, the authors provide the data and analysis necessary to understand and undertake this challenge.

David W. Lyon
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Summary

This report provides the first comprehensive portrait of civic engagement in California as it relates to the changing demographics of the state's population. Studies at the national level have shown that civic engagement—both political participation and civic volunteerism—has declined over the past two decades and is presently characterized by significant demographic differences. Recent studies have found that voting participation in California varies considerably by race, immigrant generation, socioeconomic status, and region. However, we have little systematic information about group differences in other important forms of civic engagement, such as political participation other than voting, involvement in local affairs, and volunteerism.

Declines in political participation mean fewer opportunities for state and local governments to understand the needs and concerns of their constituents. Low levels of volunteerism hamper efforts to address social problems in times of fiscal austerity. Also, group inequalities in political participation often lead to disparities in citizen influence over legislation and the distribution of policy benefits.

This report analyzes PPIC Statewide Surveys and California subsamples from recent national data collections to improve understanding of civic engagement activities among Californians, addressing the following questions:

- How does civic engagement (i.e., political participation and volunteerism) in California compare to that in the rest of the United States?
- How does the level of civic engagement within California vary across demographic groups such as age, education, income, and homeownership?

- How does the level of volunteering vary across the state's major regions and within political and racial/ethnic groups in the regions?
- What are the largest racial/ethnic differences in civic engagement?
- Do racial/ethnic differences in civic engagement persist in California after accounting for demographic differences? What are the policy implications?
- Which civic activities, if any, are linked to voting in elections? Do other forms of civic engagement serve as a substitute for voting, or are they another dividing line between those who participate and those who do not?

Key Findings

California in the National Context

Voter turnout in California is lower than in the rest of the United States because of a steep decline in participation since the early 1980s. California also lags behind the rest of the United States in the rate of campaign contributions to state legislatures and national officeholders. For all other political activities, California is on a par with the rest of the nation. Finally, rates of overall participation for volunteerism are similar between California and the rest of the United States. However, there are some notable differences in the types of activities in which volunteers participate. Those who volunteer in California are less likely to do so for religious organizations and are more likely to participate in children's organizations.

Demographics and Civic Engagement

Within California, some groups are underrepresented in the political process because their participation in various types of political activities is considerably lower than the California average. In terms of demographic characteristics other than race and ethnicity, the highest levels of participation inequality are those based on education, homeownership, and income. Those with less than a high school diploma or college degree are less likely than those who are well educated to engage in such activities

as signing petitions and writing to elected officials. Similarly, those who rent their homes are significantly less likely than homeowners to vote, give money to politics, and write to elected officials. Sizable levels of participation inequality also characterize volunteerism for almost all of the various demographic characteristics we consider, with participation significantly higher among women, homeowners, those with more education and higher incomes, and those with children under age 18.

Regional and Partisan Patterns

We find only a few significant differences within California when comparing the activities of residents in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, Los Angeles, and other parts of Southern California. For example, San Francisco Bay Area residents are the least likely to be involved in religious groups and the most likely to participate in children's organizations. Otherwise, there are no large differences in overall participation across the state's major regions.

Within each region, there are sizable differences in political participation based on political party registration. We find some evidence that those who have registered with the more dominant party in a given region are more likely to engage in such political activities as writing to elected officials and contributing money to political causes. Also, among those registered as Independents, residents in the San Francisco Bay Area have the highest rates of political participation and those living in the Central Valley have the lowest.

There are also many similarities in the effects of party registration on civic engagement across regions. In general, the most significant participation inequalities by party registration are found in voting, writing to elected officials, and giving money to political causes. By contrast, partisan differences are lowest for such activities as signing petitions and attending local meetings. For activities where participation inequalities are high, Independents are considerably less likely to participate than those who are registered Republicans or Democrats. Finally, in every region, participation is lowest among those who are not registered to vote, even for political activities that are unrelated to voting.

Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrant-Related Factors

There are sizable differences in participation associated with race/ethnicity and to a lesser extent, immigrant generation and language use. Whites are overrepresented in California in almost every political activity, particularly when it comes to contributing money to political campaigns and writing to elected officials. Thus, the option of participating in political activities other than voting actually tends to reinforce the dominance of whites at the ballot box. For Latinos, attendance at local meetings is the only activity for which they enjoy a relative advantage in participation. Asian Americans are consistently underrepresented in various types of political activities, and blacks face a relative disadvantage in terms of citizen contact with elected officials. There are also significant differences between first-generation immigrants and those in later immigrant generations, as well as between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latinos. However, these inequalities in participation are generally smaller than those found for race.

Racial Inequalities After Demographic Controls

We examined what would happen if there were a similar age structure across racial and ethnic groups—which may occur over time, for instance, as young immigrant populations are aging and take on the age characteristics of the native-born population. In a multivariate analysis controlling for age, we find a substantial reduction in racial disparities for voting, attending local meetings, and working for party organizations. One possible policy solution may be to simply wait while age differences equalize, but this could take decades. With whites accounting for an even smaller share of the population under age 18 today, the differences in the age structures between whites and nonwhites may actually expand, and racial disparities could thus increase in the next two decades.

If we account for language differences in our multivariate analysis, we find that policies that would encourage English proficiency would help to reduce inequalities in civic engagement, but that civic and political differences would still persist. On the other hand, our multivariate analysis indicates that policies aimed at reducing racial

inequalities in education, income, and homeownership can all play significant roles in diminishing the extent of racial disparities in political participation and civic volunteering in California today.

Policy Implications

Our report concludes that those who have the most to say in California elections are also those who participate more in the broader political and civic life of the state. Specifically, those who are white, older, more affluent, homeowners, and more highly educated have the highest levels of civic engagement using our broadly defined indicators. We also conclude that other types of political activities do not necessarily diminish the kinds of group inequalities present at the ballot box. Differences in participation associated with voting are also found in such activities as writing letters to elected officials, attending meetings on local issues, giving money to political causes, and signing ballot petitions. Similar levels of participation inequality are also found for volunteerism in California. In general, patterns in broad-based political participation and volunteerism do not make up for a lack of voting. They tend instead to reinforce the divisions between those who are actively involved in civic life in the Golden State and those who are not.

The consequences of low and unequal rates of civic engagement are significant. First, it means that low-income and minority communities are less likely to address social problems on their own through volunteer activities, which could be particularly important when state and local governments are faced with budget deficits and program cuts. Moreover, the voices of younger, lower-income, and minority residents are less likely to be heard in the overall political process, and their needs may thus be more difficult to directly gauge and reflect in public policymaking.

A number of policy recommendations emerge from our findings on civic engagement in California. These recommendations address the disparities evident in political participation and volunteerism today and the important role that civic engagement can have on the future quality of life of Californians.

1. *First-generation immigrants are an untapped resource for civic involvement.* There is an especially strong interest in volunteering among first-generation immigrants who have not yet participated in the civic life of their communities. This segment of society would benefit directly from increased community involvement in improving local conditions. In an era of state budget constraints, this could be a cost-efficient way to solve local problems.
2. *Increasing civic engagement should have a regional approach*. The state and national groups working in this arena must come to terms with the fact that the state's regions are diverse and confront unique issues in political participation and civic volunteering for different groups.
3. *The racial divide in civic engagement is likely to persist without upward mobility.* Current disparities in civic engagement associated with race, ethnicity, and immigrant generation are linked to differences in economic conditions, English language proficiency, and educational attainment. These disparities in civic engagement are not likely to disappear over time unless there is general social and economic progress among today's disadvantaged groups.
4. *There is a need to inform and motivate citizens about participation beyond the ballot box.* In addition to low levels of voting among minority and lower-income residents, we note large gaps in participation for other political activities and volunteerism. In addition to improving economic conditions and educational attainment, greater outreach efforts by civic and political institutions are necessary to reduce these gaps in participation.

Among all of the policy recommendations we can offer for interventions that would create more parity in civic engagement, there is none that can be offered with more certainty than this one: Efforts to reduce income and educational differences today will reduce future gaps in civic engagement. As a result, California could become a model society for a large "majority-minority" democracy where diverse groups participate in the political process, but this will require a sustained

investment in public education so that more Californians have the skills needed to move up the economic ladder and participate in the civic and political life of the state.

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Acknowledgments

Our intention from the outset of this study has been to produce a report on civic engagement that will be highly relevant to a broad group of policymakers in state and local government, leaders of foundations and nonprofit organizations, business and civic groups, and scholars in universities and other research organizations who are working in this area. To that end, this study has benefited from ongoing discussions with staff in the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSERV), whose interest in learning detailed information on civic engagement provided an important motivation for this report. GOSERV staff, including former Executive Director Chuck Supple, have linked us with the practical and policy-relevant issues related to civic engagement in California.

We are much indebted to the scholars who have done work in this area and whose national studies have informed our approach in this PPIC report, including Robert Putnam, Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady. We are also appreciative of the scholarly work on group differences in political participation in California done by our colleagues including Bruce Cain, Jack Citrin, Claudine Gay, Benjamin Highton, Taeku Lee, Harry Pachon, Ricardo Ramírez, and Zoltan Hajnal. We benefited from comments on an earlier draft from Jack Citrin, Louis DeSipio, Paul Lewis, Belinda Reyes, and Fred Silva. We had research assistance from the PPIC Statewide Survey staff, including Jonathan Cohen, Dorie Apollonio, Lisa Cole, and Eliana Kaimowitz. We wish to acknowledge the assistance of Cheryl Katz in the writing and research of the chapters on demographic and regional differences in civic engagement. We also thank Nikesh Patel for his research assistance and Gary Bjork and Joyce Peterson for their editorial comments. Although many people contributed to this study, we are solely responsible for its content.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing concern over the American public's level of civic engagement. National surveys have shown that civic engagement—which includes voting in elections, other forms of political participation, and volunteering for community and nonprofit services—has declined over the past two decades. Moreover, the current patterns of civic and political participation indicate significant group differences—in ways that reflect the existing social and economic divisions in society.

Several studies at the national level of political participation and volunteerism (Skocpol, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993) have provided detailed information on the current state of political participation and volunteerism in America and changes over time in participation trends. They have also examined demographic differences in civic and political participation, the implications of political and civic differences for group disparities, and the relationships between different types of political activities and civic volunteerism. These studies have also shown that, although civic engagement may involve acts of individual choice, these choices are often structured by various social, economic, and institutional factors. Thus, for instance, poverty and lack of education mean fewer skills that are relevant to political participation and fewer opportunities to be mobilized into participation in political activities and volunteerism.

Many scholars and commentators believe that the patterns observed in these studies do not bode well for the long-term health of American democracy. Declines in political participation and involvement in civic activities mean fewer opportunities for state and local governments to understand the needs and concerns of their constituents. Thus, group differences in civic and political participation can lead to disparities in citizen influence over legislation and the distribution of policy benefits. Group differences in volunteerism may also pose serious challenges to

state and local governance in terms of problem-solving. Low levels of volunteerism may hamper the ability of state and local governments to respond to local conditions, deliver public goods to residents, and address community problems (Putnam et al., 1994). The challenges of providing needed services to local residents through community groups become especially acute during hard economic times with accompanying cuts in government spending; places with low levels of "social capital" may fare worse because they do not have the resources to cope with declining public investments as do those with higher levels of local volunteerism. Finally, group differences in volunteerism often reinforce inequalities in political participation, leading to greater disparities in political influence and economic resources.

Some of these patterns and trends in civic engagement found at the national level have been shown to be also present in California. This is most evident in studies of voting participation. In an era in which California has seen a dramatic increase in the population, the state has also experienced declining rates of voter turnout. This ongoing political trend is exemplified by the 2002 California election, which set records for the lowest voter turnout in the state's history: One in four eligible adults participated in the March primary, and 36 percent voted in the general election. As for the October 7, 2003, special election, voting participation by eligible adults increased by just 7 points to 43 percent—despite the nature of this high-stakes, history-making election and unprecedented media attention resulting in part from the presence of movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger on the ballot (California Secretary of State, 2003). Along with these overall declines in voter participation in California, there remain sharp differences in statewide voting across race, immigrant generation, age, socioeconomic status, and region of residence (Baldassare, 2000, 2002; Ramakrishnan, 2002; Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001; Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura, 2001; Citrin and Highton, 2002). In particular, California's voters are disproportionately white, older, more affluent, more likely to be homeowners, and more highly educated than the adult population at large. Despite the fact that there have been increasing numbers of Asian and Latino voters, these groups remain underrepresented at the ballot box in statewide elections. These group differences in electoral participation mean that citizen

influence over legislation—through either elected representatives or the initiative process—varies by social and economic status, racial and ethnic classification, and immigrant status. In California, many of those who rely the most on government are the least likely to be involved in the political process.

Although much is known about the consequences of demographic diversity for voting participation in California, we have only a limited understanding of other aspects of civic engagement in the state. Civic engagement extends well beyond the ballot box, with several other ways for citizens to participate in civic life—political activities such as signing petitions and working for political campaigns, and civic behavior such as attending public meetings and volunteering for nonprofit and community organizations. As in the case of voting, involvement in these forms of civic engagement may be relatively low and unequally distributed across different groups. In some cases, differences in participation may compound the problem of political inequality at the ballot box, whereas in other cases they may ameliorate group differences in voting. Thus, to obtain a more accurate picture of the relationship between demographic diversity and citizen involvement in public affairs, we need to pay attention to forms of civic and political participation beyond the ballot box.

Despite a considerable number of national studies on the subject, no studies of California to date have provided a detailed and comprehensive picture of civic engagement in the state. So far, studies of political participation in California have primarily examined differences in the contours of public policy preferences and voting behavior that have resulted from the state's changing ethnic and racial mix and growing immigrant population (Baldassare, 2000, 2002; Citrin and Highton, 2002; Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001; Hajnal and Louch, 2001; Hajnal, Lewis, and Louch, 2002; Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura, 2001). These studies have consistently shown that such factors as race, ethnicity, and immigrant generation bear a significant relationship to political attitudes and voting behavior, and they have pointed to the public policy challenges this creates for California's unique mix of representative and direct democracy.

The portrait of civic engagement amid California's changing demography remains incomplete, however, without taking into account volunteerism and forms of political participation other than voting. Moreover, the implications of other demographic factors known to interact with political behavior and civic activism—such as age, income, homeownership, length of residence, and the presence of children in the home—must also be considered to develop a full portrait of civic engagement in the Golden State. That is what we seek to do in this study of civic engagement.

The study contributes new knowledge to existing information on civic engagement in a changing California through detailed analysis of data collected by national and statewide surveys. Data on civic engagement in California are derived primarily from the Current Population Survey, *Volunteer Supplement* (CPS-VS), conducted in September 2002. The CPS-VS contains responses from 6,717 Californians, of whom 5,074 are adult citizens. This large number of respondents allows comparisons across various groups within the state—those defined by age, race, education, or gender—as well as comparisons of volunteerism between California and the rest of the United States. In addition, we also have data from three PPIC Statewide Surveys conducted between August and November 2002. Each was a random-digit-dial telephone survey that asked a representative sample of 2,000 adult residents interviewed in English or Spanish questions replicated from national studies about forms of political participation other than voting.

Although there are no national surveys with a similar number of Californian respondents, the National Election Studies (NES) from November 2002 do contain a sufficient number of respondents from California (143) to provide reliable estimates of participation and comparisons to the nationwide average. The NES consists of a pre-election and post-election interview; questions on political participation were asked in the post-election interview conducted in the month following the general election in 2002. Finally, the September 2002 and February 2003 PPIC Statewide Surveys (each containing about 2,000 respondents) include a few questions on volunteerism. Because these surveys also include some basic measures of political interest and

participation in elections, they enable us to conduct a preliminary investigation into the links between volunteerism and political participation in California.

In addition to outlining our data sources, it is also important to characterize the activities that fall under the rubrics of political participation and volunteerism. By political participation, we mean those activities undertaken by individual citizens to influence the political process, either through elections or through the creation, administration, or enforcement of government decisions. Activities aimed at influencing electoral outcomes can be direct, such as voting in elections, or indirect, such as signing petitions, contributing money to political campaigns, attending political rallies, and engaging in political party work. Constituents can also attempt to influence the processes of policymaking and policy enforcement by such activities as attending public meetings on local issues and writing to elected officials on various matters. Each of these activities may vary in its ability to change electoral or policy outcomes but, in general, the participating population has more influence over such outcomes than the population that refrains from political participation. Thus, by examining the participation rates of groups across a wide range of political activities, we can develop a more accurate understanding of the extent to which certain groups are underrepresented or overrepresented in the population that is politically relevant in California today.

Our definition of volunteerism refers to those activities that people undertake for organizations without receiving a wage or any other form of monetary or material remuneration. Thus, volunteerism includes activities on behalf of religious groups, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), neighborhood groups, and homeowner associations. It is important to note that this definition of volunteerism is limited in that it focuses on participation in organizations and thus fails to capture informal activities such as participation in networks of friendship and extended kin. This limitation is found in most surveys of civic engagement, which may understate the true extent of volunteerism among the population. However, participation in organizations is important to study in its own right because of its implications for capacity-building in various communities and because of its links to

political participation. Another limitation of the CPS is that its measures of volunteerism are consistently lower when a response is not self-reported but is instead reported by another member of the household (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Such a pattern leads to an overall reduction in the level of volunteerism reported in the CPS because a majority of survey responses are not self-reported.

However, this downward bias in the overall level of reported participation does not seem to have any significant bearing on group differences in participation. Separate analyses that include only self-reported responses indicate no appreciable differences in the magnitude of group differences identified in our study. Thus, although our use of the CPS-VS may underestimate the *absolute levels* of volunteerism in California and the rest of the country, there does not seem to be any indication that this downward bias has any significant effect on *relative differences* in participation across groups.

