Introduction

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2005, two stories relevant to the topic of this book appeared in the *Dallas Morning News*. One, titled "From Saigon to the Texas House," reported on the election of the first Vietnamese American legislator in Texas, Hubert Vo (Graszyk 2005). Vo was elected to the Texas House by a slim margin of only thirty-three votes to represent District 149 in Houston.[1] He had arrived in the United States in 1975 as a refugee and moved from being a busboy, a cook, an assembly-line worker, and a goldsmith to being a computer company owner and real estate developer. The other story, titled "India Group Rallies to Help Its Devastated Homeland," reported on a candlelight vigil sponsored by the India Association of North Texas for the victims of the December 26, 2004, tsunami (Langton 2005). At the event, $20,000 was raised, and plans were laid to collect much more within the coming months. But the story, with its subheading of "charity, culture at core of association aiming to raise $500,000," also reported on a host of other service and cultural activities sponsored by this organization. "Our goal," one official was quoted as saying, "is to keep the community from India involved." These two stories, both of which appeared in the early stages of our research, illustrate the growing presence of new Asian immigrants in the public sphere. This presence is particularly noteworthy in Texas, a state associated most often with Latino immigration.

How do newcomers to the United States learn to become civically engaged? How is this process related to their understandings of what it means to be an American citizen? And where are the sociocultural spaces in which immigrants and their children can begin to participate in the wider public sphere? These

questions guide our comparative study of civic engagement among two quite distinct Asian immigrant populations—Indians and Vietnamese.[2] This book is based on ethnographic research done in the Dallas-Arlington-Fort Worth (henceforth DFW) metropolitan area in Texas. Although this region has rapidly become a new gateway for immigrants (Brettell 2008b), it is relatively under-researched compared to cities with a longer history of immigration such as New York and Los Angeles.[3]

Indians and Vietnamese are the two largest Asian immigrant populations in Texas and they rank third and fourth, respectively, among all foreign-born immigrants in DFW. Both groups have experienced growth in north Texas since 1990. It may seem unusual to pair a group from Southeast Asia with one from South Asia.[4] Certainly the differences between Indian and Vietnamese immigrants are striking in terms of their historical and cultural backgrounds, migration patterns, English language skills, socioeconomic status, and connections to homeland politics. We have found much common ground, however, in the ways in which these groups practice forms of civic engagement and learn to "become" American while simultaneously reinforcing a strong sense of their own ethnic identities. Indeed, they share complex and sometimes ambivalent views about becoming and being American and about what it means to be a citizen.

We focus in this book on how these "new" immigrants participate in the public sphere and hence become citizens, not only in the legal sense but also socially and culturally, through various forms of civic engagement.[5] We define *civic engagement* as the process by which individuals enter into and act within civic spaces to address issues of public concern. It involves not only actions but also knowledge about how to participate, and a sense of belonging that motivates people to become engaged. In this book we use the term *civic engagement* interchangeably with *participatory citizenship*.[6] We differentiate between *formal* and *informal* civic engagement in order to distinguish between participation in the political process (such as voting, running for office, and so on) and participation in other spheres (such as voluntary associations and religious institutions).[7] This contrast is illustrated by the stories presented earlier about Hubert Vo, an elected official who participates directly in the formal political system, and the candlelight vigil organized by an Indian immigrant association, which represents a more informal mode of participation. Our emphasis in this book is on the less formal spheres of civic engagement and on the similarities in how Vietnamese and Indian immigrants participate in these spheres.

Civic Engagement and Participatory Citizenship

Civic engagement as a form of participatory citizenship is related to contemporary approaches to citizenship, a concept with multiple dimensions. Citizenship is commonly related to the notion of "belonging" to the polity (Cohen 1982; Castles and Davidson 2000; Fortier 2000) and membership in some civil community (Brubaker 1989), but it is also connected to informal and symbolic processes that are enacted in the *public sphere*—that realm between the private sphere and the sphere of governmental institutions (Habermas 1989). In this book we use *public sphere*, *civic sphere*, and *civic space* interchangeably to refer to arenas of discursive relationships and collective practice. As our recent edited collection (Reed-Danahay and Brettell 2008a) demonstrates, immigrants to different countries and from different homelands negotiate their own senses of belonging and their own paths to civic engagement and participation.[8]

