

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161



EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 2

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Abstract

Everyday life for undocumented Americans often entails coping with the fear, stress, and anxiety of potential deportation (Fussell, 2011; Valenzuela & Erickson 2015). Yet, despite this troubling emotional state, undocumented Americans are increasingly taking to the streets, social media, and the halls of government demanding that their rights be upheld. This article contributes to understandings of how the political participation of undocumented Americans occurs in spite of the barriers this group faces. Through a comparative analysis of Catholic parishes in Los Angeles, California, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, the author found that a sense of belonging and expanded opportunities to participate in political and civic activities supported undocumented churchgoers as they set aside deportation fear to participate in local public life. This study builds on Verba et al.'s (1995) model of political participation which underscores the potential of churches to serve as political mobilizers. The author also argues that belonging and the provision of opportunities to participate both at and through the church should be incorporated into future models of political participation among undocumented Americans.

Citizens of Heaven: Political Participation of Undocumented Americans

In 1992, anthropologist Leo Chavez published *Shadowed Lives*, in which he told the story of undocumented Americans living in San Diego, California. While in many ways the titular imagery still applies to the majority of the United States' approximately 11 million undocumented residents, over the last decade, an increasing number have been participating in activities that publicly out themselves through advocacy for immigrant rights. This purposeful act of stepping out of the shadows and into the spotlight while simultaneously demanding rights and effecting political change is a phenomenon that just 20 years ago would have seemed impossible. In a country with declining rates of social capital and political participation (Putnam, 2001), and where diversity may lead to a further decline of trust and community engagement in the short term (Putnam, 2007; van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014), it is remarkable that many of the most marginalized in U.S. society are participating in these political movements in spite of the fear that frequently accompanies illegality and life in the shadows. While this phenomenon predates the Trump era, it holds important lessons around the political engagement of undocumented Americans in this time of heightened nationalism and violence.

Living in the United States as an undocumented immigrant entails coping with the everyday stress, anxiety, and restricted mobility related to fear of deportation and family separation (Valenzuela & Erickson, 2015) and fear of being the targets of violence (Fussell, 2011). The fear of deportation experienced by millions of people living and working in the United States is a fear not simply of having Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents show up at one's door, but of the removal from one's chosen home, family, economic investments, and employment histories. This may be compounded by fear of the economic, political, and violent situations in one's country of origin. In spite of this fear—which has been shown to suppress participation among other groups (Salamon & Van Evera, 1973)—undocumented Americans are engaging in political action in ways that directly challenge this fear (Pantoja & Segura, 2003).

To understand how undocumented Americans set aside deportation fear to engage actively in American politics, I build on and reframe Verba et al.'s (1995) institution-centered model for understanding political participation, arguing that a sense of belonging and a reimagining of religious sites makes the model useful for studying undocumented American political engagement. To support this claim, I review a comparative case study of two Catholic parishes in

the contexts of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. The two churches were home to vastly different levels of political engagement among undocumented and immigrant members. I maintain that this was due to the capacity of each local church to foster belonging while dampening deportation fear and demonstrating a willingness to operate as both a religious site and a site of political activity.

Political Participation and Fear

For immigrant communities in the United States, participation within the American political system is a key benchmark in broader assimilation processes (e.g., see Bloemraad, 2006; Gordon, 1964). Yet, much of the political-participation and civic-engagement literature has neglected foreign-born Americans, and those studies that have focused on this population have often failed to include undocumented Americans in their analyses (Bloemraad, 2006; Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001; Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005; Ocampo, 2015; Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008). When electoral participation is the benchmark of participation, undocumented Americans are set aside since this mode of participation is not open to them. The tendency to leave out immigrants, let alone undocumented immigrants, from discussions about politicization and participation while leaving political assimilation out of the immigration debate “implies seeing immigrants as only ‘the other’ not as potential members in a common polity” (Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005, p. 77).

For undocumented Americans, the breadth of potential means of participation is limited because they do not have the right to vote. Without comprehensive immigration reform that includes amnesty for currently undocumented peoples, there is little hope for achieving full voting rights. Historically, machine politicians exchanged the granting of citizenship for votes (Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005); however, parties now focus on mobilizing existing citizens rather than creating new ones (Anderson & Cohen, 2005). While executive action can provide temporary protections and grant rights, as seen in the recent fight over so-called DREAMers, these actions may be revoked with a change in presidential administration. Comprehensive reforms that codify policy changes into law have more legitimacy but have proven impossible to legislate in recent decades. Immigration is a useful wedge issue for politicians as it may increase voter turnout and fracture existing majorities (Jeong et al., 2011; Peterson & Fayyad, 2017) and therefore is unlikely to be meaningfully addressed in the near future.