Using these definitions of volunteerism and political participation, we use state and national surveys to address the following empirical questions:

- How does the level of civic engagement in California compare to that in the rest of the United States in terms of political participation outside elections, participation in public meetings on local issues, and volunteering for various types of organizations?
- Does the level of civic engagement vary across different regions in California, and where are the patterns of regional differences the greatest?
- Does the level of civic engagement in California vary greatly across demographic groups by age, education, income, and homeownership, and for which types of civic activities are the group differences the largest?
- How significant are the differences by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status for specific civic engagement activities, both political and nonpolitical?
- Where are the largest racial and ethnic gaps in civic engagement after accounting for socioeconomic status, age, gender, and

regional factors? How much does immigrant generation matter after controlling for other variables?

- Which civic engagement activities, if any, are linked to voting in elections? Does volunteerism serve as a substitute for political participation among citizens who are uninterested in politics, or is it yet another dividing line between those who are engaged and those who are disaffected from politics?

In our examination of group differences in civic engagement, we provide basic measures of outcomes such as participation rates and more elaborate statistical results that control for various factors. The results from multivariate regressions (presented in Chapter 6 and Appendix B) may point to the unique effect of each demographic factor on civic engagement, but it is important to also consider participation gaps without statistical controls to understand the true extent of participation inequality in California.

Given that this is the first comprehensive report of civic engagement in the state, a significant portion of the analysis is devoted to examining group differences in participation rates, with an eye toward imbalances in participation that result from various demographic, political, and geographic factors. In addition to examining group differences in participation rates, we create a standardized measure of participation inequality that allows for consistent comparisons across various categories and outcomes. Just as economists use measures of dispersion to measure income inequality, we create a standard measure of inequalities in different types of civic engagement known as the Index of Participation Inequality (IPI). We provide a more detailed account of our summary measure of participation inequality in Appendix A.

A number of important questions could not be addressed because of limitations in the available survey data. For instance, we are unable to look at changes in civic engagement over time, as has been done on the national level, because we could not find California surveys on this topic from several decades ago. Moreover, we would have preferred to look at more specific group designations such as immigrant nationalities, but we did not have this level of detailed data or sufficient sample sizes to support such analyses. We hope that our study will serve as a benchmark

for future work on civic engagement in California and lead to further analyses of trends over time and more specific group differences. We fully expect that the current overall patterns and trends reported here will change as the state continues to experience a dramatic shift in the demographic and regional composition of its population.

2. California in the National Context

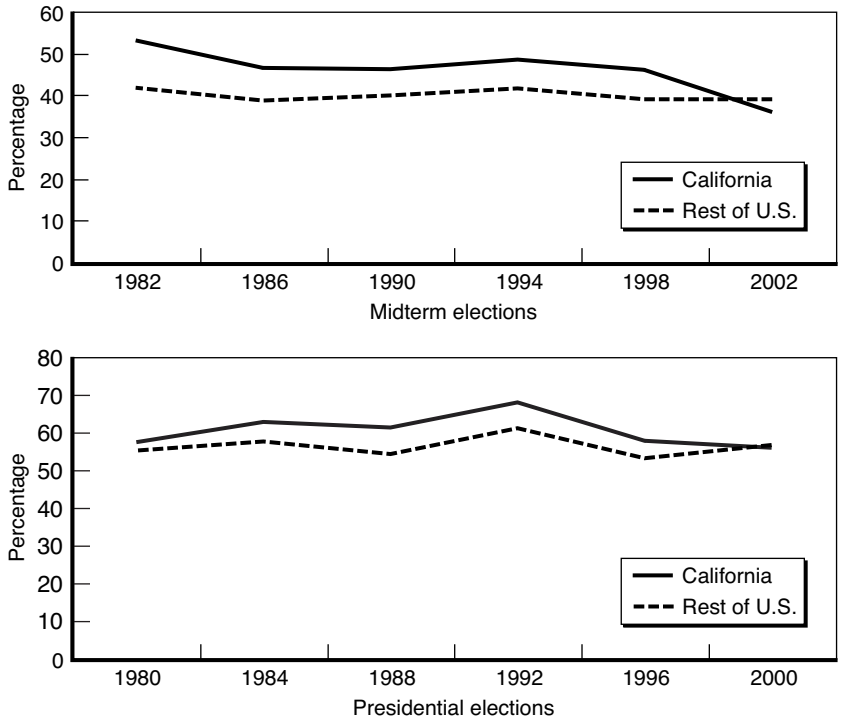
In this chapter, we examine differences between California and the rest of the nation in rates of political participation and volunteerism.

Political Participation: Voting in Elections

National surveys conducted during the 2002 election year indicate that Californians are about as participatory in the political sphere as citizens in the rest of the United States, although there are differences for particular kinds of political activities.

For instance, voter turnout among adult citizens was considerably higher in California than in the rest of the nation during the 1980s and early 1990s (Figure 2.1). These estimates from the Election Nexus Project at George Mason University, which differ slightly from those provided by the California Secretary of State, use measures of the voting-eligible population that subtract noncitizens, felons, and ineligible parolees from the count. Between 1982 and 1998, California had a consistently higher level of voter turnout in midterm elections than the nation as a whole. This difference was most pronounced in 1982, with voting rates 27 percent higher in California than in the rest of the United States. The higher rates of turnout in California were also evident during presidential election years between 1980 and 1996, with differences peaking at 13 percent in the 1988 election.

In more recent elections, however, differences between California and the rest of the nation have largely disappeared. There was virtually no difference in voter turnout between California and the rest of the United States in the 2000 presidential election, with about 55 percent of eligible voters participating in the November general election. During the 2002 midterm election, turnout in California actually dipped below the national average for the first time in the past two decades, with only



SOURCE: Election Nexus (2003).

Figure 2.1—Turnout of Voting-Eligible Population in Elections, 1980–2002

36 percent turnout compared to nearly 40 percent in the rest of the nation. Arguably, the primary reasons for low turnout in the 2002 election were those unique to the gubernatorial campaign: Voters were deeply dissatisfied with incumbent Governor Gray Davis but did not prefer the Republican alternative of Bill Simon. Furthermore, there was no election for U.S. Senate, which would likely have increased voter turnout, nor was there any ballot measure that provoked much voter interest. Thus, given the lack of palatable choices for the highest office on the statewide ballot, many Californians decided to stay at home rather than vote in November 2002.

Still, the mere presence of compelling candidates or prominent statewide initiatives may not be sufficient to restore California's edge in

voter turnout when compared to the rest of the United States. Many analysts expected a high turnout in the October 7, 2003, special election because the contest was a history-making recall election and included the charismatic appeal of Arnold Schwarzenegger, citizen outrage over the budget deficit and the vehicle license fee increase, and a high level of statewide media coverage of the election. And yet, only 43 percent of the voting-eligible population participated in the election—higher than the mark set in California in November 2002 but little different from the state's turnout rates in the 1990s (California Secretary of State, 2003).

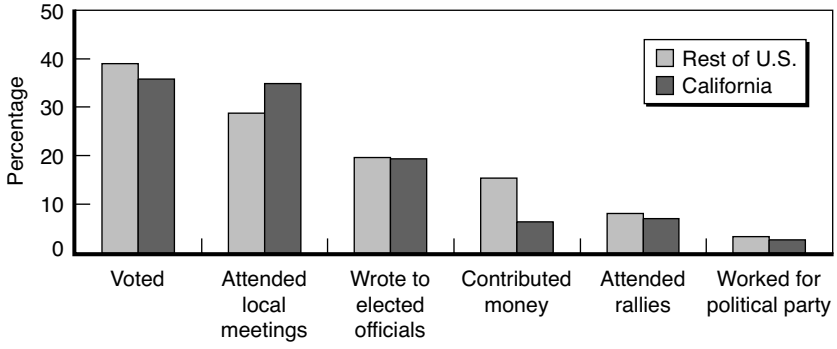
It is too early to tell whether the disappearance of the California edge in voting will continue. The most recent elections suggest this possibility, with some analysts arguing that demographic factors such as an increasing proportion of immigrants in California and a younger age distribution are leading to lower voter participation rates. Yet, these same factors did not affect California's edge in voter participation during the mid-1990s. Another possible reason for the recent disappearance of the California edge may be the steep decline in Latino turnout between the 1998 and 2002 midterm elections—perhaps the result of Latino disappointment with Gray Davis's veto of the driver's license bill for illegal immigrants, receding memories of racially divisive propositions from the mid-1990s, or the lack of a similarly galvanizing referendum issue in the November general election (García, 2002). Finally, factors such as the electoral dominance of the Democratic Party and the resultant lack of party competition in statewide races have kept voter mobilization efforts lower in California than in other electoral battleground states such as Florida and Ohio. As for the future, it still remains to be seen whether the gubernatorial recall and the election of a GOP governor will lead to a resurgence in party competition and return of a California edge in voter turnout.

Political Participation: Nonvoting Activities

To determine if California differs from the rest of the nation in terms of political activities other than voting, we examined the 2002 National Election Studies, which include nearly 150 responses from adult citizens in California on questions ranging from attending local meetings to writing government officials and contributing money to

politics. As shown in Figure 2.2, participation rates in California and the rest of the nation were similar. Thus, even though the percentage of Californians voting in 2002 may have been lower than elsewhere, the same was not true for other political activities such as attending local meetings and writing to government officials. Indeed, the results from the NES indicate that over 35 percent of Californians attended local meetings on school and community affairs, compared to only 29 percent in other parts of the country. Although this difference is not statistically significant given the size of the California sample, this finding suggests that the California deficit in voting during the 2002 election compared to the rest of the nation was evident in other forms of political participation such as attending meetings on local issues.

A similar lack of difference between California and the rest of the United States can be found for other forms of political participation such as writing to government officials and working for party and candidate organizations. About 20 percent of adult citizens in California had written a letter to a government official in the previous 12 months—a figure nearly identical to that found at the national level. Similarly, the level of participation in political rallies and protests was 7 percent in California—only slightly lower than the 8 percent participation rate in the rest of the nation. Finally, participation in party and campaign work



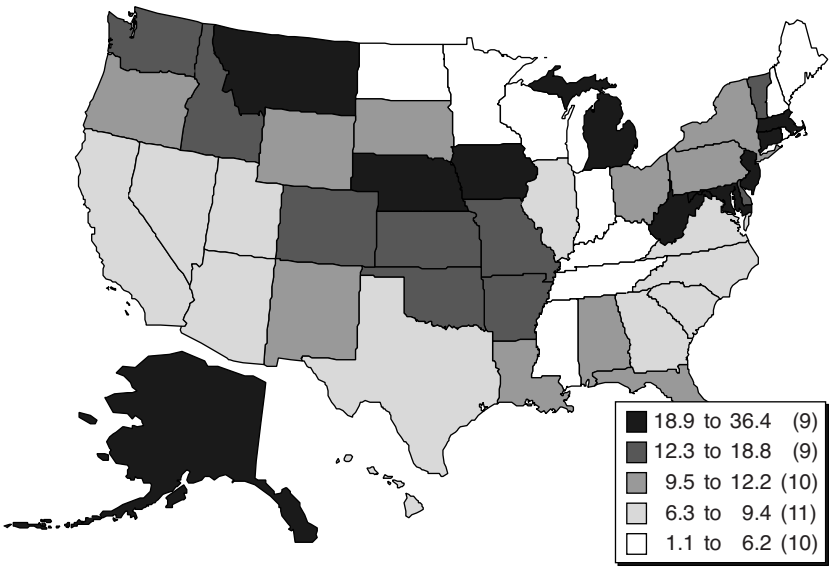
SOURCES: Election Nexus (2003); National Election Studies.

Figure 2.2—Political Participation Among Adult Citizens, 2002

was low not only among Californians (3%), but also among citizens in other parts of the country (3%).

However, in one other area of political participation Californians lag behind their counterparts in the rest of the United States—monetary contributions to political parties, candidates, and campaigns. Results from the NES indicate that only about 7 percent of adult citizens in California reported contributing money to politics, compared to over 15 percent at the national level. Such a result may be surprising at first, given the high cost and importance placed on television advertising, which would result in large campaign expenditures for campaigns in the Golden State. And yet the lower levels of campaign contributions are confirmed by data on actual giving in the various states (as opposed to reports on giving provided in survey interviews). For instance, information on contributions to state legislatures compiled by the National Institute on Money in State Politics indicates that California ranks in the bottom half of all states in terms of contributions per adult citizen. As the results in Figure 2.3 indicate, California has seven donations for every 1,000 adult citizens, making it the 14th lowest state in terms of contributions to state legislatures. Put another way, California accounts for 12 percent of the national electorate but less than 7 percent of the population that contributes money to state legislatures. Finally, data on contributions to national-level offices also indicate that Californians have relatively low rates of political giving. In the 2002 election, there were four contributions to congressional campaigns for every 1,000 adult citizens in California, ranking it as the 13th lowest state (Federal Election Commission, 2003).

California ranks so low in campaign contributions per constituent partly because of the state's large population. On the national level, states with the highest contributions per constituent tend to have some of the smallest populations and vice versa. Moreover, campaign contributions also vary across regions of the nation in ways that would affect the California trends. In the case of contributions to state legislatures, those in the Northeast and the Midwest have the highest rates of campaign contributions. In the case of congressional campaigns, political giving is high in the Northeast and the Southeast but low in the Western states. California's low rate of political giving at the state and national levels is



SOURCE: Institute on Money in State Politics (2004).
NOTES: For states with gubernatorial elections in odd-numbered years (New Jersey, Louisiana, Mississippi, Virginia), data from available election years were used—2001 for New Jersey and Virginia and 2003 for Louisiana and Mississippi. For Rhode Island and Kansas, the most recent available data are from the 2000 election.

Figure 2.3—Contributions to State Legislators per 1,000 Adult Citizens, 2002

therefore in line with larger regional variations and population-based patterns across the United States.

In sum, the results from state election agencies, the Federal Election Commission, and surveys such as the NES indicate that differences between California and the rest of the United States vary considerably by type of political activity. For some activities, such as voting and contributing money to politics, Californians lag behind those in the rest of the country. However, in other activities, such as attending local meetings, writing letters to government officials, and engaging in political party work, Californians are just as likely to participate as those outside the Golden State. Finally, as Figure 2.2 indicates, the rank-ordering of political activities remains remarkably similar in California versus the rest of the country. Voting is the most prevalent form of political participation, followed by attendance at local meetings, writing

letters to government officials, contributing money to political activities, attending rallies and protests, and working for political parties and campaigns.

Volunteerism

Evidence from prior national studies indicate that Californians exhibit lower levels of participation than the national average in some measures of volunteerism—for example, in terms of the density of community organizations per capita and average attendance at meetings of social clubs and community organizations (Putnam, 2000). At the same time, California ranks higher than the national average in terms of participation in community projects and the frequency of volunteering for activities. Although these prior comparisons between California and the rest of the United States are intriguing, they are limited by not being based on recent data. Many of the findings are based on survey data that stretch from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, leaving the question of contemporary trends largely unanswered. However, recent data in the September 2002 CPS on volunteerism in California and the rest of the nation should help in this regard.

There are several ways to measure the extent to which people participate in civic volunteerism. First, we need to decide on the relevant baseline population. In this section, we analyze volunteerism among adult citizens to provide a basis of comparison to the data on political participation. However, we do consider the issue of volunteerism among noncitizens in Chapter 5, which deals with differences in participation across racial groups and immigrant generations. Once the baseline population has been established, we consider differences in participation along several lines: overall rates of participation, the average number of hours spent on volunteer work, and the average number of organizations for which people volunteered. The latter two measures are considered with respect to the population that engages in volunteerism—measuring activity per volunteer is important because it gives a sense of the intensity of participation among those who engage in civic voluntarism. Thus, we can determine not only whether Californians are more likely to volunteer but also whether such volunteers engage in more time-intensive activities than others. Finally, we also consider differences between California and

the rest of the nation in terms of the types of organizations for which people volunteer.

The most basic measure of volunteering in the CPS is the extent to which people report volunteering in some capacity during the previous 12 months. About 28 percent of adult citizens in California report having volunteer activities, about the same as the 29 percent participation rate found in the rest of the nation (Table 2.1). Similarities in volunteerism between California and the rest of the United States also extend to the scope of organizational participation—in both cases, volunteers participated in an average of 1.5 organizations. At the same time, there are also considerable differences in volunteerism. On average, volunteers in California were more intensely engaged in volunteer activities than those living outside the state. Whereas each volunteer in California spent an average of 165 hours in volunteer activities in the preceding year, the average for the rest of the country was about 13 percent lower, at 144 hours.

Table 2.1

Volunteerism Among Adult Citizens, 2002

	California	Rest of U.S.
Percentage who volunteered	28	29
Number of organizations	1.5	1.5
Hours volunteered	164.5	143.5
Type of organization (%)		
Religious	35	42
Children (e.g., education, sports)	34	28
Civic	26	26
Health	17	17
Education	7	6
Recreation/sports	4	3
Environment	3	3
Safety	2	2
Political	1	2

SOURCE: Current Population Survey, *Volunteer Supplement* (2002).

Some differences are also apparent in the types of activities in which volunteers participate. Californians were significantly less likely to participate in religious organizations (35%) than volunteers in the rest of the country (42%), and were more likely to participate in organizations related to children's activities, including their education and recreation. For all other types of volunteer organizations, however, there was no appreciable difference associated with living in California. About 26 percent of volunteers indicated that they had participated in civic organizations, 17 percent reported volunteering for health-related organizations and causes, and about 7 percent reported working on education issues separate from those regarding children. Finally, a very small portion of volunteers reported involvement in recreational and environmental organizations, as well as groups concerned with public safety and politics. These low levels of participation held true not only in California but also in the rest of the United States.