Many social theorists distinguish between legal citizenship and forms of participatory citizenship. Étienne Balibar (1988: 724), for example, differentiates between citizenship in its "strict sense"—"the full exercise of political rights"—and in its "broad sense"—"cultural initiative or effective presence in the public sphere (the capacity to be 'listened to' there)."[9] Taking this further, Renato Rosaldo and William V. Flores (1997) suggest that immigrants frequently draw on forms of cultural expression to claim recognition and political rights. They label this approach *cultural citizenship*, defining it as "the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state's democratic processes" (57). Cultural citizenship, as articulated by Rosaldo (1994: 252), takes into account what he terms "vernacular notions of citizenship"—that is, the claiming of distinctive and special rights, representation, and modes of cultural autonomy that are different from official or unitary models of citizenship.[10] The premise of cultural citizenship is that it can accommodate "multicultural conceptions of political belonging" (Baker and Shryock 2009: 11).[11] And as Kathleen Coll (2010: 6) has recently pointed out, it also draws attention to how people experience and practice citizenship in their everyday lives. Cultural citizenship, as a form of participatory citizenship, is critical to any exploration of processes of civic engagement among immigrant newcomers.

The concept of *social citizenship* is another widely discussed dimension of participatory citizenship. T. H. Marshall (1964) originally defined it as full social inclusion in a society—that is, as having the social rights that accompany civil and political rights.[12] Gerard Delanty (2002: 60), who criticized Marshall for ne-

glecting "the substantive dimension" of social citizenship, has suggested (2003: 602) that "citizenship is not entirely about rights or membership of a polity, but is a matter of participation in the political community and begins early in life. It concerns the learning of a capacity for action and for responsibility." Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar (2008: 205), along similar lines, define social citizenship as the process whereby individuals "assert rights to citizenship substantively through social practice rather than through law." In this book, we build on these recent approaches, focusing in particular on how people learn to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship as they define them. Thus our formulation of participatory citizenship, which encompasses ideas about both cultural and social citizenship, implies that citizenship is not simply a matter of rights granted to immigrants by the nation-state, but also entails forms of participation claimed and enacted by immigrants themselves in order to establish belonging.[13]

Legal citizenship, and hence the extension of the right to belong, is not only about inclusion but also involves processes of exclusion based on race and gender. Asian immigrants, along with women and African Americans, have historically not been treated equally with regard to access to citizenship—even though the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868, defines all persons born or naturalized in the United States as citizens of the country as well as of the state wherein they reside, thereby guaranteeing them equal protection under the law. Racial constructions of citizenship became most apparent in the 1920s when several groups of Asian origin, including Japanese, Filipinos, and those of the Hindu faith, were declared by the Supreme Court to be nonwhite and thereby ineligible for citizenship (Kerber 1997: 843).[14] As legal scholar Leti Volpp (2001) has noted, Asian Americans continue to live under a shadow regarding their loyalty to the United States, and racial exclusion therefore continues to shape their experiences as citizens even though they are no longer excluded from legal status (naturalization) as citizens.[15] Noting that "citizenship has served as a proxy for race" (66), particularly for Chinese and Japanese Americans, Volpp, who underscores the notion of citizenship as identity and solidarity, suggests that discourse about the citizenship of Asian Americans "refers to people's collective experience of themselves, their affective ties to identification and solidarity" (58). Despite recent attempts to tease out the relationship between forms of identity and notions of citizenship, we find it analytically useful to emphasize that citizenship is an aspect of identity and not easily separable from it.[16] We therefore devote the second chapter of this book to a discussion of how Vietnamese and Indian immigrants in DFW perceive their own identities, including as Americans, or hyphenated Americans, as well

as how they respond to how they may be identified by others. We view these identities as critical to an understanding of how immigrants enter the public sphere and become civically engaged.