Even without the right to vote, undocumented Americans are able to actively participate in other forms of engagement such as political speech, attending demonstrations and political meetings, and engaging with elected leaders. In order to be politically active through any of these avenues, one must have the means (e.g., skills, language, know-how), the motive (e.g., the desire, engagement with politics, and belief in change), and the opportunity (e.g., those who are politically active are likely to have been asked to do so).

Acquisition of these variables is influenced by traditional socioeconomic status indicators such as wealth, race, education, and gender, but also through institutional involvement (Verba et al., 1995). In Verba et al.’s (1995) model, one’s demographic characteristics and childhood experiences combine with institutional involvement in adulthood to predict the likelihood of political participation. Through adult exposure and involvement in institutions, the likelihood of participation can be increased beyond what socioeconomics may predict.

Through engagement within institutions, individuals can make up skill deficits (the means to participate politically), may acquire the motivation to participate through institutional ideologies

and practices, and be asked to participate (the opportunity). Institutional engagement (e.g., church attendance) can also foster political interest and civic skills, and provide opportunities for recruitment. Institutions are likely to be key for many immigrants' political participation as these institutions assist in compensating for low socioeconomic status and other disadvantages within the American social structure.

Religious institutions are historically and currently significant to American political participation. Churches and church attendance serve as a "locus of recruitment" and as an equalizer of skills and opportunity, providing the means, motive, and opportunity for participation (Verba et al., 1995). Immigrants are more likely to attend religious services than their native-born counterparts (40% and 36%, respectively). Nationally, nearly half of Latinos are Catholic (48%), another 29% identify as some form of Christian (in California and New Mexico, 28% and 34% of the population is Catholic, respectively; Pew Research, 2015).

For U.S. Latinos and Latino immigrants, the church takes on added significance as the primary associational affiliation and brings with it ties beyond the co-ethnic community (Heredia, 2011). Previous studies have found that among Latinos of any immigration status, regular church attendance is a significant predictor of political participation (Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001).

This relationship may have grown in significance as the Catholic Church became heavily invested in mobilizing its members for immigration reform in the mid-2000s (Heredia, 2011). This effort was led by individuals like the now-retired Cardinal Richard Mahone, of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, who became a public face for Catholic support of immigration reform (Pomfret, 2006). The Catholic Church continues to remain involved in the immigrant rights movement through the research and advocacy arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration Policy, direct service and advocacy by local and national chapters of Catholic Charities USA, and a constellation of parish- and diocesan-level services and advocacy for immigration reform. Mainstream Catholic teachings and core values align with the immigrant rights movement (Heredia, 2011), and while the Catholic Church is not alone in its advocacy for immigrants, it remains the largest religious institution that is both home to and supportive of Latino immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2008).

Although Hondagneu-Sotelo (2008), Heredia (2011), Jones-Correa and Leal (2001), and Pantejo and Segura (2003) provided insight into Latino and immigrant political engagement, they offered little discussion of undocumented Americans and no exploration of the potential dampening effect that deportation fear has on political participation.

Decades before Donald Trump assumed the presidency and championed draconian and nationalistic immigration policies, changes in migration trends, policy, and policing have created a livid reality for undocumented Americans. Not only are the chances of deportation greater as a result of increased policing, but the costs of deportation have also risen. As a result of an intensive push to secure the U.S. border dating back to the 1990s—which only intensified in the post 9/11 era—the United States has witnessed a fundamental change in migration patterns from Mexico, the primary immigrant sending country,^[1] and much of Central America (Massey et al., 2002; Nevins, 2001). Instead of discouraging migrations from Mexico, the border buildup has converted circular, seasonal migration patterns into one-directional migration with long-term settlement in the United States. Long-term settlement has changed the composition of immigration flows as family reunification drives up the rates of spouses and children joining in this one-directional migration flow (Massey et al., 2016).