Of course, the question still remains as to why Californians who volunteer demonstrate a relatively high level of participation in organizations related to children's activities and such a low level of participation in religious organizations. One might think that the higher level of participation in children-related organizations results from a higher proportion of adults with dependent children in the Golden State, and further analyses of the CPS data indicate that adult citizens in California are 5 percent more likely to have dependent minors than those living outside the state. However, controlling for the presence of children and for the number of children does not diminish the higher level of participation in children-related organizations among volunteers in California.

One might also think that other demographic differences between California and the rest of the United States—most notably racial composition, immigrant generation, and age structure—could account for this exceptional pattern among volunteers in California. However, controlling for such factors still leaves volunteers in California with a higher level of involvement in youth-related organizations than those in other parts of the country.

Other differences between California and the rest of the United States merit further examination—such as the lower level of participation

in religious organizations and the higher number of hours spent in volunteer work. The CPS is limited in that it does not contain measures of factors such as social norms, individual attitudes, and the density of social networks that would enable one to explore in greater detail the issue of California's exceptionalism along these particular dimensions.

Conclusions

Californians were less likely to vote in the 2002 elections, but this is a new phenomenon that bears watching and that could be explained by the uniquely unappealing nature of the 2002 California ballot. Indeed, the voting participation rates rose to average national levels in the October 7th special recall election. Californians are just as likely as other Americans to participate in other political activities, with the exception of contributing money to political campaigns. As for civic volunteering, rates of overall participation are similar, although those who volunteer in California are less likely to participate in religious organizations and more likely to engage in volunteer work related to children's activities. In all, civic engagement in the Golden State is not much different from participation in political activities and volunteer work in the rest of the country.

3. California's Regions, Partisanship, and Civic Engagement

In this chapter, we examine regional and partisan differences in political participation and volunteering in California. We might expect variations in civic engagement across the state's regions because California has the largest population, and is one of the largest states in terms of geographic area. As a result, the state's residents live in a number of distinct geographic regions. A number of potential factors may lead to regional variations in civic engagement—including each region's unique culture and history as well a particular array of public and private institutions—which present distinct opportunities and constraints for active participation (Baldassare, 2000, 2002). For the policymaker, it is crucial to know if one region lags behind others in terms of political participation and volunteering. It is also important to understand the extent to which there are differences across political groups within each region.

California is unique in the political makeup of its voters and federal and state elected officials. Today, Democrats outnumber Republicans by a wide margin statewide, in terms of both voters and elected officials. At the same time, Independent voters are growing in number and many Californians are not registered to vote. Region by region in California, there is also a considerable amount of variation in terms of party dominance in the electorate and control over political institutions. Obviously, people's voter registration and partisan leanings can shape their motivation and opportunities for political participation in many important ways, and these loyalties need to be considered both at the statewide level and within the specific partisan context of California's regions.

We divide the state into four regions based on geography and major population centers: the San Francisco Bay Area, which includes the nine counties surrounding San Francisco; the Central Valley, stretching 400 miles from Bakersfield to Redding; Los Angeles County, the state's largest metropolitan area; and Other Southern California, which includes Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. In all, about 85 percent of the state's residents live in one of these four regions. The rest of the state's residents live in largely rural areas in the central coast, Northern California, mountains, and desert and they are not included in this analysis. We divide the population into four political groups: Democrats, Republicans, Independent voters, and those who are not registered to vote (there are too few registered voters outside the two major parties for separate analysis). We also examine the participation differences within voter registration groups by region.

Regional Differences in Political Participation and Volunteerism

The state's major regions do have important similarities in terms of their overall level of political activities. Residents in all four regions are more likely to participate in the political process by voting than by any other type of activity. Table 3.1 shows that citizens in all four regions turn out to vote with similar regularity, with those in the San Francisco Bay Area (57%) and the Central Valley (55%) slightly more likely than those in Los Angeles (49%) and the rest of Southern California (51%) to be regular voters. Californians are fairly similar across regions in their participation in other political activities as well. In each of the four regions, signing petitions and attending meetings are the most frequent nonvoting activities; attending rallies and doing political party work are far less common. San Francisco Bay Area residents are somewhat more likely than those in other regions to sign petitions and write to elected officials. There is not much regional variation in contributing money, attending rallies, or participating in political party work.

There are no major regional differences in rates of volunteer work; about one in four residents in each region is involved in some type of

Table 3.1

Regional Differences in Political Participation and Volunteering Rates, by Region

	By Region (%)				
	Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California	IPI
Vote regularly	55	57	49	51	0.03
Sign petitions	37	43	39	40	0.02
Attend local meetings	36	40	36	39	0.03
Write to elected officials	25	35	28	30	0.04
Contribute money	21	23	20	22	0.02
Attend rallies	16	19	16	13	0.04
Participate in political party work	7	7	6	7	0.04
Percentage who volunteered	24	25	23	29	0.04
Type of organization					
Religious	33	24	39	39	
Children	33	37	31	30	
Civic	26	28	24	22	
Health	17	18	15	18	

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteering.

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteering.

nonpolitical civic engagement. As for types of involvement, residents in the Central Valley are equally likely to support religious charities and children's causes, whereas those in the San Francisco Bay Area are much more heavily invested in children's organizations and those in Los Angeles County and the rest of Southern California devote more of their time to religious efforts.

Partisan Differences in Political Participation

Next, we look at the level and type of political participation by political party membership across the state as a whole. Republicans and Democrats generally have much in common in their levels of political

participation, particularly when their rates are compared to the rates of Independents and those who are not registered to vote. The one exception is that Republicans (34%) are more likely than Democrats (23%) to contribute money to political causes. Republicans are also slightly more likely than Democrats to vote regularly and write to elected officials, and Democrats are slightly more likely to attend local meetings (Table 3.2).

Independent voters have lower levels of participation than the major party members when it comes to voting regularly (47%) and giving money to political causes (16%) and, not surprisingly, participating in political party work (4%). However, Independent voters are similar to Democrats and Republicans in terms of signing petitions, attending local meetings, writing to elected officials, and attending rallies. Finally, those who are currently not registered to vote are politically inactive in a more general sense. As expected, very few describe themselves as regular voters (13%) or participants in political party work (3%). However, disengagement among the nonregistered also extends to other political activities: They rarely attend rallies (8%), contribute money to political causes (7%), or write to elected officials (8%). Those who are not registered to vote are about half as likely to say they sign petitions as

Table 3.2

Partisan Differences in Political Participation Rates, by Party Registration

	By Party Registration (%)				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Not Registered	IPI
Vote regularly	62	67	47	13	0.13
Sign petitions	44	43	43	21	0.07
Attend local meetings	42	39	40	32	0.03
Write to elected officials	32	35	30	12	0.08
Contribute money	23	34	16	7	0.14
Attend rallies	18	16	17	8	0.07
Participate in political party work	10	8	4	3	0.15

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002).

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation.

those who belong to the major parties or Independent voters. Participation among the nonregistered is high only for attendance at meetings on local issues, with a rate of participation (32 percent) that is comparable to that of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

Partisan Differences in Political Participation, by Region

This section looks at level and type of political participation by political party membership within each of the regions, which vary significantly in voter registration. The coastal areas (i.e., Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area) are heavily Democratic in terms of voter registration and state and federal elected officials, whereas the Central Valley and the Other Southern California region have relatively high proportions of Republican voters and state and federal elected officials (Baldassare 2000, 2002).

Overall, the highest-propensity voters are Republicans (71%) and Democrats (64%) living in the Central Valley (Table 3.3). The next-closest voting groups are Republicans (66%) and Democrats (62%) in Los Angeles, Republicans (65%) and Democrats (63%) in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Republicans (62%) in other Southern California counties. Other regional voting groups have fewer than six in ten frequent voters. Independent voters in the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area are much more likely to say that they frequently vote than those in Los Angeles and Other Southern California.

Although attending local meetings is a more common activity for Democrats in Other Southern California than elsewhere (48%), it is the Democrats who live in the Central Valley who are particularly unlikely to write letters to their elected officials (24%). It is also particularly noteworthy that those who are not registered to vote in the San Francisco Bay Area are more likely to attend local meetings (40%) than are nonvoters elsewhere. We do not see any particularly striking differences in signing petitions, contributing money, attending rallies, or participating in political party work for regional voting groups.

Table 3.3

Partisan Differences in Political Participation, by Region and Party Registration

	By Party Registration (%)				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Not Registered	IPI
Central Valley					
Vote regularly	64	71	52	9	0.14
Sign petitions	41	43	35	21	0.08
Attend local meetings	42	39	40	24	0.05
Write to elected officials	24	31	25	5	0.12
Contribute money	22	30	8	4	0.20
Attend rallies	18	17	22	8	0.08
Participate in political party work	11	7	3	3	0.17
San Francisco Bay Area					
Vote regularly	63	65	55	16	0.09
Sign petitions	43	39	44	21	0.06
Attend local meetings	40	34	40	40	0.03
Write to elected officials	37	34	42	17	0.07
Contribute money	26	31	21	4	0.12
Attend rallies	21	15	20	7	0.11
Participate in political party work	11	8	3	1	0.19
Los Angeles					
Vote regularly	62	66	41	14	0.14
Sign petitions	46	41	38	18	0.08
Attend local meetings	39	38	39	34	0.02
Write to elected officials	33	38	19	9	0.15
Contribute money	21	34	14	9	0.15
Attend rallies	20	19	17	8	0.08
Participate in political party work	8	8	2	4	0.16
Other Southern California					
Vote regularly	58	62	40	11	0.14
Sign petitions	45	45	46	24	0.07
Attend local meetings	48	39	44	24	0.07
Write to elected officials	31	33	30	16	0.10

Table 3.3 (continued)

	By Party Registration (%)				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Not Registered	IPI
Contribute money	24	34	16	10	0.13
Attend rallies	13	14	14	4	0.08
Participate in political party work	9	7	6	1	0.11

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002).

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens.

Within each region, too, there are significant differences in political participation according to party registration. In the Central Valley, frequent voting among Republicans is 7 percentage points higher than among Democrats and 19 points higher than among Independent voters. Republicans are considerably more likely than people in other parties to make political contributions (30%), whereas Independent voters (22%) are the most likely to attend rallies. There are no other significant differences in political participation across the registered voter groups in the Central Valley other than the consistently higher participation rates among registered voters than among those not registered.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Republicans and Democrats are 8 to 10 percentage points more likely than Independent voters to vote frequently. However, Independents (44%) are just as likely as Democrats (43%) to sign petitions and more likely to do so than Republicans (39%). Another pattern to note is that Republicans in the Bay Area are among those least likely to send letters to elected officials—not surprising given the dearth of Republican elected officials in the region—but are more inclined to participate in the political process through financial contributions (31%) than either Democrats (26%) or Independents (21%).

In Los Angeles County, Republicans are the group most likely to go to the polls, surpassing Democrats by 4 percentage points and Independents by a wide 25-point margin. Republicans are also significantly more likely than others to give money to political causes (34%), and slightly more likely to write to elected officials (38%),

whereas Democrats are somewhat more likely to sign petitions (46%). Otherwise, political participation in Los Angeles County shows little difference by party, but the differences between registered voters and the nonregistered are substantial on all seven measures of political participation.

These voting trends are similar for Southern California counties outside Los Angeles. Republicans are 4 percentage points more likely than Democrats and 22 points more likely than Independents to be regular voters. Democrats lead Republicans in attending local meetings (48% to 39%), whereas Republicans lead Democrats in contributing money to political campaigns (34% to 24%). Independent voters are more likely to sign petitions (46%) and attend local meetings (44%) than they are to vote on a regular basis. There are no other significant or noteworthy differences by political party registration in this region.

One of the most interesting trends to surface across the regions is that San Francisco Bay Area residents distinguish themselves from others in their active involvement in nonvoting political activities. Democrats in this region are more likely to write to elected officials than Democrats in the other regions. Independent voters in this region are more likely to vote regularly (55%), sign petitions (44%), and write to elected officials (42%) than Independent voters in other regions. Moreover, San Francisco Bay Area residents who are not registered to vote are more likely to attend local meetings (40%) than unregistered voters in other regions.

Regions, Partisanship, and the Index of Participation Inequality

The analysis so far has revealed few differences in civic engagement across California's major regions. However, there are important differences within each region based on party registration, and some of these patterns vary across regions. These differences may be difficult to summarize, given the various arrays of findings presented so far, but they are more apparent with summary measures of participation inequality. As indicated in Chapter 1, we have constructed a summary measure of group disparities in civic engagement—the IPI—that provides

standardized results across various categories and outcomes. The IPI is calculated in the following manner: It takes the deviation of each group's share of the participating population from its share of the citizen population and provides a summary measure of participation inequality based on the sum of these absolute deviations. This summary measure is standardized to a "0 to 1" scale, with the maximum theoretical level of participation inequality set to 1 and the minimum set to 0. So, if a miniscule proportion of the population accounted for everyone who gave money to politics, then the IPI level would be close to one. If, on the other hand, all groups had the same level of participation, then the IPI level would be zero.

Looking first at the regional variations, Table 3.1 indicates that the IPI scores are at a low range for all the measures of political participation and the general measure of volunteering (sample sizes were too small to allow examination of the specific types of organizations). This indicates that the regional variations in civic engagement are not very noteworthy.

Next, we examine the IPI scores for the partisan differences in political participation (Table 3.2). There are fairly large scores associated with voting regularly, contributing money, and participating in political party work. In all of these activities, those who are not registered to vote are distinctly different from those who are registered, and major party members are ahead of Independent voters in their rates of political participation. The four voter registration groups have the lowest IPI score when it comes to attending local meetings.

Last, the partisan differences in political participation within regions yield some interesting trends (Table 3.3). There are similarly high IPI scores in all four regions for contributing money and participating in political party work, and three of the four regions (i.e., not the San Francisco Bay Area) have similarly high IPI scores for voting regularly and writing to elected officials. The four regions are similar in IPI scores for signing petitions—that is, voters across party designations are consistently about twice as likely as nonvoters to participate in this particular political activity. As for attending rallies, San Francisco Bay Area residents demonstrate sharper distinctions by party registration than adults in other regions. Attending local meetings is the activity with the lowest IPI scores of any measure of political participation, even more so

in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area than elsewhere in the state.

Conclusions

There are more similarities than differences in political participation and volunteering when we compare residents throughout California's major regions. However, one trend to watch in the future is that citizens in Los Angeles are less likely to be regular voters than those living in other regions. Also, writing to elected officials is more common in the San Francisco Bay Area than in either Los Angeles or the Central Valley. San Francisco Bay Area residents are also the least likely to be involved in religious groups and the most likely to participate in children's organizations. Other than this, there are no large differences across the four regions today.

In examining variations across voter registration groups, the most striking differences are between the registered voters and others. Those who are not registered to vote trail all other voting groups in a wide range of political activities. Republicans are somewhat more engaged in voting and contributing money than are Democrats, despite the fact that the GOP lacks the political clout at the ballot box or in elected offices held in California. Independent voters are almost as engaged in signing petitions and attending local meetings as they are in voting regularly, and they match the major party voters in signing petitions, attending local meetings, writing to elected officials, and attending rallies.

Although voter registration plays a significant role in shaping political participation across the state, there are also subtle and important variations within each region. We noted strong similarities across regions in terms of the contributions of time and money to formal political causes by voting groups. But in other respects, there were important differences in the regional voting groups, such as their tendency to vote regularly, write to elected officials, sign petitions, attend local meetings, and attend rallies.

At this point, we are unable to untangle the possible (and likely) interactions of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic variations on the regional differences noted in this chapter, because we lack a sufficient number of cases to provide reliable estimates of these interactive effects at the

regional level. However, we do have sufficient numbers at the statewide level to consider these more detailed variations in civic engagement, including differences in age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and immigrant generation. In the chapters that follow, we analyze these more detailed variations. Still, what we can say for certain in this chapter is that voter registration plays an important role in shaping political participation in California. And, although there may be few differences in civic engagement across regions per se, there are indeed differences in how voter registration relates to political participation in the Central Valley, the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and other parts of Southern California. These findings, in addition to what we can glean about group-based differences in the chapters that follow, suggest that researchers and policymakers need to pay greater attention to group-based disparities in civic engagement at the regional level.

4. Demographics and Civic Engagement

In the preceding chapter, we looked at geographic variations in political participation and volunteering rates across the state's major regions. In this chapter we turn our attention to differences in civic engagement rates within the Golden State's various population groups. We examine the relationship between eight key demographic factors—age, income, work status, education, homeownership, years at residence, gender, and the presence of children at home—and civic engagement activities. In doing so, we seek to replicate the national studies identifying a host of demographic factors associated with varying degrees of civic engagement among Americans.

We divide our demographic analysis into three pairs of closely linked factors—age and employment status, education and income, and homeownership and length of residence—and we then examine a fourth pair—gender and the presence or absence of children in the household. As in the previous chapter, we first look at political activities and then turn our attention to volunteerism for each of these four pairs of demographic factors. Finally, we develop a summary measure of participation inequality that can be used to compare participation rates across demographic categories.

Before proceeding, it is instructive to review what we already know from studies carried out at the national level. Previous studies have consistently shown that age bears a significant relationship to political participation, with low levels of involvement among young adults for virtually every type of political activity—from voting and signing petitions to writing to elected officials and working on political campaigns (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). The reasons for low participation among the young are also relatively well established. Apart from the fact that they are less

likely to be homeowners or to have children and that they are more residentially mobile than older adults, the young are less likely to participate because they have had fewer experiences that produce the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in politics. The young are also less likely to have peers who are involved in politics and are more likely than older citizens to see politics as peripheral to their concerns (Keeter et al., 2002; Lester, 2003).