Becoming a naturalized citizen does not necessarily obviate participation in the sending society, and immigrants often develop a dual sense of belonging.[17] Wong and Pantoja (2009: 266) have explored the relationship between civic engagement and naturalization among Asians in the United States and have hypothesized that "Asian immigrants who are civically engaged are more likely to become U.S. citizens *ceteris paribus*."[18] However, they conclude from their survey research that "being active in politics of the home country is associated negatively with naturalization" (268). We did not find this to be the case among the Vietnamese and Indians in the DFW region, and we suggest that ethnographic research can help illuminate more nuanced understandings of naturalization and its relationship to civic engagement. Recent studies of citizenship, often informed by ethnographic research, take into account a changing terrain of geographic mobility and mass communication that enhances immigrant groups' continued attachment to their homelands. They describe simultaneous participation in citizenship practices both within and across the borders of nation-states—practices that constitute expressions of transnational identity. Ties to the homeland can enhance immigrant political participation, as has been demonstrated by research on a number of immigrant populations both in the United States and abroad.[19] Although the main focus of our research is not these transnational aspects of civic engagement but rather the practice of citizenship in the United States, we take seriously the role of what anthropologist Lok C. D. Siu (2005) calls the "third space" of diaspora, that is, the space between the past and life in the homeland, and the present and life in the new country.

Refugees and Immigrants, Displacement and Emplacement

Scholars have generally accepted the division between immigrants (such as Indians) as economic migrants seeking a higher standard of living, and refugees (such as the Vietnamese) as those who migrate for political reasons and are compelled to exit their homeland rather than being motivated primarily by the attractions of the new country (Hein 1993). Sociologist Rubén Rumbaut (2006: 277) has noted that "a distinction is often made between refugees and other classes of immigrants [that] revolves around their different motives for migration and the traumatic nature of their flight experiences." Although we agree with his further point (2006: 279) that the distinction between immigrants and refugees along these lines can be simplistic, we also believe it is helpful to remember

the very different "exit motives" to which he refers in his work and that apply to our research participants. There is, moreover, a legal basis for this distinction. According to the U.S. Department of State, a refugee is "a person who has been forced from his or her home and crossed an international border for safety. He or she must have a well-founded fear of persecution in his or her native country, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."[20] Under U.S. law, refugees are a particular type of immigrant—with *immigrant* defined as someone granted "legal permanent residency," usually for the purposes of reuniting with family, seeking work, or avoiding persecution. Although different exit motives for migration may exist, both immigrants and refugees experience forms of displacement and the need to establish modes of belonging in the new land. Although in this book we refer to both first-generation Indians and Vietnamese as "immigrants" for the sake of comparison, we recognize the unique and painful experiences of Vietnamese refugees.[21]

The forms of civic engagement and modes of belonging of the Vietnamese Americans in our study are affected by the historical relationship of the Vietnamese to the United States, including the Vietnam War. The first-generation Vietnamese in the DFW region came as refugees as a direct result of the Vietnam War, which escalated during the 1960s and finally ended in 1975, when the South Vietnamese government collapsed and surrendered to the North. The United States had officially ended its involvement in 1973 by withdrawing all troops, although American personnel remained in South Vietnam until the fall of Saigon in 1975. The war had immediate antecedents in 1954, when the Indochinese War between the French and the Viet Minh ended with the defeat of the French and the demise of French colonial rule in Vietnam. Vietnam was then divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam, with the north heavily influenced by China and communism, and the South influenced by the United States and operating with a democratic government. Many Vietnamese families moved to the South at this time, especially if they had ties to the former colonial rulers and were Catholic. From the perspective of South Vietnam and the United States and its allies, the Vietnam War was fought primarily to prohibit unification of the country under communist rule. Following the Vietnam War, a political unification resulted in the establishment in 1976 of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which still rules the country. This government is not recognized as legitimate by former Vietnamese refugees who fled the country and now live in the United States and elsewhere. The United States and other countries accepted political refugees from South Vietnam starting in 1975 and, as we describe in more detail in Chapter 1, Vietnamese refugees continued to

arrive in significant numbers until the end of the 1990s; the rate has declined to a trickle since then.

No similar geopolitical context or legacy of war defines the relationship between Indian immigrants and the United States. The first immigrants from India were primarily men who came to the United States in the late nineteenth century, largely from the Punjab region in the northwest area of the subcontinent. They had farming backgrounds and found employment in agriculture in California. As did other immigrants of Asian origin in California, they experienced discrimination. Some married Mexican Americans, and their wives and children came to be known as "Mexican Hindus" (Leonard 1997: 39, 42). These early Punjabi immigrants were part of a dispersion of native-born Indians to places as far afield as South Africa, Fiji, and Trinidad during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often in connection with the expansion of the British Empire and the need for manual labor. Although a small number of Indians ventured to the United States after World War II, a true second wave of Indian immigration to the United States began only after 1965, roughly coinciding with the beginnings of Vietnamese immigration.