The growth of deeper familial roots in the United States makes the rupture of deportation even more devastating. Individuals are no longer only deported from their country of employment; increasingly, deportation means separation from family members—spouses, children, and parents. A recent study of undocumented families in New Mexico found that even U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents can experience heightened levels of anxiety and fear related to deportation threats as they worry about having their parents forcibly removed from the country (Valenzuela & Erickson, 2015).^[2]

The growing risks and costs of deportation make fear a rational response to the specter of deportation, but beyond the outcome of being deported or not, the chronic exposure to the emotion of fear has serious consequences for this population in relation to individual health outcomes and political engagement. In a 2014 study in New York City, Geller et al. found that the implementation of stop-and-frisk policing resulted in elevated rates of anxiety and reduced levels of mental health for young people of color. The study found that being subjected to repeated stops increased the likelihood of experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder and anxiety. Chronic exposure to such anxiety can result in hypertrophy, leading to depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and other disorders (Debiec & LeDoux, 2004). While little has been done to explore the long-term impacts of fear and anxiety among undocumented Americans, evidence is emerging of negative health outcomes related to increased anxiety and stress linked directly to policing and policy decisions and what the popular press has dubbed the “Trump effect” on Latino health (Gemmill et al., 2019; Hoyt et al., 2018; Wan & Bever, 2019).

While more work is needed to address longitudinal impacts of depression, anxiety, and fear on civic and political engagement (Nelson et al., 2019), cross-sectional studies have demonstrated a link between depression and reduced political engagement (Ojeda, 2015).

Method

This article utilizes data from a comparative case study with a most-/least-likely case selection, comparing Catholic churches in Los Angeles and Albuquerque. Each church, or parish, was selected through analysis of publicly available data to identify neighborhoods in Los Angeles and Albuquerque that are home to (1) high levels of foreign-born populations, (2) high levels of Mexican- and Central American-origin populations, and (3) high levels of households below the poverty line. With these data mapped out across the cities of Los Angeles and Albuquerque, I identified two potential neighborhoods as locations likely to have both high levels of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America and a Catholic parish that serves them. After attending services and reaching out to individuals at both the chosen site and the alternative, the two sites were selected: St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles and Sacred Heart in Albuquerque (both pseudonyms). Data for this project were collected in two ways, first through participant observation at parish masses, events, and group gatherings, and second through interviews with staff members and parishioners conducted over an 8-month period.

Research Sites

Saint Catherine’s Catholic Parish

Saint Catherine’s Catholic Parish is located in an immigrant-rich Los Angeles neighborhood with significant levels of Mexican and Central American families. St. Catherine’s has a large staff that reflects both the needs of the community and the popularity of the parish. It is home to 11,000 families who have registered with the parish, and staff estimate this is augmented by the number

of families who regularly attend the parish without registering. The church offers three daily masses Monday through Saturday and eight masses on Sunday. Of the eight Sunday masses, only one is offered in English, and this is the service with the lowest attendance. The remaining seven masses are celebrated in Spanish and generally fill the large church to capacity.

St. Catherine's is also home to a number of associations that fall under the parish umbrella. Thirty-one groups make announcements in the weekly newsletter, and a handful of others exist less formally under the umbrella of the parish. These organizations and groups range in motivation from religious and prayerful reflection to community building and social services. Reflecting the ethnic diversity of the parish are the numerous groups that organize around the patron saints of their home countries. For example, the Ministry of the Virgin of Guadalupe serves the Mexican American community of the parish, while the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Assumption serves the Guatemalan American community. Other organizations focus on social services such as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous and the Peace, Justice, and Life groups.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Sacred Heart Catholic Church is located in Albuquerque's South Valley and is home to approximately 1,200 registered families. Sacred Heart is a quiet neighborhood church south of downtown Albuquerque. The neighborhood traces its roots back to Spanish land grants and is typical of the South Valley—a mix of modest and middle-class homes on large lots, elements of Southwestern architecture at many homes, and pockets of commercial activity catering to local Hispano and Latino residents.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church acts as a microcosm of culture and diversity within central New Mexico as it balances the histories and practices of Hispano residents (native-born New Mexicans who proudly and frequently trace their roots back to Spanish colonizers) with more recently arrived immigrant Latinos, predominantly from Mexico. The Spanish-language mass on Sundays brings these two groups together in worship but also highlights tension between old and new residents.

The parish has two full-time priests, two deacons, and nine part-time staff members who work in the parish offices as secretaries, program directors, and so forth. The parish is home to 17 affiliated groups or ministries and holds one Spanish-language mass on Sunday (there are no Spanish-language masses offered during the week). Parish groups range from Al-Anon to the Blue Army, a group of women who gather Monday mornings to pray the rosary in honor of Our Lady of Fatima.