In addition to age, various factors related to socioeconomic status also create dividing lines between those who participate and those who do not. For instance, homeowners and those with more education and higher incomes are more likely to pay attention to political news and to participate in social networks in which people give money to political activities and write to elected officials. Those who are employed are also more likely to participate, not just because they earn more money than those who are unemployed or remain at home, but also because they are more likely to be involved in social networks or work-related institutions (unions, company political action committees) that encourage participation. For similar reasons, residential mobility (as measured by years at a residence) is also an important factor: Longer-term residents have more opportunities to be involved in social networks than recently arrived residents. Finally, national studies of political participation have also shown that women are less likely to participate in political activities than men and that the presence of children often leads to higher participation among both men and women (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, 2001).

In many but not all respects, the expected demographic patterns are the same for volunteerism as they are for political participation. The similarities may reflect the fact that demographic differences in political participation can be traced to broad-based variations in civic engagement, including volunteerism. However, not all demographic patterns may necessarily be the same for each form of civic engagement: For instance, young adults with children may participate in certain nonpolitical activities (e.g., youth sports) more than older adults without children—even if they are more infrequently part of the political process—by virtue of the demands and opportunities for this type of volunteering activity at their stage in life. Thus, we might expect some

different demographic patterns to emerge in the arena of volunteering in California.

Age and Employment Status

Political Participation

In most California age groups, voting is by far the most common form of political participation, outstripping such activities as signing petitions, attending meetings, writing to officials, donating money, attending political rallies, and working for a political party. The chief exception is for young adults ages 18 to 34, who are more likely to sign petitions and attend meetings than they are to regularly cast a ballot in an election. Across employment status, this same general pattern holds—that is, voting in elections is the most common political activity among the full-time employed, part-time employed, unemployed, and retired. As Table 4.1 shows, the young and unemployed have the lowest propensity to vote among the various age categories and employment groups.

Overall, voting is far more frequent among older voters and retirees, with more than three in four in both of these groups saying that they regularly cast a ballot. This trend is well established in national and statewide studies. More than half of California adults ages 35 to 54 also say that they are regular voters, compared to only one in three in the 18 to 34 age group. Older voters are more than twice as likely as those in the youngest age group to be frequent voters. Similarly, about half of all adults who work full-time or part-time are regular voters, compared to 36 percent of unemployed adults. Table 4.1 illustrates the significant discrepancies between age and employment groups in voting behavior.

The second most common form of political participation, signing a petition on an issue, shows less variation by age and employment status. Californians in the middle age group (44%) are most likely to say that they sign political petitions, but younger (36%) and older residents (41%) are nearly as likely to do so. As for attending a meeting on a local issue, which ranks third in political participation, those in the middle

Table 4.1

Political Participation and Volunteerism, by Age and Work Status

	By Age (%)			By Work Status (%)			
	18–34	35–54	55+	Full-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Retired
Vote regularly	33	55	76	50	47	36	77
Sign petitions	36	44	41	41	38	33	38
Attend local meetings	37	46	30	43	40	21	25
Write to elected officials	20	35	35	31	28	26	31
Contribute money	10	23	35	22	15	9	32
Attend rallies	16	16	17	17	16	13	15
Participate in political party work	5	7	11	7	7	5	9
Percentage who volunteered	20	30	22	26	20	23	21
Type of organization							
Religious	29	35	42	34	37	34	45
Children	36	39	15	36	26	29	13
Civic	20	24	32	23	26	21	32
Health	17	17	14	16	15	13	14

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

age group are again the most likely to participate (46%), whereas older people are least likely to attend meetings (30%) and younger residents fall in between (37%). Finally, by employment status, meeting attendance is considerably lower among unemployed (21%) and retired residents (25%) than among those who are working full-time (43%) or part-time (40%). These patterns for attendance at local meetings (highest participation in the middle age groups and low participation among retirees) most likely result from the presence of children in the household, since school-related issues usually dominate the concerns of those who attend local meetings. We consider below the effects of children in the home on political participation and in Chapter 6 the residual effects of age on political participation after demographic

controls. At this point, however, it is important to note that the standard pattern of higher political participation among older residents and retirees does not apply for attendance at meetings on local issues.

Writing letters to elected representatives, the fourth most-frequent political activity, is far more common among Californians age 35 and older (35%) than among younger residents (20%). It is interesting to note that there are no such significant differences in letter writing by employment status. Giving money to a political cause is highly dependent on age, with more than one in three older residents engaging in this fifth most-frequent activity, compared to only one in ten younger residents. The effect of age on political donations is also seen with regard to employment status, with retirees (32%) far more likely to say that they donate than unemployed (9%) or even part-time (15%) or full-time (22%) working Californians.

As for the last two measures of political participation, attending rallies and working for a political party, which rank sixth and seventh, respectively, we find no major differences by age or employment status. One in six (or fewer) Californians participates in rallies, and less than one in ten residents has done work for a political party.

Volunteerism

We also look at measures of civic participation demonstrated by volunteering time for a public cause and the types of causes that are supported. Table 4.1 shows the differences in civic participation by age and employment status. Those most likely to give their time to a civic organization are ages 35 to 54, of whom three in ten say that they do volunteer work, compared to only one in five younger and older Californians. Residents are more likely to volunteer for organizations involving religion and children than they are for civic and health-related groups.

Older people are most likely to support religious causes (42%) and civic groups (32%) such as arts organizations or neighborhood improvement associations, whereas the middle-age group is more divided between volunteering for children's causes (39%) and religious groups (35%), and younger people are more likely to give their time to

children's causes (36%). There are no age differences with regard to volunteering for health organizations.

The effect of employment status is less dramatic, with people employed full-time somewhat more likely than part-time workers, retirees, or the unemployed to volunteer. Part-time workers and retirees who do volunteer are much more likely to do so for a religious or civic cause, whereas full-time employees are as likely to give their time to children as to religious groups. Again, there are no differences with regard to volunteerism for health organizations.

Education and Income

Political Participation

Education and income are known to have dramatic implications for political participation, and the effects of these demographic variables on voting are reflected in Table 4.2. Whereas 62 percent of Californians with college degrees vote on a regular basis, only 41 percent of those with high school education or less and 53 percent of those with some college say that they participate in most elections. Thus, the high-education group is 51 percent more likely than the low-education group to vote with regularity. The effect is equally strong for income: 61 percent of those with household incomes of $80,000 or more say that they generally vote in elections, whereas fewer than half of those making less than $40,000 (45%) and only about half of those with incomes of $40,000 to $80,000 (54%) frequently cast a ballot. In other words, the highest-income group is about one-third more likely than the lowest-income group to register their votes in California elections.

Education and income are also strongly related to all of the other measures of political participation examined in this report. Those with college degrees are 70 percent more likely than those with only a high school diploma or less to sign petitions, 55 percent more likely to attend local meetings, more than three times as likely to write letters to elected officials, and more than twice as likely to give money to political causes and attend political rallies. Those with some college education tend to fall between the other two groups in rates of political participation.

Table 4.2

Political Participation and Volunteerism, by Education and Income

	By Education (%)			By Income (%)		
	High School or Less	Some College	College Degree	Less Than $40,000	$40,000 to $80,000	$80,000 or More
Vote regularly	41	53	62	45	54	61
Sign petitions	27	44	46	34	44	43
Attend local meetings	29	38	45	31	40	44
Write to elected officials	12	29	43	18	34	39
Contribute money	12	19	30	11	23	31
Attend rallies	9	15	22	12	18	19
Participate in political party work	3	6	11	4	8	10
Percentage who volunteered	19	29	36	19	24	35
Type of organization						
Religious	38	38	31	36	36	31
Children	31	31	36	29	32	40
Civic	21	29	28	27	22	24
Health	13	16	21	16	15	19

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTES: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism. The top income category in the CPS is $75,000 or more.

The effects of income are somewhat less dramatic. The differences in political participation between the highest- and lowest-income groups are strongest when it comes to donating money, with those making $80,000 or more nearly three times as likely as those earning less than $40,000 to give money to political causes. Those with high incomes are also more than twice as likely to write letters to their elected representatives and 42 percent more likely to attend a meeting on a local issue. The behavior of the middle-income group tends to resemble that of the highest-income group in political participation; the biggest outlier is the lower-income group.

Volunteerism

Volunteering is strongly linked to education and income, which, in themselves, are highly correlated demographic variables. About one in three college graduates (36%) say that they volunteered their time in the past 12 months. Those with college degrees are nearly twice as likely as those with a high school education or less to contribute their time (Table 4.2). College graduates are most likely to volunteer for efforts that benefit children, whereas the highest priority for those with some college education or a high school diploma or less is a religious cause. Those with a high school education or less lag behind others in their involvement in children's groups and in civic and health-related organizations.

Volunteerism also increases with income. About one in three Californians (35%) with household incomes of more than $80,000 say that they engaged in volunteer work in the past year, making this group about twice as likely as those with incomes below $40,000, and about 46 percent more likely than those with incomes between $40,000 and $80,000, to have engaged in this type of civic participation. Upper-income residents are more likely to volunteer for children's groups, whereas lower-income residents are most likely to spend their time with religious causes. Involvement with religious groups declines slightly with income, whereas involvement with children climbs sharply; there is little variation across income groups in participation with civic and health-related organizations.

Homeownership and Length of Residence

Political Participation

Whether a person owns or rents a home, and the length of time he or she has lived in that home, also tend to be highly correlated with voting behavior. Our findings confirm those in previous studies—long-term residents and homeowners are overrepresented in California elections and renters and short-term residents are underrepresented.

As Table 4.3 shows, nearly two in three homeowners vote in most elections, compared to only 38 percent of renters. Those who own the home they live in are 66 percent more likely than those who live in rental

Table 4.3

Political Participation and Volunteerism, by Homeownership and Length of Residence

	By Homeownership (%)		By Length of Residence (%)			
	Rent	Own	< 5 Years	5–10 Years	10–20 Years	> 20 Years
Vote regularly	38	63	41	55	64	75
Sign petitions	38	42	38	42	41	43
Attend local meetings	33	42	36	44	44	36
Write to elected officials	23	35	26	33	36	33
Contribute money	12	28	15	23	28	34
Attend rallies	14	18	16	17	16	17
Participate in political party work	5	9	5	8	9	10
Percentage who volunteered	19	28				
Type of organization						
Religious	33	36				
Children	33	33				
Civic	22	26				
Health	16	17				

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTES: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism. Information on length of residence is not available in the September CPS dataset.

housing to cast ballots. It is interesting to note that renters are as likely to sign a petition as they are to vote. The biggest gaps between homeowners and renters are in voting, writing to elected officials, and giving money to political causes.

The effect of length of residence on voting behavior is similarly strong—three in four Californians who have lived in their home for more than 20 years say that they frequently turn out to vote, compared to 41 percent of those who have been in their current home for five years or less, just over half of residents (55%) who have lived in their home five to ten years, and 64 percent of those who have been at the same

address between ten and 20 years. This represents a 34 percentage point gap between the voting frequency of those who have been in their home for the shortest and the longest times.

As for other measures of political participation, homeowners are more than twice as likely as renters to give money to their favorite political causes and are 52 percent more likely to express their opinions in letters to elected representatives. The two groups are similar in their likelihood of signing petitions, attending local meetings and rallies, and working for a political party. The same trend is seen for length of residence, with the longest-term residents more than twice as likely as relative newcomers to support their political causes financially. However, length of residence does not exert a strong influence on the other measures of political participation.

Volunteerism

When it comes to participation in civic organizations, homeowners are more likely than renters to volunteer their time, with more than one-quarter of homeowners compared to fewer than one in five renters saying they have engaged in volunteer work in the past 12 months (Table 4.3). There are no significant differences between the two groups in types of volunteer organizations supported. In each group, about one in three participates in religious and children's groups, one in four in civic organizations, and one in six in health-related groups. Unfortunately, there is no survey information available on length of residence that would allow us to consider trends in civic volunteerism. However, we expect that these patterns would be similar to those found for homeownership, with higher levels of engagement among long-term residents who are more likely to be aware of volunteering opportunities and to be recruited into participation.

Gender and Children in Household

Political Participation

Gender has little relationship to political participation in California. As Table 4.4 shows, about half of men (52%) and women (54%) alike are frequent voters, and both groups are more likely to participate in the

Table 4.4

Political Participation and Volunteerism, by Gender and Presence of Children Under Age 18 in the Household

	By Gender (%)		By Children in Household (%)	
	Male	Female	Yes	No
Vote regularly	52	54	48	56
Sign petitions	38	42	40	40
Attend local meetings	36	41	55	29
Write to elected officials	31	29	27	32
Contribute money	23	21	18	24
Attend rallies	18	15	14	18
Participate in political party work	7	7	5	8
Percentage who volunteered	21	28	33	22
Type of organization				
Religious	35	35	35	42
Children	32	33	51	17
Civic	22	27	19	29
Health	13	19	14	17

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

political process by voting than by any other action. There are no major differences by gender in rates of signing petitions, attending meetings, writing to elected officials, making political contributions, attending rallies, or working for a political party.

The presence of children at home, on the other hand, does have an influence on voting. A majority (56%) of residents in households without children say that they vote frequently, compared to 48 percent of those in households with children under age 18. Most likely, these relationships are a function of age, since few adults age 55 and older have children in the household, and many in this age group are active participants in the political process. This also helps to explain why households without children are more inclined to give money to political

causes (24%) than those households with children (18%) and are slightly more likely to write to elected officials. However, as we noted before, political activism among older residents does not include attendance at meetings on local issues. Thus, it is not surprising to find that those with children at home are far more likely to attend meetings on local issues (55%) than are those in households with no children (29%).

Volunteerism

As can be seen in Table 4.4, women are more likely than men to volunteer their time for civic causes. Nearly three in ten women (28%) say that they have performed volunteer work in the past 12 months, compared to one in five men (21%). The rate of volunteerism is also higher among those who have children (33%) than those with no children in the household (22%). Part of the reason why volunteering may be more common for women is that they are slightly more likely than men to live in households with children. However, even after accounting for the presence of children in the household, women are more likely to volunteer than men. Among households with children, the gender gap in participation is 35 percent versus 29 percent, and for households without any children the gap is 24 percent for women versus 16 percent for men.

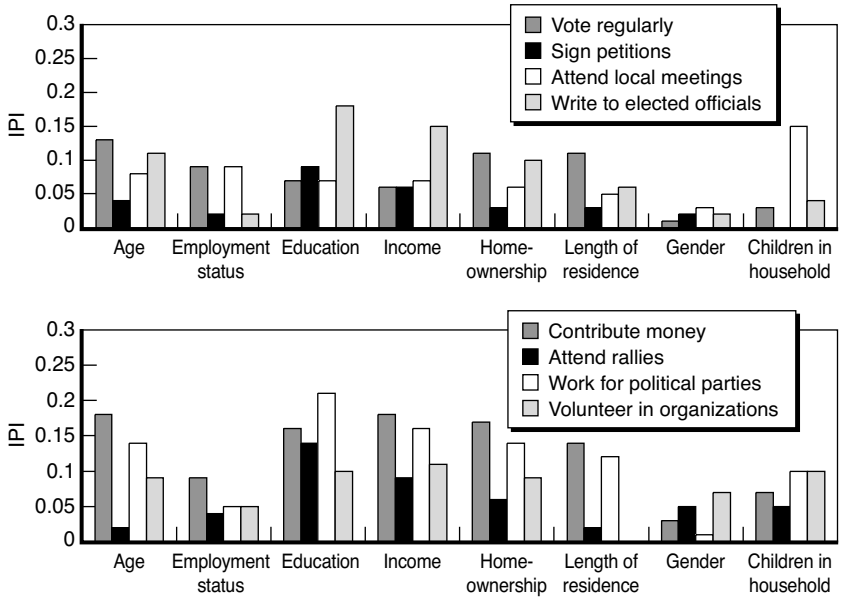
As for the types of organizations supported by volunteers, women are more involved in civic and health-related organizations. There are no gender differences in preferences for religious and children's groups. Finally, there are significant differences in organizational involvement among volunteers when it comes to the presence or absence of children in the household. Not surprisingly, Californians with children living at home are most inclined to lend support to organizations involving children and are three times as likely to do so as those without any children in the household. Those with children are next most likely to participate in religious groups, followed by civic and health-related organizations. Those in households without children give their greatest support to religious charities (42%), followed by civic organizations (29%). For both these causes, they surpass parents with children at home. Finally, about one in six California households without children is involved in children's groups or health-related organizations.

Comparing Demographic Factors: The Index of Participation Inequality

So far, we have examined in considerable detail the extent to which political participation and volunteerism vary across groups defined by age, employment status, education, homeownership, etc. Thus, for instance, we know that attendance at local meetings is highest among middle-aged residents and that volunteerism is higher among women than men. However, we would like to have a better understanding of how participation differences vary across demographic categories: For instance, are differences in participation in voting greater for age than for homeownership and education? Are activities such as giving money to politics marked by greater demographic differences in participation than other types of activities?

As we showed in the previous chapter, the Index of Participation Inequality provides a standardized measure of group disparities across activities. The IPI also has the added benefit of providing standardized comparisons across categories such as region, age, education, and homeownership. Figure 4.1 presents IPI levels for volunteerism and various types of political activities. The highest levels of participation inequality are those based on education, homeownership, and income. Educational attainment accounts for the greatest level of participation inequality in more than half of the political activities considered (signing petitions, writing to elected officials, attending rallies, and engaging in party work) and ranks near the top for the remainder. Similarly, homeownership accounts for the greatest inequalities in participation for voting and giving money to politics and also figures prominently in writing to elected officials. By contrast, the lowest inequalities tend to be those associated with gender and the presence of children in the household. The only exception is for attendance at local meetings, where the presence of children in the household serves as the strongest dividing line between participants and nonparticipants.