In this book, we compare two groups that are referred to in much of the literature as being part of a contemporary global "diaspora"—one created as a result of French colonialism and, more recently, by the Vietnam War; the other created by former colonial subjects who now migrate to pursue economic and educational goals. Both groups are reflected in Stéphane Dufoix's observation that "dispersion implies distance, so maintaining or creating connections becomes a major goal in reducing or at least dealing with that distance" (2008: 3). We see the Indians and the Vietnamese as similarly displaced in their new surroundings (even though the forced nature of migration for the Vietnamese is a cogent fact) but also as working toward *emplacement* (a sense of belonging) by constructing complex and fluid identities, forging multiple connections, learning how to become engaged citizens, and hence claiming civic and political presence. In their work on Asian diasporas, Wanni Anderson and Robert G. Lee (2005), inspired by Angelika Bammer's earlier work (1994), suggest that the notion of displacement may be "a productive paradigm for understanding the Asian experience in the Americas" (10). These authors argue that Asian immigrants rely on identity categories that tie them to their homelands, thus expressing an ongoing tension inherent in "the contradiction between laying claim to America and the claims of diaspora" (9). We also see this tension in the ways in which the Indian and Vietnamese participants in this research project talk about their identities.[22]

We must be careful in our assumptions about displacement, exile, and diaspora, however, as Liisa Malkki has pointed out (1995: 511). She suggests (515-516) that modes of emplacement should be considered alongside displacements. Kirin Narayan (2002: 425), writing about South Asian immigrants, observes that emplacement occurs not only through the creation of physical spaces, but also in the imagination—"the orienting of self within multiple frameworks of meaning." In her work on former Yugoslavian refugees in Amsterdam and Rome, Maja Korac (2009) argues that the concept of emplacement helps us understand the experiences of migrants with transnational locations, loyalties, and senses of "home"—experiences that cannot be captured by the idea of assimilation to or integration within one particular nation-state. These ideas about emplacement, applied to the study of both refugees and economic migrants, are, we suggest, fundamental to any consideration of the process by which immigrant newcomers develop a sense of belonging and become engaged citizens.[23]

Communities of Practice, Social Capital, and the Mainstream

Among immigrants, emplacement goes hand in hand with participation in the public sphere. We argue in this book that as social actors with both agency and intention, immigrants are involved in the "cultural production" of the citizen.[24] They actively learn to be civically involved through varying levels of social practice in a wide range of associative contexts. To understand how immigrants develop a sense of belonging and learn forms of civic engagement in their new host country, we employ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's concept (1991) of the "community of practice"—a group with shared ways of doing things and mutual understandings of behavior (including modes of communication). Although *community of practice* is not a new concept and has been applied to various other spheres, we suggest that its implications for the study of immigrants have not yet been sufficiently appreciated.[25]

In developing their analytical model, Lave and Wenger sought to "draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (1991: 29). The emphasis in this approach is on *situated learning*, a process akin to apprenticeship—learning by doing and observing. Stephen Billett (2007) has observed that much of the more recent communities-of-practice literature neglects social agency, despite its central place in Lave and Wenger's book *Situated Learning* (1991). Billett points out that Lave and Wenger stress the relational aspect of communities of practice and that "rather than the individual being pos-

terior to the social practice in which they engage, the relationship is agentic on both sides" (56). This perspective is essential to our own focus on immigrants as social actors in the process of becoming engaged citizens.

Along with the concept of situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) also identify the process of "legitimate peripheral participation" (39). Newcomers, they argue, start from a position of peripherality and then move toward full participation. Access is a crucial element in the process through which one becomes a "full member" of a community of practice, and membership requires "access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (101) By adopting this framework for the study of immigrants and civic engagement, we posit that American civic life itself can be viewed as composed of various localized communities of practice, some composed of immigrants themselves, which may or may not be receptive to newcomers.

Communities of practice related to civic engagement may be located at various levels of sociality, ranging from informal forms of mutual aid to organizations and associations and to more formal political parties. Each individual participates in multiple, and sometimes overlapping or interconnected, communities of practice, which are "homes for identities" (Wenger 1998, 2006). Each community of practice "needs to develop various resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community" (Smith 2003: 3). However, a community of practice does not necessarily require "co-presence, a well-defined identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries," to be identified as such (Lave and Wenger 1991: 98). Rather, the emphasis (for full participants) is placed on shared understandings about the meaning of activities in which members engage.