Findings

Fear of deportation was an everyday experience for respondents in both Los Angeles and Albuquerque. Participating in political life required temporarily setting aside this fear. In the Los Angeles church, a number of individuals set aside their fear of deportation to participate in political actions; however, this was not the case in Albuquerque. Differences in the two levels of participation are explained in this section, with a focus on fostering a sense of belonging and creating opportunities at the church.

Belonging

Belonging is a complex, Janus-faced sentiment that is both felt by the individual or group and recognized by others. One feels that they belong to a community, and the community recognizes

and accepts that the individual belongs to the community. Among churchgoers at St. Catherine's in Los Angeles, belonging satisfied both sides of the equation; in Albuquerque neither side was satisfied. Churchgoers in Los Angeles expressed a sense of ownership and belonging at St. Catherine's, while at Holy Spirit in Albuquerque, undocumented and immigrant arrivals self-segregated to a greater level and avoided formal registration with the church.

Los Angeles churchgoers at St. Catherine's expressed their belonging in straightforward terms, often referring to the parish as "my church" or "our community." Their feelings of belonging were echoed in their involvement in and leadership of the parish and its numerous affiliated groups—from the social justice committee, to the lectors and Eucharistic ministers at Sunday masses, to the association of followers of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Registration and Integration

In Albuquerque's Holy Spirit Church, undocumented churchgoers were far less involved in parish ministries and groups. In fact, the parish staff and priests had a difficult time getting these individual and families to register with the parish. Registration with the parish—a process of giving one's name and address to the parish offices—is a technical requirement of Catholics in good standing but functions as a way for the church to document its membership, track donations to the church, and allow families to celebrate sacraments at a church (e.g., marriage and baptism).

In Albuquerque, church priests and leaders had difficulty encouraging undocumented individuals and others of tenuous legal status to register with the parish. Although the church would not turn over any information to legal authorities without a subpoena, and the church did not ask about legal status in registration forms, the fear of documenting their presence in the United States kept people from registering with the church. Church leaders at Holy Spirit referred repeatedly to the difficulty they faced in getting people to register with the church. One parish secretary explained that "the undocumented won't register with the church; they'll come to the church [for Mass and] come when they need help," but they won't register.

In Los Angeles, churchgoers used church registration as a way to document an otherwise undocumented life. When Central American undocumented immigrants sought to regularize their status under Temporary Protective Status, they requested letters from St. Catherine's to prove their residency and moral standing in the community. Church secretaries regularly wrote letters to ICE officers indicating the involvement of individuals and families in their parish.

Different levels of belonging were also seen in the participation at the two parishes. While undocumented and newly arrived immigrants participated in all aspects of the church in Los Angeles, in Albuquerque their participation was limited to attending the once weekly Spanish-language mass and a Friday evening prayer service. The Friday service is a combination of prayer, song, and personal testimony, and typically concludes with snacks and conversation. This was an event catering almost exclusively to the immigrant community of Holy Spirit and represented a way the two communities' self-segregation occurred within the church.

At Sacred Heart, the integration of immigrant groups and longer term members of the parish provides an example of the limits of belonging in the Albuquerque community. The one Spanish-language mass every week brought together Latino immigrants and residents of the community, many of whom identified as Hispano. While the two groups shared a language, tensions between the groups limited belonging among Latino immigrants.

One Hispano churchgoer who traced his roots to Spanish land grants explained to me the tensions under the surface of the Spanish-language mass through the example of Day of the Dead^[3] celebrations. He explained that when the parish modified events and traditions to cater to the growing immigrant population, the Hispano community felt a sense of loss and frustration, saying, “That is not how we do it, that is not our tradition.”

Outreach

Church leaders and organizations at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles acknowledged and confirmed the sentiment that undocumented and immigrant churchgoers belonged at and to the parish. As such, services blended multiple communities in the same pews. Leaders at Albuquerque’s Holy Spirit Church tried to integrate the two communities, but a fairly strict segregation between Hispano and Latinos remained.

The church secretary at St. Catherine’s explained that for many undocumented churchgoers, their church feels like a second home, and the parish tries to support that sentiment:

[St. Catherine’s is] like a second home, like a second family for them. Of course, we [as a church] always try to have our arms open for them.... [Immigrants here at St. Catherine’s] feel protected, I think. They feel part of something ... they forget their [legal] situation somehow.