Comparing the IPI across activities also reveals some important differences. Writing to elected officials and giving money to politics rank highest in their levels of participation inequality for most of the demographic categories considered in this chapter. By contrast,



SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002) for political participation and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

Figure 4.1—Index of Participation Inequality, by Demographic Category

attending rallies and signing petitions tend to have some of the lowest inequalities in participation. Indeed, in some instances, the IPI values for the former are two to three times higher than the IPI values for the latter. Finally, voting and attending local meetings rank in the middle in terms of participation inequality. Such activities demand less-sophisticated political skills from participants than writing to elected officials and less monetary resources than contributing money to politics. Still, they tend to entail a more unequal distribution of political activity than attending rallies and signing petitions. Finally, we see that volunteerism in the Golden State is marked by inequalities in participation. Far from serving as an antidote to participation inequality, volunteering is marked by differences in participation that are similar to those found for voting. Indeed, for some demographic categories such as gender and the presence of children in the household, the IPIs for volunteerism are significantly higher than those for voting.

We explore the links between volunteerism and political engagement in more detail in Chapter 7, with an examination of interrelationships at the individual level between the two sets of activities. What is important to note here, however, is that volunteerism appears to reinforce the gaps in participation between those who vote and those who are disengaged from politics.

Conclusions

As we can see from the survey data presented in this chapter, voting and participating in the political activities of California are skewed toward older residents, retirees, and those who have lived in the same home for more than two decades. More than three in four in each of these groups cast ballots with regularity, ensuring that their voices are heard more often than others in California's electoral process. To a lesser degree, California's elections are also overly influenced by homeowners, the affluent, and those with college educations, with about six in ten in each of these groups regularly turning out at the polls. To some degree, other forms of political expression are also more common among older, wealthier, college-educated, homeowner, and longer-term residents.

Those least likely to participate in political activities are those who are younger, renters, those with a high school diploma or less education, and those who have moved to their current address within the past five years. Four in ten or fewer in each of these groups regularly express their views at the ballot box. Given that these are the same groups that are more likely to need public assistance provided by government, the fact that their voices are not heard in the political process would seem to have profound societal implications.

When it comes to Californians' involvement in civic volunteerism, there are important differences in the rates of participation. Volunteering tends to increase with age, education, income, retirement, homeownership, and length of residence. Once again, there appear to be advantages for the more established and affluent groups in California. Moreover, the types of volunteering activities also vary across groups, with the affluent and highly educated showing more involvement in activities for children than those with lower incomes and less education.

Once again, the overall patterns of civic engagement point to marked advantages for the established and affluent groups.

5. Race, Immigrant Generation, and Civic Engagement

Now that we have examined differences in civic engagement based on such factors as geography, age, gender, and socioeconomic status, we turn to the next important question: How do rates of political participation and volunteerism vary across race, ethnicity, and immigrant generation? This question is especially important to the study of civic engagement in California because of the state's rapidly changing racial and ethnic mix, with a sizable and growing proportion of first- and second-generation immigrants. Issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration have also taken greater importance during the past decade with the passage of various racially divisive measures at the statewide level, dealing with issues ranging from affirmative action and bilingual education to driver's licenses and public benefits for undocumented immigrants. Many studies have considered racial and ethnic differences in public opinion and voter turnout among California's residents, but they have not paid much attention to other forms of civic engagement. In this chapter, we seek to build on the existing knowledge on racial and ethnic differences by examining group differences in volunteerism and various types of political activities beyond voting.

Political Participation, by Race and Ethnicity

Within California, voting ranks as the most widespread form of political activity across racial and ethnic groups, with one notable exception. As shown in Table 5.1, the most prominent form of political participation among Latinos is attendance at local meetings, where such issues as education and other local services and decisions are discussed. For Latinos, the rate of participation in local meetings is 13 percent (or 5 percentage points) higher than their rate of participation in general elections. Among whites, by contrast, attendance at local meetings is

Table 5.1

Political Participation, by Race/Ethnicity

	By Race/Ethnicity (%)				
	Overall	White	Latino	Asian	Black
Vote regularly	54 (1)	60 (1)	38 (2)	39 (1)	54 (1)
Sign petitions	40 (2)	44 (2)	29 (3)	38 (1)	39 (2)
Attend local meetings	39 (3)	37 (3)	43 (1)	34 (3)	44 (2)
Write to elected officials	30 (4)	35 (3)	17 (4)	24 (4)	20 (4)
Contribute money	22 (5)	26 (5)	10 (5)	17 (5)	20 (4)
Attend rallies	16 (6)	17 (6)	12 (5)	13 (5)	19 (4)
Participate in political party work	7 (7)	8 (7)	4 (7)	6 (7)	7 (7)

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002).

NOTES: Ranking of activities is given in parentheses. In cases where differences in activity rates are not statistically significant at the 0.15 level, the activities receive the same rank-ordering.

nearly 40 percent (or 23 percentage points) lower than their rate of regular electoral participation. The patterns are similar for blacks and Asian Americans, where the rate of attendance at local meetings is significantly lower than the rate of regular participation in general elections.

With the exception noted above, the rank-ordering of political activities is remarkably similar across racial groups in California. Next to voting, signing petitions is the most pervasive form of political participation, with about 40 percent of respondents claiming that they signed a petition on state or local affairs. The next most common form of participation is attendance at local meetings, accounting for the involvement of 39 percent of Californians (34% to 44%, depending on the racial/ethnic group). Contributing money to politics is the next most prevalent form of political participation, with about one in five respondents claiming to have given money to a political group or campaign. Finally, attending political rallies and working for political organizations were the least prominent activities among Californians, regardless of their racial or ethnic group.

Of course, the presence of a strong similarity in the ordering of political activities across racial groups does not mean the lack of significant group differences for each type of activity. We examine below each of these types of participation in greater detail, to explore the extent to which Californians differ in their civic engagement across lines of race and ethnicity, and the implications of such differences for influencing state and local politics.

Voting Regularly

Media reports during the late 1990s in California pointed to the increasing numbers of immigrant and ethnic voters as the awakening of a "sleeping giant." Latino and Asian voters, many of them first-generation immigrants, went to the ballot box in droves to register their anger and opposition to various statewide initiatives targeting issues ranging from illegal immigration to affirmative action and bilingual education.[1] The legislation targeting immigrant issues motivated Latino and Asian American citizens in California to finally reach the same levels of voter turnout as the rest of the state by the 1998 election. Scholarly work on voting during the 1990s has generally confirmed the rising level of political participation among Latino immigrants, although there does not seem to have been a similar spike in participation among Asian immigrants (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura, 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001).

To answer the question of what has happened to racial disparities in participation after the period of racially divisive ballot propositions stretching from the 1994 to the 1998 elections, we turn to recent data from the PPIC Statewide Surveys. As Table 5.1 indicates, about half of California's citizens can be considered regular voters, but there are significant differences across racial groups. The highest level of participation is among white citizens, followed next by black, Asian American, and Latino citizens. The gap in participation is most evident between whites and Latinos—although 60 percent of the former are

[1]Proposition 187 (1994) denied social services to undocumented immigrants. Proposition 209 (1996) eliminated public affirmative action programs. Proposition 227 (1998) dismantled bilingual education programs in public schools.

regular voters, only 38 percent of the latter can be characterized as such. At first glance, it might seem that these differences in participation could result primarily from differences in the age structure of the various populations. In the PPIC Statewide Survey, for instance, the oldest respondents tend to be white, followed by blacks, Asians Americans, and Latinos. Controlling for the age of respondents does little, however, to diminish racial disparities in voting: Latinos still lag significantly behind other racial groups, and whites still enjoy the highest levels of participation. As we show in Chapter 6, these gaps can be partially explained by other factors such as nativity and socioeconomic status. What is important to note here is that there are sizable gaps in voting across racial groups, differences that belie the optimism of increased turnout among Latinos in the mid-1990s.

It is important to note that these racial gaps among the ranks of regular voters are not unique to the 2002 election. As indicated above, the 2002 election in California was marked by high levels of citizen apathy in the gubernatorial and other statewide campaigns. Although a few ballot measures, such as the measure on funding after-school programs (Proposition 49—the "Arnold Schwarzenegger proposition"), received voter attention and interest, the election overall was a typical midterm election with significantly lower levels of citizen engagement and interest than a presidential election. However, even the highly publicized 2003 recall election was characterized by racial and ethnic gaps in participation, with exit polls from the *Los Angeles Times* indicating that Asian American, Latino, and black turnout was virtually the same in the gubernatorial recall as in the 2002 election.

Signing Petitions

Petitions for state and local ballot propositions are important in studying racial and immigrant politics for two reasons. First, ballot propositions have the potential to be less protective of minority interests than decisions made by representative institutions such as state legislatures and city councils. Legislative bodies generally have a broader base of knowledge and experience than the overall citizenry in dealing with policy issues. Through deliberation and tradeoffs across issues, legislatures allow for some topics to be insulated from public contestation

and for groups that are in the minority on a particular issue to gain certain concessions. Propositions, on the other hand, allow for the majority to consistently prevail over the minority without deliberations or tradeoffs once measures reach the ballot. Thus, the potential for minority interests to be overruled is significantly greater in ballot propositions than in the rulemaking bodies of state and local government.

The potential for minority interests to be overruled is most likely to occur when a proposition focuses specifically on issues affecting that minority. As noted above, some of the most highly publicized and contested ballot propositions at the statewide level during the 1990s were directly related to race and immigration. In the propositions concerning illegal immigration, bilingual education, and affirmative action, the policy preferences of the California electorate were generally divided between whites and nonwhites, and on such issues, nonwhites were consistently on the losing side. However, as a recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California has pointed out, most of the propositions in California at the state and local levels do not explicitly deal with issues relating to race, language use, or immigration (Hajnal and Louch, 2001). The study shows that, for these propositions, Latinos and blacks are just as likely as whites to be on the winning side of an issue, and the authors conclude that race is not a significant factor in determining the outcomes of most ballot propositions in California.

One issue that remains unexplored, however, is whether there are racial differences among those who sign petitions and get propositions on ballots. These activities are arguably just as important as the act of voting because they help set the agenda on what questions appear on state and local ballots and, just as important, what questions or issues do not appear. Thus, race might not be significant in voting on many ballot propositions but may still be significant in terms of the power to set the issue agenda of state ballot propositions.

As Table 5.1 indicates, there are sizable differences in the rate of petition signing across racial groups. Just as in the case of voting, whites have the highest rates of participation (44%), followed by blacks (39%), Asian Americans (38%), and Latinos (29%). Also, just as in the case of voting, these differences are not solely the result of differences in the age

structure of the various populations. Controlling for the effects of age still leaves intact most of these racial gaps in participation.[2]

The lower rates of petition-signing among Asian Americans and Latinos may occur because petition gatherers are less likely to target areas with high proportions of noncitizens. To the extent that whites, blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinos share the same policy priorities, this difference in petition-gathering may not lead to any racial differences in policy influence. However, petition-gatherers may be less likely to target nonwhites precisely because they do not share the same policy priorities as whites. Also, even if nonwhites are asked to sign petitions, they may be more likely than whites to feel that such petitions are tangential to their concerns or run contrary to their interests. Thus, to the extent that Latinos and Asian Americans have policy priorities and preferences that are significantly different from whites, their lower rates of participation in signing petitions means less power in setting the legislative agenda of ballot propositions.

Attending Local Meetings

Given the consistent racial disparities in participation found in voting and signing petitions, we may expect to find similar patterns for attendance at local meetings. Data from the PPIC Statewide Surveys indicate that this is not the case. Instead of having the lowest rates of political participation, Latino citizens rank highest in their attendance at meetings that involve local issues. This relatively high level of participation is also found among black respondents, with whites and Asian Americans demonstrating significantly lower rates of attendance at local meetings. This high level of participation among Latinos and blacks may be a function of their greater presence on school boards and city councils. On the other hand, these racial differences may simply be based on the demographic profiles of the various populations. Latinos and blacks may be more likely to participate in education-related issues because they are more likely than whites or Asian Americans to have children of school age. Indeed, controlling for the presence of children

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[2]The only exception is for black-white differences, which no longer remain significant after controlling for the effects of age.

under age 18 reduces the statistical significance of these racial differences in participation. Even with this caveat, however, racial differences in attendance at local meetings are an important exception to the general pattern of high political participation among whites and low levels of participation among Latinos.

Writing to Elected Officials

As Table 5.1 indicates, there are large racial disparities in California in the rate of citizen contact with elected officials. Indeed, the differences are among the strongest we have considered so far. Whites have the highest rate of contact (35%), more than twice as high as the rate of contact among Latino citizens (17%). It is possible that much of this disparity is due to the lower ability of many Latino immigrants to communicate effectively in English. We allow for this possibility by separating those Latinos who were interviewed in Spanish from those interviewed in English. We find that those who were interviewed in Spanish have a rate of contact with elected officials that is 35 percent lower than those interviewed in English.[3] Still, even among English-proficient Latinos, the gap in participation between themselves and whites is large, with the former having only a 20 percent rate of participation. Thus, English language ability does not adequately account for the wide gap between whites and Latinos in the rate of contact with elected officials. Finally, it should be noted that Asian Americans and blacks exhibit a higher rate of participation than Latinos, although their rates of participation (24% and 20%, respectively) are still considerably lower than whites. Thus, whatever relative advantage Latinos may enjoy in terms of attendance at local meetings, such patterns are rare when compared to other types of political participation such as writing to elected officials.

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[3]Two factors may explain why the gap in participation measured by English language ability is not greater: those who communicate primarily in Spanish either can have a relative or friend contact elected officials on their behalf, or they may write in Spanish to elected officials who either speak Spanish themselves or have Spanish-speaking staff.

Contributing Money to Politics

Giving money to political causes may affect policy outcomes directly by improving the likelihood of victory or defeat for ballot propositions. Money can also influence policy outcomes indirectly, both by shaping access to elected officials and by affecting the election outcomes of candidates who are friendly to a group's issues.[4] The question naturally arises as to whether members of certain racial or ethnic groups have greater access or influence than others when it comes to campaign finance. Results from the PPIC Statewide Surveys indicate that there are indeed significant gaps in the rate of political contributions across racial and ethnic groups in California. Just as in the case of voting and signing petitions, whites are the most likely to give to political causes and candidates (26%), followed by blacks (20%), Asian Americans (17%), and Latinos (10%). These gaps in giving remain even after controlling for the age structure of the different populations.

The lower level of campaign contributions among Latino citizens may not be surprising, given the income disparities between whites and Latinos in California. Still, racial differences in campaign contributions do not mirror differences in income. In the PPIC Statewide Surveys, Asian Americans have income levels that are similar to those of whites, yet their rate of campaign giving is only two-thirds the rate among whites. Likewise, even though they have similar levels of income, blacks display a rate of campaign giving that is twice that of Latinos. In the following chapter, we explore whether racial differences in campaign contributions would persist if all groups had the same levels of education and homeownership. In the absence of such equalization, however, the results presented here indicate sizable differences in the extent to which members of different racial groups are represented among those who give money to political campaigns. These differences in campaign contributions reinforce racial gaps in other types of political activities, leaving Latino and Asian citizens with relatively less ability to gain access to elected officials and perhaps even influence policy decisions.

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[4]Past studies have shown that, although individual political donations rarely have direct effects on legislative votes, institutional actors who give money to legislators do have a greater degree of access to the shaping of legislation (Hansen, 1991).

Attending Rallies

Attending rallies and speeches has a less-obvious effect on public policy than many of the other activities considered so far because it plays only a minor role in influencing election outcomes and setting the legislative agenda. Still, rallies provide an avenue for participation and political expression for those who lack the monetary resources to contribute to campaigns or the political knowledge necessary to participate in local meetings. Indeed, attendance at local rallies is also open to those who are not citizens of the United States—a fact that could influence the relative level of participation among members of different racial and ethnic groups in California. In Table 5.1, we see, once again, that Latinos and Asians lag behind white and black citizens, who have similar rates of attendance at political rallies.

We allow for the possibility that including noncitizens may change these group differences in participation. Including noncitizens does raise the *level* of Latino and Asian participation by 17 percent each. However, including noncitizens does not improve the *rate* of participation for these two groups. Indeed, for Latinos, including noncitizens actually leads to a lower overall rate of attendance at rallies because the participation rate for Latinos is significantly lower for noncitizens than for citizens. For Asians, including noncitizens has no effect on the rate of participation, since there is no appreciable difference in the rate of attendance among citizens and noncitizens. Even with the inclusion of noncitizens, however, the fundamental racial differences in attending political rallies still remain, with Latinos and Asians accounting for a disproportionately smaller share of participants.

Participation in Political Party Work

As Table 5.1 indicates, participation in party and campaign organizations constitutes the least widespread form of political activity in California, with only 7 percent of adult citizens reporting participation in such activities over the past year. Given the low levels of participation in the general population, it becomes more difficult to ascertain differences in involvement across racial groups because of the small baseline for comparison. Still, data from the PPIC Statewide Surveys indicate that Latino citizens have a lower level of engagement in party

work than do whites and blacks in the state. The lower level of participation among Latinos is surprising, given the increasing number of Latino leaders in the state Democratic Party, as well as outreach efforts by political candidates, party caucuses, and unions—all targeting Latinos. Indeed, some have remarked that party organizations in California are more likely to target Latinos than Asian Americans for mobilization (Wong, 2002; Ramakrishnan, 2002). The PPIC data indicate that even if Latinos are more likely to be the targets of voter mobilization efforts, they are not more likely than other groups to participate in partisan organizations.