One priest at St. Catherine’s dedicated a sermon to the idea that, as Catholics, everyone, regardless of immigration status, were “brothers and sisters in Christ” and that they were “citizens of heaven.”

St. Catherine’s opens its arms to undocumented members of the community by providing social service aide to church members (regardless of immigration status) and incorporating foreign religious traditions into its celebrations. Members of the community and the church regularly bring their correspondences from immigration officials and other public agencies to the church office to have them translated and explained to them by church staff. During one interview with church staff, two women came into the office seeking assistance with a letter one had received from ICE officials. The letter, written in English, was about an application for asylum based on threat of physical violence in the woman’s native El Salvador. Church staff explained the letter’s contents, used the information to track the status of the application on the ICE website, and even coordinated a ride for the woman to her interview with ICE officials to be held in Orange County (a 1-hour drive from the church).

Additionally, the Los Angeles church incorporated religious practices and traditions from immigrant arrivals from across Mexico and Central America. Prior to my arrival at the research site, a priest from the church traveled to an Indigenous community in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca to visit the holy site dedicated to the Virgin of Juquila. The trip was designed to better serve the growing Oaxacan community attending services at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles. The priest brought back a statue of the Virgin of Juquila, and the parish began holding annual celebrations in her honor.

At Sacred Heart in Albuquerque, such overt actions of welcoming and belonging were missing. The tensions in the region between Hispano and Latino immigrant communities played out in the parish offices and with the pastor himself, who made it clear that “he didn’t cross the border, the border crossed him”—a common refrain among Hispano or Spanish descendants in New Mexico that both celebrates their historical traditions while creating social distance from Latino immigrant communities.

Opportunities

Traditionally, opportunities to participate in political actions at church revolve around recruitment—political groups and movements use churches as loci of recruitment to draw people into their campaign (Verba et al., 1995). However, the case of St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles demonstrates that churches may not only function as recruitment centers but as sites of political action and opportunities to participate. St. Catherine’s many associated organizations provided opportunities to participate in state and local political issues *at* and *through* the church. By contrast, Albuquerque’s Holy Spirit Church provided no such opportunities, even at the height of the 2016 presidential election.

Opportunities for political participation at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles took a variety of forms. While the parish offices engaged in some activities, so too did individual groups affiliated with the church—especially the Social Justice Ministry. The church had close ties to their local council district representative and his office. Through both the broader parish offices and the Social Justice Ministry, activities and events were co-coordinated with the councilman’s office. These events included neighborhood clean-ups, e-waste recycling events, and community block-captain trainings. These events were secular in nature, were open to the parish and local community, and linked elected officials with the community at St. Catherine’s by operating such events out of the church and using the church as a co-host. At all of these events, representatives of the councilman, or occasionally the councilman himself, would attend, providing opportunities to engage with political leaders on safe ground.

St. Catherine’s church and affiliated groups were also heavily involved in their local neighborhood council^[4]. St. Catherine’s had two parishioners serving on the local neighborhood council, and the parish gym was often used for council meetings. Occasionally, council meetings were designed to overlap with parish ministry meetings to increase exposure and engagement between the secular and religious groups. By hosting these events at the church and purposely interweaving church meetings with the council meetings, the barriers to entry for this form of political participation were significantly lower for all churchgoers, but especially the undocumented.

Opportunities to participate through the church were also common in Los Angeles. Church groups would coordinate participation in local political activities. For example, when a local advocacy group was holding information sessions on the fate of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) in 2016, the church coordinated carpools and group attendance. Church leaders also organized groups to attend events at Los Angeles City Hall and sites across the city that linked parishioners to civic and political actions.

This type of organizing provides not only opportunities to participate, but also a sense of safety—or cover—as undocumented churchgoers engage with the Los Angeles political community. Participating in events through the church, under their name, provides a sense of institutional cover: Should something go wrong, individuals believe that the church will support them. By engaging at and through the church at non-church events, this sense of cover is carried with them as undocumented believers practice civic engagement across the city.