Volunteerism, by Race and Ethnicity

As shown in Table 5.2, there are significant differences across racial groups in civic volunteerism. The table presents results for the most basic measures of volunteerism—rates of participation in the previous 12 months, the number of organizations in which volunteers participate, and the intensity of participation as measured by the number of hours spent volunteering. We also include the average levels of organizational participation and hours of volunteerism for the overall population (volunteers as well as nonvolunteers). We do so because the average measure of hours and organizations per respondent gives some sense of the bias in the participating memberships of civic organizations. Thus, for instance, if the average number of organizations among all white respondents is greater than the average number for members of other racial groups, then we can surmise that whites are overrepresented in the participating memberships of civic organizations.

When we consider the most basic metric of volunteerism—whether the respondent has done any volunteer work in the previous 12 months—whites have the highest levels of participation. Nearly one-third of white respondents report having volunteered, compared to only one-quarter of blacks. Volunteerism among Latinos and Asian Americans is even lower, accounting for only one out of every six adult residents in California. The gap in volunteerism between whites and

Table 5.2

Volunteerism, by Race/Ethnicity

	By Race/Ethnicity (%)				
	Overall	White	Latino	Asian	Black
Percentage who volunteered	25	30	17	16	24
Number of organizations	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.3
Hours volunteered	161	167	120	149	201
Percent share of:					
Adult population		54	27	12	6
Adult citizen population		63	19	9	7
Organizational involvement		71	16	7	6
Volunteer hours		72	14	7	8
Type of organization					
Religious	35	32	40	30	62
Children	33	34	37	28	20
Civic	25	26	18	27	20
Health	16	18	14	14	11

SOURCE: CPS-VS (September 2002).

NOTE: The reference population is adult residents.

nonwhites is also apparent in the number of organizations in which volunteers participate. Whites who volunteer participate in an average of 1.50 organizations; the corresponding figures are 1.33 for blacks, 1.26 for Asians, and 1.23 for Latinos. Among those who volunteer, racial and ethnic differences are smaller in terms of the intensity of participation. Although blacks report the highest number of hours spent volunteering, the difference with whites and Asian Americans is not statistically significant. There is, however, one significant difference in intensity of participation: Latinos who volunteer spend considerably fewer hours doing so than whites or blacks in California.

Next, we examine differences in participation among the general population by looking at the share of each group in total organizational involvement and volunteer hours. We derive these measures by multiplying the number of organizations and the number of hours volunteered to the baseline rate of participation for each group and divide that number by the totals for California. Thus, we arrive at a

measure of participation that indicates the extent to which particular groups are overrepresented or underrepresented in the memberships of volunteer organizations and total volunteer activity. Since whites in California are more likely to volunteer, and are likely to do so with greater intensity, we can expect them to be overrepresented in the share of the population that engages in volunteerism. The results in Table 5.2 reveal this to indeed be the case: Although whites account for only 54 percent of adult residents in the CPS survey, they account for 71 percent of the net organizational memberships in the state and 72 percent of all volunteer hours. On the other hand, Latinos account for more than one in four adult residents but for only 14 percent of all volunteer hours and one out of every six memberships in volunteer organizations. Similarly, Asian Americans account for 12 percent of the adult resident population in California but only 7 percent of organizational memberships and volunteer hours. Finally, blacks are the only group for whom the share of volunteerism is roughly equal to the share of the adult resident population.

In addition to racial differences in the rate and intensity of volunteerism, there are also notable variations in the kinds of organizations in which volunteers participate (Table 5.2). Among whites who volunteer, religious and children's organizations get top priority, followed by civic associations and health organizations. A similar pattern holds for Latino volunteers, although they are significantly less likely to participate in civic organizations than their white counterparts. Asian volunteers are equally likely to support religious, civic, and children's organizations. Blacks in California remain a big exception. Those who volunteer are overwhelmingly more likely to participate in religious organizations (62%) than in children's or civic organizations (20% each). The high participation of black volunteers in religious organizations may not be surprising, given the unique importance of churches as sociopolitical institutions in black communities. Indeed, the high levels of church involvement found among blacks in California is also present in some national surveys such as that by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, (1995). Also, more recent surveys such as the Social Capital Benchmark Survey (2000) indicate that blacks are nearly twice as likely as whites to be involved in organizations affiliated with their religion. At the same

time, involvement in church activities other than regular services do not vary significantly between blacks and whites. Although more studies with sizable California samples may be needed to further validate these findings, the results here are in line with those found in other national surveys, with black participation in church organizations significantly higher than that of whites, Asian Americans, or Latinos.

Civic Engagement, by Immigrant Generation

California is a state marked not only by high racial diversity but also by a sizable number of first- and second-generation immigrants. As other studies of voting participation have noted, turnout can vary significantly across immigrant generations (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura, 2001; Citrin and Highton, 2002). Here, we extend the study beyond voting and find similar differences in participation across immigrant generations. Data from the PPIC Statewide Surveys indicate that first-generation immigrants are less likely than those in successive immigrant generations to participate in a wide variety of political activities (Table 5.3). For instance, only 44 percent of first-generation immigrants consider themselves to be regular voters, a considerably lower percentage than found among second-generation immigrants (51%). As a result, naturalized citizens account for a 20 percent smaller share of regular voters than their share of the adult citizen population.

Of course, part of this difference is likely due to the fact that many immigrants may have naturalized relatively recently and would not have had sufficient experience with the American electoral system to deem themselves "regular voters." However, we see a significant difference in the frequency of voting even among the native-born—i.e., between second-generation immigrants and those in the third generation and higher (57%). Thus, our results confirm the findings of studies from particular election years (Ramakrishnan, 2002; Citrin and Highton, 2002): Immigrant generation bears a strong relationship to the frequency of voting in California.

Similar gaps can be found for signing petitions, with a wide gulf in participation between first-generation immigrants and those in successive immigrant generations (29% versus 39% and 43%, respectively).

Table 5.3

Political Participation, by Immigrant Generation

	By Immigrant Generation (%)		
	First	Second	Third (+)
Vote regularly	44	51	57
Sign petitions	29	39	43
Attend local meetings	40	36	39
Write to elected officials	23	27	32
Contribute money	15	22	23
Attend rallies	15	17	16
Participate in political party work	5	7	8

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, October, and November 2002).

NOTE: The reference population is adult citizens.

Smaller differences exist for activities such as contributing money to politics and writing to elected officials. For most of these activities, differences by immigrant generation follow the pattern of what has generally been termed "straight-line assimilation," or increasing participation with each successive generation. Attendance at local meetings and political rallies is the only activity for which this straight-line pattern of immigrant assimilation does not hold.

This pattern of straight-line assimilation applies not only to political participation but also to civic volunteerism, as shown in Table 5.4. We include noncitizens in our analysis because the barriers to participation in the political sphere for noncitizens do not exist for most types of civic volunteerism. Also, because noncitizens account for a significant proportion of first-generation immigrants in the state, we provide estimates of participation that differentiate immigrants according to citizenship status.

As the results from the CPS-VS indicate, rates of volunteerism are lowest among first-generation immigrants in California. Only about one in ten noncitizens reports volunteering in the previous year—a figure that contrasts sharply with the 26 percent participation rate among second-generation immigrants and the 30 percent rate among those in

Table 5.4

Volunteerism, by Immigrant Generation

	By Immigrant Generation (%)			
	First			
	Noncitizen	Naturalized	Second	Third (+)
Percentage who volunteered	11	17	26	30
Number of organizations	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5
Hours volunteered	123	213	156	160
Percent share of:				
Adult population	18	13	13	56
Adult citizen population	—	16	16	69
Organizational involvement	6	8	14	73
Volunteer hours	6	11	14	70
Type of organization				
Religious	40	41	31	35
Children	38	26	33	33
Civic	11	24	25	26
Health	13	19	16	17

SOURCE: CPS-VS (September 2002).

NOTE: The reference population is adult residents.

the third generation and higher. Even among naturalized citizens, rates of volunteerism are significantly below those found among the native-born population. Mirroring these differences in citizenship status and immigrant generation is the number of organizations in which volunteers participate. It is lowest among noncitizens, followed next by naturalized citizens, and increasing with each successive immigrant generation. Reflecting these group differences, third- and higher-generation immigrants account for a disproportionately large share of memberships in voluntary associations. Although they account for 56 percent of the adult population in the state, they constitute 73 percent of organizational membership in California. By contrast, first-generation noncitizens and citizens account for 18 percent and 13 percent of the adult population, respectively, but only 6 to 8 percent of the membership in voluntary organizations.

There is, however, one aspect of volunteerism that breaks with the pattern of straight-line assimilation. The intensity of participation, as measured by the number of hours per volunteer, is significantly higher among naturalized citizens than among any other group. First-generation immigrant volunteers who are U.S. citizens spend an average of 213 hours per year working in a voluntary capacity; the comparable figure for those in the third generation and later is only 160 hours. Thus, volunteers who are naturalized citizens seem to be a select group: Although the ranks of volunteers are smaller among these first-generation immigrants than among those in higher immigrant generations, this smaller group participates with a much higher intensity as measured by the number of hours spent volunteering.

Finally, there are also some differences across immigrant generations in the types of organizations for which people volunteer (Table 5.2). Regardless of their citizenship status, first-generation immigrants who volunteer are more likely than those in the second or third generation to volunteer for religious organizations. However, these generational differences are considerably more muted than those found for race, mostly because participation in religious institutions is so high among blacks (who are predominantly in the third generation or higher). Another important pattern is that participation in civic organizations is low among first-generation immigrants who are not citizens of the United States. Given the close ties between civic organizations and mainstream political participation, we may expect that noncitizens have little incentive to participate in the former. Indeed, the higher level of participation among naturalized citizens indicates that when they do have opportunities to participate in politics, first-generation immigrants who volunteer are just as likely to direct their efforts to civic organizations as those in later immigrant generations.

Civic Engagement, by English Proficiency

Another important aspect of immigrant adaptation is the ability to communicate effectively in English. We can expect English proficiency to vary in its importance according to the type of activity involved. In many parts of California, the ability to communicate in English may not serve as a strong barrier to voting because ballots and other voting

materials are available in languages other than English. However, those with low levels of English proficiency may lack the skills or opportunities necessary to participate in other types of political activities such as writing to elected officials and signing petitions. Finally, language use may also be significantly related to volunteerism, although the barriers to participation in ethnic and religious organizations may not be as strong as the barriers found in the sphere of mainstream political participation.

Surveys such as the CPS and the PPIC Statewide Survey enable us to examine the effects of language use and English proficiency only narrowly—by whether people respond to surveys in English or Spanish. Language of interview is strongly related to English proficiency, but the former is not synonymous with the latter. As national surveys of Latinos have shown, some Latinos may have high levels of English proficiency and still choose to be interviewed in Spanish (*Washington Post* et al., 1999). For these Latinos, language of interview may have less to do with English proficiency and more to do with the desire to maintain cultural distinctiveness from an Anglo society. Still, for the vast majority of respondents who choose to be interviewed in Spanish, their English proficiency is limited, and so we choose language of interview as a rough measure of English proficiency.

Results from the PPIC Statewide Surveys indicate that language of interview bears a significant relationship to political participation, with English-language respondents generally reporting a higher level of political activity than Spanish-language respondents (Table 5.5). In some instances, the differences in participation are quite large. In the case of contributing money to politics, English-speaking Latino respondents have a rate of participation that is nearly four times higher than Spanish-speaking respondents. Similar differences exist for writing to elected officials (31% versus 12%) and signing petitions (41% versus 22%). Smaller differences are associated with language proficiency for such activities as attending rallies and working for political parties and campaigns. Attending meetings on local issues is the only political activity for which there is no significant difference in participation between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latino respondents.

Table 5.5

Political Participation and Volunteerism in California, by Language Use

	By Language Use (%)	
	Spanish	English
Vote regularly	32	55
Sign petitions	22	41
Attend local meetings	41	39
Write to elected officials	12	31
Contribute money	6	23
Attend rallies	12	16
Participate in political party work	5	7
Percentage who volunteered	11	19
Type of organization		
Religious	51	38
Children	29	38
Civic	20	18
Health	15	13

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and CPS-VS for volunteerism (September 2002).

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

This divergence by type of political activity is understandable, given that Spanish-speaking respondents participate less in activities that involve money (reflecting their lower levels of income) or that generally require the ability to communicate effectively in English (signing petitions and writing to elected officials). On the other hand, attending local meetings or rallies does not require English proficiency for those Spanish-speaking Latinos who live in cities or neighborhoods with large concentrations of Latinos. Thus, there are significant differences by language use among Latinos when it comes to certain types of political activities, and these differences have a significant bearing on the relationship between race/ethnicity and political participation in California.

There are also sizable differences in volunteerism between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latinos. Whereas 19 percent of English-speaking Latinos report having volunteered in the previous year, only 11 percent of Spanish-speaking Latinos report volunteer activities. Of course, much of this difference is attributable to immigrant generation, with first-generation immigrants much more likely to respond to interviews in Spanish than English. Even after controlling for immigrant generation, however, Spanish-speaking Latinos are less likely to volunteer than English-speaking Latinos. Another important difference between the two groups is the kinds of organizations in which volunteers participate. Volunteers who respond in Spanish are much more likely than their English-speaking counterparts to have participated in religious organizations (51% versus 38%) and slightly less likely to have participated in children's organizations. The higher level of participation in religious organizations among Spanish-speaking volunteers may be due to a reduced need for English proficiency in Latino-dominant parishes and congregations than in other types of organizations. However, there is no difference based on language of interview in the likelihood that Latino volunteers will participate in civic and health associations. So the differences may turn on such factors as the religiosity and church attendance among Spanish-speaking versus English-speaking respondents.

The issue of religiosity and church-based participation needs to be explored in greater detail in future surveys of volunteerism among Latinos. The findings can be refined by using more detailed indicators that differentiate between English proficiency and language of interview. Finally, the analyses regarding language of interview and language proficiency need to be extended to populations whose primary language is neither English nor Spanish. Indeed, the effects of English proficiency may be even stronger for Asian immigrants if the institutional framework for participation among those who speak Asian languages is weaker than those found for Spanish speakers.

The Index of Participation Inequality—Race and Immigrant-Related Factors

So far, we have seen that race, immigrant generation, and language of interview all bear significant relationships to political participation and volunteerism. Here, we examine the relative magnitudes of the inequalities caused by those relationships—in comparison to each other and also in comparison to the inequalities based on the various demographic factors considered in Chapter 4. As we discussed in that chapter, the IPI provides a standardized measure of group inequalities in participation regardless of the activity involved or the category being considered.

As Table 5.6 indicates, the disparities in political participation associated with race are consistently stronger than those found for immigrant generation or language of interview. Thus, although the range of IPI scores for political participation by race is 0.03 to 0.14 (out of a maximum range of 0 to 1), the range is 0.01 to 0.05 for immigrant generation and 0.01 to 0.07 for language use. For volunteerism, on the other hand, the IPI scores for race are comparable to those found for immigrant generation. The relatively high IPI scores for political participation by race stem from the fact that whites are overrepresented—and that Latinos and Asian Americans are underrepresented—in virtually every political activity. It is important to note that the differences in political participation are strong even when we consider participation only among adult citizens. If we had considered participation inequalities among all residents, the IPI scores for race would be even greater because of the relatively high levels of noncitizenship among Latino and Asian immigrants compared to native-born whites and blacks.

Expanding the sample to all residents would also increase the IPI scores for immigrant generation and language use. Since first-generation immigrants generally display the lowest rates of participation, and since participation in activities such as contributing to campaigns and signing petitions is rare among immigrants who are not U.S. citizens, we can expect the inequalities in participation for the resident population in California to be even greater than those found for the citizen population.

Table 5.6

Index of Participation Inequality in California, by Race, Immigrant Generation, and Language Use

	Race	Immigrant Generation	Language Use
Vote regularly	0.08	0.05	0.04
Sign petitions	0.07	0.05	0.04
Attend local meetings	0.03	0.01	0.01
Write to elected officials	0.12	0.05	0.05
Contribute money	0.14	0.05	0.07
Attend rallies	0.06	0.01	0.02
Participate in political party work	0.09	0.05	0.03
Percentage who volunteered	0.13	0.14	0.09

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

Finally, even for language use, expanding the sample to all residents would increase our measure of participation inequality because noncitizens tend to have lower levels of English proficiency than immigrants who are U.S. citizens. When measured in reference to the adult citizen population, however, participation inequalities by immigrant generation and language use are smaller than those found for race.

It is important to also note that there are important regional variations to the racial gaps in political participation and volunteerism. Table 5.7 presents race-based IPI scores for the state's major regions. In most instances, the Los Angeles area displays the highest levels of participation inequality, with the three other major regions having similar IPI scores. The contrast between Los Angeles and the rest of California is most evident in activities such as writing to elected officials and giving money to political causes. However, depending on the region of comparison, sizable differences also exist for voting, signing petitions, and attending local meetings. Across the various regions, however, there is a high degree of similarity in the types of activities that generate the

Table 5.7

Index of Participation Inequality in California, Race-Based Scores, by Region

	Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Other Southern California
Vote regularly	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.05
Sign petitions	0.04	0.06	0.09	0.06
Attend local meetings	0.01	0.03	0.07	0.02
Write to elected officials	0.11	0.10	0.19	0.07
Contribute money	0.10	0.10	0.22	0.09
Attend rallies	0.00	0.10	0.06	0.04
Participate in political work	0.02	0.10	0.14	0.11
Percentage who volunteered	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.12

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

NOTE: The reference populations are adult citizens for political participation and adult residents for volunteerism.

highest levels of participation inequality (writing to elected officials and giving money to political causes) and those that generate the lowest (signing petitions and attending local meetings and rallies).

Finally, just as we saw in Chapter 4, volunteerism does not serve as an antidote to participation inequality in the political sphere. Racial inequalities in volunteerism are high in each of the regions considered and are higher than most of the political activities considered. This is because the reference population for volunteerism is the adult resident population (any resident can volunteer), as opposed to the adult citizen population for political participation. Our independent calculations reveal, however, that even among adult citizens, racial inequalities in volunteerism are significant and generally mirror those found for other types of political activities.

The IPI scores associated with race and ethnicity are therefore among the highest we have seen among Californians, especially for volunteerism and for political activities such as voting, writing to elected officials, and contributing money to political causes. Indeed, the levels

of participation inequality associated with race are considerably stronger than those found for gender and employment status and rival those found for education and homeownership (Figure 4.1 and Table 5.6). One question that remains is whether race continues to bear a significant relationship to participation when these other demographic factors are controlled for. We address the issue of demographic controls in the next chapter, which examines the potential efficacy of various policies intended to reduce racial disparities in civic engagement.

Conclusions

As we have shown in this chapter, race and factors related to immigrant generation play a significant role in differentiating between who participates in political activities and who does not. Whites are overrepresented in almost every political activity, with the greatest advantages found in contributing money to political campaigns and writing to elected officials. Attendance at local meetings is the only activity for which whites are underrepresented in their share of the participating population. For Latinos, by contrast, attendance at local meetings is the only activity for which they enjoy a relative advantage in participation over other racial groups. For all other activities, Latinos account for a share of participants that is 23 to 56 percent smaller than their share of the adult citizen population. The extent of the participation disadvantage among Latinos is most stark in the areas of campaign contributions and writing to elected officials.

For Asian Americans in California, there is no political activity in which they represent a larger share of the participating population than their share of the adult citizen population. The extent of Asian underrepresentation is relatively similar across activities but is most pronounced in the cases of voting, writing to elected officials, and contributing money to politics. Finally, blacks in California hold a participation advantage in two activities—attending local meetings and participating in political rallies. For other activities, blacks represent a slightly smaller share of the participating population than their share of the citizen population. One notable exception, however, is citizen contact, with blacks significantly underrepresented in the population that writes to elected officials.

Finally, there are also sizable differences in participation between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latinos and between first-generation immigrants and those in later immigrant generations. These differences are present even among those who are citizens of the United States. If the reference population were expanded to also include noncitizens, then the extent of group inequalities would be even larger, pointing to an even more worrying disjuncture between those who live in California and those who participate in activities that shape its civic life and political outcomes.

6. Racial Inequalities After Demographic Controls

The analysis in Chapter 5 has shown that race, ethnicity, language use, and immigrant generation each bear important relationships to the likelihood of political participation and volunteerism. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, other factors such as age, education, and homeownership also have a significant relationship to political participation. Controlling for each of the latter factors should enable us to gauge the importance of race relative to other demographic considerations. It should also help us to determine which policies can and cannot minimize racial disparities in participation. For instance, if controlling for homeownership substantially reduces racial gaps in participation, then policies geared toward increasing homeownership among nonwhites should have salutary effects on group disparities in participation. In addition to various controls, we will also consider the extent to which race and ethnicity interact with many of the other factors we have considered in this report: gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Thus, for instance, Asian Americans may report a lower likelihood of volunteering, but this may be truer of Asian American women than of men. Similarly, the age-based differences in participation may apply to one racial group but not to others. By considering demographic controls and interactive effects, we can therefore gain a more detailed understanding of the ways in which race and ethnicity relate to civic engagement in California.

Table 6.1 presents the results of racial disparities in political participation after controlling for each of several factors. First, we see that controlling for age leads to substantial reductions in the level of racial inequality for activities such as voting, attending local meetings, and working for party organizations. One may argue that for these political activities, the best policy may simply be to wait for the age

Table 6.1

Change in the Index of Participation Inequality, Controlling for Each Factor

	Initial IPI (No Controls)	Change in IPI (%)				
		Age	Immigrant Generation	Language Proficiency	Home-ownership	Education
Vote regularly	0.10	–61	–25	–21	–33	–38
Sign petitions	0.07	–6	–31	–21	–10	–30
Attend local meetings	0.03	–40	1	5	32	109
Write to elected officials	0.14	–17	–9	–14	–16	–33
Contribute money	0.15	–21	–5	–16	–23	–23
Attend rallies	0.07	–14	7	–7	–21	–58
Participate in political party work	0.10	–41	–17	–18	–29	–54
Percentage who volunteered	0.12	5	–49	–14	–8	–37

SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and CPS-VS (September 2002) for volunteerism.

structures of the various populations to equalize. Although aging may certainly raise the rates of participation among Latinos and Asian Americans, simply waiting for the passage of time will not reduce race-based disparities in political activity. Indeed, with whites accounting for a disproportionately small share of the citizen population under age 18, racial disparities stand to get worse before getting any better as the differences in age structures of whites and nonwhites will continue to expand. Finally, simply waiting for age distributions to converge will do little to reduce the racial disparities in participation for activities such as signing petitions, contributing money to political causes, and writing letters to elected officials. By the same token, one cannot simply wait for Latinos and Asian Americans to fill the ranks of second- and third-generation immigrants for racial inequalities in participation to subside. This "solution" will not only take several decades to materialize, it will also leave much of the racial disparities in participation intact, as indicated by the results in Table 6.1. Thus, while age and immigrant generation may explain much of the race-based disparities in political

participation, it is difficult to envision policies that can lead to changes in these demographic realities.

Next, we consider the effects of factors that are within the realm of public policies in the short to medium term: language proficiency, home ownership, and education. Some may argue that the lack of English proficiency is one of the most significant barriers to participation among Latinos and Asian Americans in California. The question naturally arises as to what racial disparities in participation would be like if all Californians had the ability to communicate effectively in English. Table 6.1 reveals that, in such a scenario, racial inequalities in participation would indeed be lower for activities such as voting, signing petitions, and contributing money to politics. Still, these reductions in participation inequality account for less than 30 percent of the original levels noted in Table 6.1. Thus, although policies encouraging English proficiency may lead to greater participation among many citizens in California, significant racial inequalities would still persist.

Next, we consider the effects of homeownership on racial disparities in participation. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, those who own homes are significantly more likely than those who rent to participate in various types of political activities. Rates of homeownership in California vary significantly across racial groups, with whites having the highest rates, followed then by Asian Americans, Latinos, and blacks. Table 6.1 indicates that, if all groups shared the same rates of homeownership, racial inequalities in participation would decline considerably for activities such as voting, working for political parties, and contributing money to political causes. Surprisingly, however, homeownership has little effect in reducing IPI for activities that are most connected to local politics such as signing petitions and writing to elected officials. Indeed, for attendance at local meetings, controlling for homeownership actually increases the level of participation inequality. This is because Latinos and blacks already hold an advantage in participation over whites and Asian Americans, despite their lower levels of homeownership. Thus, assigning all groups the same level of homeownership actually widens the gap in attendance at local meetings, with Latinos enjoying the highest predicted rates of participation. The overall finding, however, is that policies that reduce racial disparities in

homeownership should have a salutary effect on inequalities in political participation, with reductions of as much as 33 percent.

Finally, we consider the effects of education. In Chapter 3, we showed that there are sizable differences in political and civic participation according to educational attainment. In California and in the rest of the nation, racial differences in educational attainment mirror racial disparities in participation, with the exception of Asian Americans, who have the highest levels of educational attainment but some of the lowest levels of political participation. Still, policies aimed at reducing disparities in education should nevertheless reduce race-based inequalities in political participation by increasing participation rates among Latinos and blacks. Our analysis of data from the PPIC Statewide Surveys reveals that this is indeed the case.

As Table 6.1 indicates, if all groups shared the same level of educational attainment, inequalities in political participation would decrease substantially for all activities except attendance at local meetings.[1] The reductions in participation inequality are especially dramatic for such activities as voting, working for political parties, and attending political rallies. It should be noted that these reductions in participation inequality are due to increases in the predicted rate of participation among blacks and Latinos and not to any changes in the participation level of Asian Americans.

However, even if group differences in educational attainment were eliminated, this would still leave intact some significant racial disparities in participation for such activities as contributing money to politics and writing to elected officials. Indeed, these differences remain significant even after jointly controlling for all of the other factors we have considered so far, and even after including additional factors such as party identification and paying attention to political news. Thus, even if policies in California succeeded in reducing socioeconomic differences by race, there would still be sizable group inequalities for certain political activities that are intimately related to citizen influence over policymaking.

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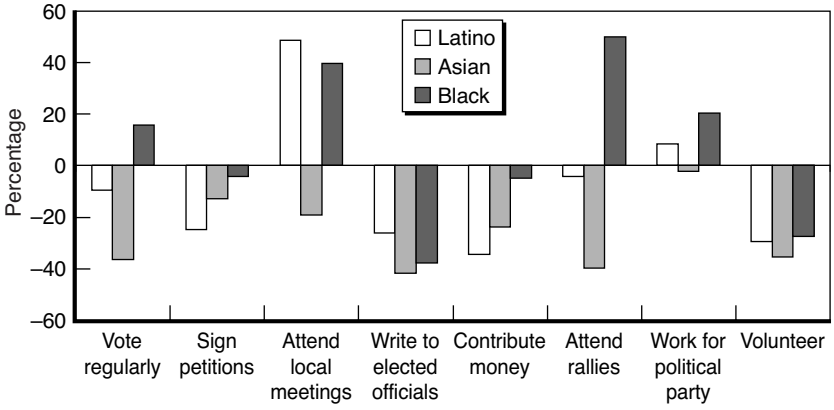
[1]This, again, is because Latino and black participation in local meetings is high despite their lower levels of educational attainment.

Turning finally to racial differences in volunteerism (Table 6.1), we see that controlling for age, homeownership, and language proficiency does very little to change the substantial levels of racial inequality associated with volunteerism. Even if all racial groups in California were assigned the same age distribution, there would be no appreciable effect on participation inequality by race. (Indeed, it would increase participation inequality slightly, by 5 percent.) Similarly, making it easier for members of different racial groups to become homeowners would mean only a modest 8 percent decline in the IPI, and increasing English proficiency among Latinos would mean only a 14 percent reduction in race-based inequalities in volunteerism.

Higher education, however, does help to reduce racial disparities in volunteerism. Indeed, eliminating group differences in educational attainment reduces the IPI for race and volunteerism by more than one-third. Finally, the strongest reductions in race-based inequalities in volunteerism are those associated with immigrant generation. As we saw in Chapter 5, first-generation immigrants have the lowest rates of volunteerism, whereas Latinos and Asian Americans in the third generation and later are just as likely to engage in volunteerism as native-born whites and blacks.

Finally, racial differences in volunteerism also tend to diminish when controlling for citizenship status and immigrant generation. However, policies regarding immigrant entry and naturalization are created at the national level, not the state level. Drastic policy solutions such as eliminating further immigration into the United States not only are unrealistic but would still do little to increase participation among the sizable number of immigrants who already live in this country. However, national policies aimed at expediting the process of naturalization should help boost the extent to which first-generation immigrants (who are predominantly Latino or Asian) participate in civic associations. Also, governmental and nongovernmental actors at the state and local level can strengthen the association between citizenship acquisition and volunteerism by incorporating civic skills and civic recruitment efforts into courses that help immigrants to pass the naturalization exam.

Now that we have examined the reductions in race-based participation inequalities when controlling for *each* of several factors, it may also be instructive to see what racial differences in participation would look like when controlling for *all* other factors. In other words, if people had identical characteristics in all factors other than race/ethnicity (i.e., age, gender, and educational attainment), would they still differ in their likelihood of participating in politics and volunteerism? Figure 6.1 compares the relative likelihood of participation for Latinos, Asian Americans, blacks, and whites, after controlling for all of the other factors considered in this report. By "relative likelihood," we mean the relative odds of participation with whites as the baseline comparison (see Appendix B for full regression results). The findings indicate that many significant racial and ethnic differences in participation would remain even if people were identical in every other manner. The most glaring differences are in writing to elected officials, contributing money to political causes, and volunteering through civic organizations. The odds of writing to elected officials are 25 percent lower among Latinos and about 40 percent lower among Asian Americans and blacks than among whites. Also, whites have a greater likelihood of volunteering than all



SOURCES: PPIC Statewide Surveys for political activities (August, October, and November 2002) and CPS-VS for volunteerism (September 2002).

NOTE: Comparision of odds ratios, with whites as the reference category at 0 percent.

Figure 6.1—Relative Likelihood of Participation, by Race/Ethnicity

other racial/ethnic groups, with a gap that ranges from 27 percent among blacks to 35 percent among Asian Americans. In contributing money to politics, Latinos lag behind all other groups, even presuming identical levels of education, homeownership, and income.

Other notable race-based patterns emerge when controlling for all other factors. Blacks and Latinos are actually much more likely to attend local meetings than Asian Americans or whites—a finding that was true in the tabulated differences noted in Chapter 5 but that proves even more pronounced when controlling for age, gender, immigrant generation, and various socioeconomic factors. Also, blacks in California are about 50 percent more likely than whites or Latinos to attend political rallies. There is also a slight advantage among blacks when it comes to working for political parties, although this difference is not statistically significant. These findings—higher participation among Latinos and blacks with respect to whites—highlight the important role of rallies and local meetings in fostering civic engagement among nonwhites. At the same time, they serve as exceptions to the more general rule of persistent disadvantages in civic engagement among nonwhites when compared to whites.

As we saw in Chapter 5, there are also some important regional differences in the extent of race-based participation inequality, with Los Angeles generally having the highest IPI scores. Of course, this difference may be due to variations in age structure across regions, as well as the distribution of other factors such as language proficiency, educational attainment, and homeownership. We controlled for these other factors and found that these adjustments generally do produce similar levels of race-based participation inequality across the various regions—which is not to say that racial IPI scores disappear but that they have similar magnitudes across regions. However, some regional differences still remain, such as the exceptionally high levels of race-based participation inequality in Los Angeles for writing to elected officials and contributing money to political campaigns. Some may argue that the persistent regional gaps are due to the higher proportion of noncitizens in Los Angeles than elsewhere. However, our figures on political participation inequality are based on the citizen population. Asian American and Latino *citizens* living in Los Angeles have a considerably

lower level of participation in these various activities than their white counterparts—hence the high level of IPI.

Finally, we also need to consider the extent to which race and ethnicity interact with several of the other factors we have considered in this report: gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Taking the issue of gender first, there are indeed some notable differences in participation across racial and ethnic groups. Although women in general are more likely than men to volunteer for participation in civic organizations, this pattern does not hold true for Asian Americans. Asian American women are also less likely to attend local meetings than their male counterparts—a finding that does not apply to blacks, Latinos, or whites. The higher degree of civic volunteerism among women in the Latino community has been confirmed by studies in other areas such as New York City (Jones-Correa, 1998). We see here, however, that the same does not hold true for Asian American women.

It is difficult to ascertain from the data why Asian American women are unique in having a lower level of participation in voluntary activities and local issues than men. It is possible that they have less free time to participate in their local communities because they focus more time on their immediate families. Also, Asian Americans are less likely to live in ethnically concentrated areas, which may further dampen the kinds of social connections among women that lead to civic participation. Another notable aspect of the interaction between race and gender is that Latinas and black women are less likely than men to write to elected officials, whereas the same does not hold true for Asian American and white women. These patterns, too, require further research, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and case studies of communities in California and elsewhere. Only then can we fully understand why gender affects civic engagement in different ways across racial and ethnic groups.

Other interactive effects (between age and race, education and race, etc.) do not reveal much of a divergence across racial groups. Among all groups, higher education leads to higher participation in most of the political and civic activities we have considered in this report. Age also has a consistent effect on participation across racial groups. The young are generally more likely to participate in political rallies and less likely to

engage in such activities as giving money to politics, writing to government officials, and working for party and campaign organizations. There is one exception, however: Age does not play as strong a role in differentiating participation among Latinos. Regardless of their age, Latinos have a relatively low likelihood of making campaign contributions—a relationship that holds true even after controlling for homeownership and income. Also, older Latinos are just as likely to attend political rallies as younger Latinos. This finding with respect to Latinos may reflect other factors such as the relatively larger role that California unions play in mobilizing Latino participation when compared to participation among whites, blacks, or Asian Americans. Unions may ask Latinos young and old alike to attend political rallies and may divert political activity from individual campaign contributions to collective protest actions. There may be other reasons as well that account for the unique effects of age on Latino participation. As in the case of gender and race, more detailed, community-level studies are needed that explore the reasons why age has a different relationship to participation for Latinos than for Asian Americans, blacks, and whites.

In this chapter, we have explored and highlighted the effects of various control variables on the relationships between race/ethnicity and civic engagement. We have asked what would happen, for example, if there was a similar age structure across racial/ethnic groups—which may occur over time, for instance, as young immigrant populations are aging and take on the age characteristics of the native-born population. Our findings suggest that this would result in the disappearance of some differences but not all of the disparities in civic engagement. On the other hand, policies aimed at reducing racial inequalities in education, income, homeownership, and English proficiency can all play significant roles in diminishing the extent of racial disparities in participation rates. To prove effective, however, such policies would have to significantly reduce the high levels of socioeconomic disparities that exist today between different racial and ethnic groups.