By contrast, none of the previously mentioned opportunities to engage in political actions at or through the church were witnessed in Albuquerque. Indeed, the line between church and state seemed quite rigid at the parish level. However, a new bishop in Santa Fe (who oversees all churches in Albuquerque) seemed to indicate a new direction. He had hosted a forum on

immigration, inviting members of the public, local officials, and church members to discuss how immigration policies were often at odds with church teachings, especially family separation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The differences in experiences between Albuquerque and Los Angeles churchgoers speak to the role of local contexts of reception, the mobilizing potential of immigrant-serving churches, and the hyper-local nature of political participation of undocumented Americans. This calls for a revised understanding of the role of churches in the political participation of undocumented Americans; they may not simply be sites of recruitment but sites for fostering a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to participate in political actions at and through the church.

An immigrant context of reception is traditionally composed of the governmental reception (either hostile, neutral, or supportive), the societal reception (again, either hostile, neutral, or supportive), and the relative strength of the immigrant group's co-ethnic community (see Portes & Zhou, 1993). However, these forces can vary greatly across states and municipalities (Varsanyi, 2010).

In a dramatic about-face, following the 1994 passage of Proposition 187, which, among other outcomes, would have denied public education to undocumented Californians, the State of California and the City of Los Angeles have been on the forefront of implementing supporting policies for immigrants of all legal status. In Los Angeles, where over one third of the population is foreign born, immigrants from Mesoamerica experience a local context of supportive local policy and large co-ethnic communities. In Albuquerque, immigrants from Mexico and Central America are a newer phenomenon, and attitudes toward them are complicated by New Mexico's history of colonization and annexation. Unlike its neighboring border states, New Mexico has been bypassed by new migrants as they search for stronger economies in nearby Arizona, Texas, and California. Although growing, New Mexico's foreign-born population (9.7%) lags behind its neighbors, where the immigrant population accounts for a quarter of the California population (27%) and 13% and 17% in Arizona and Texas populations, respectively (U.S. Census, 2019).

Tension between native-born people and immigrant newcomers is a common thread in American history. In New Mexico, this has taken on the unique form of *Hispanos* (those identifying as descendants of Spanish colonizers) actively distancing themselves from new arrivals. As Gómez (2007) explained, claims to pure Spanish identity are often the result of intense racism and discrimination, attempts to create social distance from racialized Mexican identities. While similar to the intergroup nativism fueled by immigrant replenishment identified by Jiménez (2008), in New Mexico this has resulted in the creation of an oppositional identity.

The Albuquerque church, set in a locality with less supportive contexts of reception, did not foster a sense of belonging and opportunity. The Los Angeles church, located in a highly supportive context of reception, encouraged belonging and engagement. The findings from this project indicate that, given certain conditions, undocumented Americans are able to set aside deportation fears and engage in local political and civic life. Catholic churches may support these efforts but are also supported or inhibited by a local context of reception. Nevertheless, religious institutions have the potential to serve as key sites of political incorporation for undocumented Americans as they both provide opportunities to participate and act as a bridge between the religious and the political.

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1. While countries of origin among the undocumented population are as diverse as the global population itself, Mexico remains the country of origin for the most undocumented Americans (Passel & Cohn, 2016). In 2014, 5,850,000 undocumented Americans in the United States were from Mexico alone; El Salvador was the second highest, with 700,000 in 2014 (Passel & Cohn, 2016). [↑](#)
2. For those individuals who are deported but wish to return to the United States, the costs of return have greatly increased with the increased investment in border policing. There are two primary costs associated with clandestine border crossings between the United States and Mexico—financial and physical. In 1993, the average fee paid to a smuggler to cross the border was \$980, but by 2013 this had surpassed \$3,000 (Cornelius & Lewis, 2007), an exorbitant figure for low-income families. More troubling than the rising financial cost is the physical toll of clandestine border crossings for individuals seeking to return to the United States following deportation. Death is a growing risk in crossings—in 1998, there were 263 border deaths, but in 2012 this number rose to 477 (Anderson, 2013). The rise in border deaths has been attributed to the increase in border enforcement (calculated by the border patrol budget; Massey et al., 2016). [↑](#)
3. What Catholics of European extraction celebrate as All Souls Day and All Saint's Day, Mesoamerican cultures celebrate as Day of the Dead, which blends Indigenous and Catholic beliefs. [↑](#)
4. In the city of Los Angeles, neighborhood councils are officially sanctioned and deputized groups of local stakeholders who review planning, public works, and other localized issues. These groups are elected by stakeholders (broadly defined as anyone who works, lives, recreates, or travels through the neighborhood regularly), and voting is open regardless of legal status.

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