Institutional behavior—for example, mobilization and outreach efforts by political parties, changes in party platforms and institutional agendas, and the political activation of labor and ethnic associations—may also play an important role in encouraging greater

participation among Latinos, Asian Americans, and blacks in California (Wong, 2002; Apollonio et al., forthcoming). At present, we do not have adequate measures for such policies and efforts to evaluate their likely effect on racial inequalities in political and civic participation. In the meantime, we have developed several other policy recommendations based on our analysis of the PPIC and CPS-VS data, all which form the basis of our concluding chapter (Chapter 7).

7. Conclusions and Policy Implications

In this first comprehensive analysis of civic engagement in California, we find that the Golden State has lower levels of voting but is fairly similar to the rest of the nation in other measures of political participation and volunteering activities. Moreover, the factors that drive civic engagement trends in California—such as age, education, income, homeownership, and length of residence—mirror persistent themes in national surveys. We also find that in this state of highly populous and varied geographic areas, there are distinctions in the levels and types of civic engagement across the major regions, as well as within these regions with respect to political and racial/ethnic groupings. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, we have noted that there are sizable differences in political participation and volunteering between racial/ethnic groups and according to immigrant status that go beyond the oft-reported differences in voting. Given the state's rapidly shifting racial and ethnic composition, and the steady flow of immigrants from around the world, this latter finding has special significance.

A Broad Pattern of Racial/Ethnic and Immigrant Status Gaps

Those who are white, older, affluent, homeowners, and highly educated have a disproportionate say in California politics and representation in the civic life of the state. Past studies have shown these groups to have a distinct advantage with respect to voting. In this report, we see that other types of political activities do not necessarily diminish the kinds of group inequalities we see at the ballot box. For instance, writing letters to elected officials is an activity that is open to all residents of the state, even to noncitizens. Unlike voting, this particular form of political activity does not require registering to vote or keeping one's

registration current, nor does it require that the participant be present at a particular location at a particular time. At the same time, writing to elected officials usually demands a greater degree of political interest from the participant, as well as a greater level of politically relevant knowledge and skills in communication. Our results indicate that the latter dynamic is probably stronger than the former. Thus, instead of seeing reductions in participation inequality for this activity, when compared to voting, we see either no significant inequality (for age, homeownership, and employment status) or even an increase in inequality (for educational attainment, income, and race).

Other activities that might be expected to produce lower levels of participation inequality are attending meetings on local issues and signing ballot petitions. Attending local meetings does indeed reveal lower levels of participation inequality than those found for voting. The reductions apply for almost every demographic category, most notably for race and homeownership. In general, the presence of children in the household helps to increase participation among younger Californians, Latinos, and those who do not own their home.

Similar reductions in participation inequality are not found in the case of signing petitions for state and local ballots. The ballot initiative in California is a holdover from the Progressive Era meant to empower citizens to participate directly in the policymaking process, often overruling the decisions made by elected officials or making decisions they choose to avoid. Unlike voting, signing petitions to place an initiative on the state or local ballot does not have to occur on a particular date or in a particular location—one can, for instance, sign a petition on the weekend while shopping at the mall. And yet, citizen initiatives may preserve existing inequalities in participation by requiring that signers be registered to vote and may even increase participation inequality by disproportionately empowering the majority to place items on the ballot that overrule the interests of a minority. We find that petition-signing does indeed reduce participation inequality when compared to voting, across such categories as age, employment status, homeownership, and length of residence. However, education- and race-based inequalities in participation continue to remain strong, with racial disparities most apparent in such areas as Los Angeles County. Thus,

even though the opportunity to place questions on state and local ballots may reduce disparities on the basis of age and homeownership, significant gaps in participation remain between whites and nonwhites and between those with college degrees and those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Finally, we might have expected volunteerism in California to be marked by lower levels of participation inequality than those found for such political activities as voting and contributing money to political causes. Volunteerism does not demand the kinds of political skills or economic resources that may be required to support political campaigns. Also, unlike voting, volunteerism does not require that participants be registered to vote or interested in politics. We do find some support for the contention that volunteerism allows people to participate who might otherwise be disconnected or shut out from political participation. For instance, the young demonstrate higher levels of volunteerism than they do in such political activities as voting. Also, religious organizations offer individuals who may be shut out of political participation (for example, noncitizens and those with low levels of English proficiency) the opportunity to participate in the civic life of their communities.

For the most part, however, patterns in volunteerism tend to reinforce the divisions between those who are engaged in the civic life of the Golden State and those who are not. The ranks of volunteers in California still consist disproportionately of those who are native-born, white, homeowners, and highly educated. Indeed, inequalities in volunteerism based on race and immigrant generation are even stronger than those found for voting.

Such patterns are worrisome for two reasons. First, it means that communities composed primarily of immigrants and nonwhites have a reduced ability to address social problems. This problem becomes especially acute when cuts in government spending occur, with such communities lacking the necessary level of volunteerism to cushion the shocks of declining public investments. Race- and immigrant-based inequalities in volunteerism are also troubling because they tend to perpetuate group disparities in political participation. Since those who are recruited to participate in politics are disproportionately drawn from those who participate in civic associations, racial and immigrant-based

disparities in volunteerism will mean continued disparities in political participation for Latinos and Asian Americans.

Linking Civic Activities to Voting Behavior

The relationships between volunteerism and political participation are also important when considering the participation of youth in the civic life of California. Recent studies have suggested that volunteerism among youth does not easily translate to participation in politics. Among older Americans, participation in civic associations may increase voter turnout because of the concomitant increase in political knowledge and skills, as well as the improved chance of being mobilized to participate in politics. Among youth, by contrast, such mobilization may not occur. Even when such attempts may be made, youth may view volunteerism as an alternative to mainstream politics rather than as an integral component of civic engagement.

We can provide a preliminary answer to this important question regarding the links between volunteerism, political interest, and participation among youth. The February 2002 PPIC Statewide Survey included several questions on volunteerism, political interest, and the frequency of voting in elections.[1] The results confirm the more general finding nationwide that youth engaged in volunteerism are less interested in politics than older Americans who volunteer. Only 21 percent of young volunteers (ages 18 to 24) express a high interest in politics, compared to 31 percent of older volunteers. Similarly, only 55 percent of young volunteers say that they vote regularly, compared to 81 percent of older volunteers. Still, it is important to note that the relationship between volunteerism and voting among youth is positive, a finding that holds up even in a multivariate regression. Admittedly, it is difficult to assign causality to the link between youth volunteerism and subsequent voting because we are looking at a snapshot in time, not changes over

[1]Respondents reported a degree of volunteerism considerably higher than the level reported in the September CPS (48% versus 28%). If this higher level of volunteerism is due to misreporting, we presume that the "social desirability" effects will also be found in inflated reports of voting and political interest. Thus, any misreporting is less likely to affect our findings regarding the links between volunteerism and voting than attempts to predict volunteerism or voting.

time. In the absence of panel data, our results here are mainly suggestive—increasing the number of youth who volunteer may lead to higher levels of political interest and participation among those ages 18 to 24.

The February 2002 PPIC Statewide Survey also indicated that the link between volunteerism and political participation is found for virtually every other group, whether defined by race, immigrant generation, income, or homeownership. Just as in the case of age, however, the strongest relationship tends to be for groups who have a low propensity to participate in politics: first-generation immigrants, Latinos and Asian Americans, and those who rent their home. The same February PPIC Survey also showed that there is an exceptionally high level of interest in volunteering among first-generation immigrants who are not yet U.S. citizens (47% for noncitizens versus 35% for naturalized citizens and 34% for native-born citizens). The potential for increasing volunteerism among immigrants is also underscored by the fact that the foreign-born are less likely than others to be aware of volunteering opportunities (CPS-VS, 2002). Although this higher interest in volunteerism may not immediately translate into higher participation in politics because of barriers related to citizenship, our results indicate that naturalized citizens who volunteer are also more likely to participate in various forms of political activities. Thus, policies that encourage volunteerism among immigrants, youth, and renters all have the potential to increase the ranks of those who participate in politics.

Policy Recommendations

A number of policy implications can be derived from current rates of civic engagement in California. Although the overall trends are similar to those of the nation as a whole, and the patterns across demographic groups largely reflect what is found elsewhere, it is important for several reasons to monitor the levels of activity that we found in the current study.

First, we need to recognize that the dramatic racial and ethnic change and immigration from abroad under way in California today may alter the rates and types of civic engagement in the future. Second, declining levels of civic engagement could further aggravate one of the

most serious societal problems facing the state today—economic inequality between the "haves" and "have nots." Low-income and minority communities may not have the volunteer capacity to make up for state and local budget cuts in this era of fiscal strain, and their limited community participation means that their voices may not be heard as different interest groups compete for state and local government services. Finally, the state's governance structure relies heavily on direct democracy—that is, voters making important local and state policy decisions at the ballot box. If current trends persist, members of underrepresented groups may never be heard in the policy process because many do not vote or participate actively in the broader political process that leads to policy changes. A number of specific recommendations flow from the important role of civic engagement in the quality of life for Californians:

1. *First-generation immigrants represent an untapped resource for civic involvement.* Our surveys indicate a public willingness to increase political and nonpolitical involvement across the state's regions and demographic and political groups. At present, many do not volunteer because they lack sufficient information about opportunities. In an era of state budget constraints, creating volunteering opportunities and raising awareness of such programs can be a cost-efficient way to solve local problems. There is an especially strong interest in volunteering among first-generation immigrants—a segment of California society that is currently lagging in some measures of civic engagement and that would benefit directly from increased community involvement to improve local conditions. With many first-generation immigrants unaware of volunteering opportunities and lacking prior experience in volunteerism in their home countries, outreach and education efforts by community organizations could help raise participation among the foreign-born.
2. *Increasing civic engagement should have a regional approach*. Reducing group disparities in civic engagement cannot be done without recognizing differences across the state's major regions. We find that regions vary in the extent to which racial/ethnic

groups are more or less involved in civic engagement. Public and nonprofit groups should consider the unique attributes of the state's major regions—each of which contains a diverse population, millions of residents, and its own immigration history and public institutions—in designing programs to increase political participation and volunteering among disadvantaged groups.

3. *The racial divide in civic engagement will not disappear without upward mobility.* The current racial and ethnic, and immigrant and nonimmigrant, disparities in civic engagement may get smaller over time, with increases in English language proficiency and educational attainment. However, racial disparities in civic engagement will not disappear unless there is general social and economic progress among today's disadvantaged groups.
4. *There is a need to ease entry into nonvoting political behavior.* In addition to low levels of voting among minority and lower-income residents, we also note large gaps in participation for other political activities and volunteerism. In addition to improving economic conditions and educational attainment, greater outreach efforts by civic and political institutions would help reduce these gaps in participation. Increasing volunteerism also has the added benefit of increasing participation in political activities for immigrants, Latinos, Asian Americans, renters, and youth—all groups who are the least likely to have a say in the political process.

The issue of civic engagement and its relationship to immigration and racial diversity will be of continued importance to California in the years to come, with Latinos and Asian Americans representing a growing share of the state's resident population and adult citizenry. This study has provided a baseline assessment of the state of civic engagement in California today. However, more research needs to be done in this area. Part of this research agenda might involve gathering more "data points" from future surveys that identify patterns and trends in civic engagement. However, it also entails a reassessment of the categories we use to study volunteerism and political participation across various

groups. For instance, there needs to be a detailed examination into whether terms such as "volunteering," "community," and "service" take on different meanings across racial groups, immigrant generations, and national origins. Also, we need to examine whether particular types of civic organizations such as religious institutions, unions, home-country associations, and recreational associations have different ways of engaging immigrant populations and translating their involvement into political participation. There may also be important differences in the way that immigrant youth and native-born youth get involved in volunteerism, with implications for disparities in volunteerism and political participation. With sustained attention to the issue of civic engagement from researchers, community organizations, and political leaders, we can hope for reductions in the divide between those who participate regularly and have a greater say in policy decisions and those who are disengaged from civic life in California.

Appendix A

The Index of Participation Inequality

The IPI used in this report is based on the Hoover coefficient of inequality and is calculated as follows:

$$IPI = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| (E_i / E_{tot} - A_i / A_{tot}) / 2 \right|$$

where

E_i/E_{tot} = group i's share of the participating population,
A_i/A_{tot} = group i's share of the overall population.

The absolute value of the deviation of each group's share of the participating population from its share of the overall population is divided by two and then summed up across all groups. This gives a standard measure of participation inequality that ranges from 0 to 1. This measure of inequality is preferred to the Gini coefficient of inequality because the Gini coefficient treats groups differently depending on whether they are associated with high or low outcomes, whereas this measure does not. Thus, for instance, in measures of income inequality, the Gini coefficient performs poorly in aggregating the incomes of top income groups. A similar limitation is found for the Gini coefficient for political and civic participation measures.

Appendix B

Logit Regression Results: Political Participation and Volunteerism

Table B.1

Political Participation

	Vote Regularly		Sign Petitions	
	β	se	β	se
Latino	–0.100	0.096	–0.282***	0.095
Asian	–0.451***	0.147	–0.138	0.142
Black	0.148	0.129	–0.042	0.123
First generation	–0.168*	0.100	–0.434***	0.099
Second generation	–0.028	0.091	–0.045	0.084
Age	0.434***	0.023	–0.003	0.021
Female	–0.010	0.061	0.154***	0.057
Education	0.263***	0.029	0.256***	0.027
Homeowner	0.551***	0.067	0.012	0.066
Children under age 18	0.138**	0.067	0.101	0.064
Constant	–2.490***	0.145	–1.206***	0.132
n		5,282		5,272
Pseudo R2		0.123		0.027

Table B.1 (continued)

	Attend Local Meetings		Write to Elected Officials	
	β	se	β	se
Latino	0.396***	0.096	–0.302***	0.108
Asian	–0.210	0.148	–0.540***	0.158
Black	0.334**	0.128	–0.477***	0.149
First generation	–0.057	0.099	–0.085	0.108
Second generation	–0.194**	0.089	–0.034	0.093
Age	–0.040*	0.023	0.100***	0.024
Female	0.145**	0.060	–0.128**	0.063
Education	0.378***	0.029	0.543***	0.031
Homeowner	0.351***	0.069	0.251***	0.074
Children under age 18	1.106***	0.066	–0.009	0.071
Constant	–2.316***	0.144	–2.995***	0.154
n		5,297		5,292
Pseudo R2		0.083		0.085

	Give Money		Attend Rallies	
	β	se	β	se
Latino	–0.420***	0.129	–0.041	0.127
Asian	–0.274	0.175	–0.504**	0.194
Black	–0.048	0.157	0.405***	0.153
First generation	–0.158	0.123	0.198	0.125
Second generation	0.138	0.100	0.133	0.110
Age	0.298***	0.028	–0.063**	0.029
Female	–0.223***	0.069	–0.237***	0.076
Education	0.386***	0.033	0.370***	0.037
Homeowner	0.589***	0.087	0.296***	0.091
Children under age 18	0.026	0.081	–0.285***	0.086
Constant	–3.913***	0.183	–2.700***	0.180
n		5,276		5,297
Pseudo R2		0.100		0.036

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Table B.1 (continued)

	Party Work	
	β	se
Latino	0.082	0.190
Asian	–0.023	0.258
Black	0.185	0.235
First generation	–0.116	0.187
Second generation	0.070	0.150
Age	0.163***	0.042
Female	0.029	0.106
Education	0.437***	0.052
Homeowner	0.454***	0.138
Children under age 18	–0.261**	0.128
Constant	–4.949***	0.285
n		5,291
Pseudo R2		0.055

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Table B.2

Volunteerism

	Volunteer	
	β	se
Latino	–0.350***	0.092
Asian	–0.437***	0.130
Black	–0.319**	0.128
First generation	–0.792***	0.096
Second generation	–0.061	0.097
Age	0.000	0.002
Female	0.451***	0.062
Education	0.067***	0.008
Homeowner	0.288***	0.069
Children under age 18	0.769***	0.067
Constant	–2.392***	0.171
n		6,330
Pseudo R2		0.078

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Appendix C

Datasets

PPIC Statewide Surveys (August, September, and October 2002)

Sample Details (Adult Citizens)

	Immigrant Generation			
	First	Second	Third +	Total
White	214	432	2,972	3,618
Latino	374	315	272	961
Asian	161	81	49	291
Black	18	19	280	317

Question Wording

- How often would you say you vote—always, nearly always, part of the time, seldom, or never?

The next set of questions is about some of your activities in the past year. Please tell me if you have or have not done any of the following in the past 12 months. *[rotate questions]*

- Have you written or e-mailed a local, state, or federal elected official?
- Have you attended a political rally or speech?
- Have you attended a meeting on local or school affairs?
- Have you signed a petition, such as the signatures gathered for local or state initiatives?
- Have you worked for a political party, candidate, or initiative campaign?
- Have you given money to a political party, candidate, or initiative campaign?

Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement (September 2002)

Sample Details (Adult Residents)

	Immigrant Generation			
	First	Second	Third +	Total
White	424	371	3,003	3,798
Latino	1,335	433	394	2,162
Asian	685	136	61	882
Black	31	12	432	475

Question Wording

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

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

National Election Studies (November 2002)

The National Election Studies in November 2002 contain 1,511 respondents, of which 143 are residents of California. Our measures of political participation are derived from the following questions:

1. In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you—did you vote in the elections this November?

2. During the past twelve months, have you telephoned, written a letter to, or visited a government official to express your views on a public issue?
3. During the past twelve months, did you attend a meeting about an issue facing your community or schools?
4. During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office?
5. Did you give money to a political party during this election year?
6. Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?
7. Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?
8. Aside from a strike against your employer, in the past twelve months, have you taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issues?

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