We suggest that conceptualizing the civic sphere in terms of communities of practice allows for a more dynamic approach to the processes by which newcomers become participatory citizens than does the social capital approach to civic engagement that is commonly associated with the work of Robert D. Putnam.[26] Putnam's work inspired a number of studies that look at immigrant participation in religious assemblies and ethnic organizations, as well as research on the implications of different forms of social capital for political participation.[27] For example, on the basis of their research in Amsterdam, political scientists Meindert Fennema and Jean Tillie (1999) have argued that ethnic voluntary associations create social trust and that this in turn establishes political trust and high rates of participation in the political sphere.[28] The social capital approach (Portes 1998, 2000) tends to focus attention on individual resources and relation-

ships that are accrued (that is, on having high or low social capital, civic skills, and so on) and that assist in achieving specific ends. We suggest that an emphasis on social capital alone tends to overlook the role of social agency and process in civic and political engagement among immigrants. The emphasis on social capital and its relationship to democracy has, moreover, been criticized by those who offer caution about the "dark side" of civic engagement.[29] We argue that although there are certainly cases in which associational life can have a "dark side," and that homogeneous groups can exclude others and thereby work against democracy,[30] voluntary associations are important spheres in which immigrants learn and develop practices of civic participation. An emphasis on social capital neglects questions about how immigrants acquire a sense of "belonging" and the knowledge of how to participate in American civic life that helps them work together to express their presence in the civic sphere. A community-of-practice framework directs attention to these processes of learning and collaboration.

Our attention to the relationship between civic engagement and emplacement is related to questions about what constitutes immigrant political incorporation and what constitutes "the mainstream" in relation to which immigrants are often positioned (and sometimes describe themselves) as "marginal." The idea of moving toward the center of civic life through communities of practice prompts the question, What are immigrants moving toward? Is it the mainstream? In a discussion of what they call "Arab Detroit," Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock (2000: 16) write that the Arab population in Detroit exists within both the margins and the mainstream, suggesting that these terms reflect "overlapping imaginative zones." These authors argue that Arabs "enter the American mainstream whenever they represent or think of themselves in relation to a larger, non-Arab society" (16). Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003: 12) take a somewhat different approach, one that seeks to describe the mainstream not as an imaginative zone but rather as "that part of the society within which ethnic and racial origins have at most minor impacts on life chances or opportunities." These authors propose that the mainstream has changed in recent years, and that it is no longer to be viewed primarily as "middle class" but instead also "contains a working class and even some who are poor" (12). Despite their efforts, and despite their new view of assimilation as a workable concept that can now include a group's "visible point of reference on the social landscape, embodied in an ethnic culture, neighborhood, and institutional structures" (11), the concept of mainstream remains shrouded in normative views of a Euro-American middle class that are used by the general public, so we do not wish to use it analytically here.[31]

We do not therefore argue that Indians and Vietnamese are moving toward

the mainstream, but we *are* interested in the ways in which they talk about doing so. In fact, our Indian research participants evoked this concept quite often during conversations and interviews. In our view, the important research question is not whether people are entering a mainstream, but what they think the mainstream might be and how they feel they can (or cannot) belong to it. We believe that Abraham and Shryock's casting of margin and mainstream as "imaginative zones" is a highly productive way of looking at how immigrants might see their emplacements and displacements. Learning to talk about American society in terms of having a mainstream signals participation in the community of practice that is civic life, and learning the modes of discourse available within it. Becoming civically engaged is not about "assimilation" in order to move from the margins to a mainstream, but rather is a movement from peripheries to centers in various communities of practice that make up the civic sphere.[32]

Formal Political Participation

Although the major focus of this book is on less formal modes of civic participation, we argue that it is also through participation in communities of practice that immigrants enter the public sphere as political actors. In other words, there is a link between informal and formal participation, and both of these modes constitute civic engagement. The community-of-practice model captures the transition from a peripheral to a more central position through processes of situated learning. We argue that people can acquire civic skills through participation in communities of practice such as ethnic associations and then transfer those skills to more formal political spheres. Here we outline some of the major contours of the growing formal political participation of Indians and Vietnamese in the United States, a topic to which we return in our concluding chapter.

Among South Asians there is certainly evidence of early forms of political mobilization in order to respond to specific cases of discrimination or violence—for example, against "dotbuster" gangs in New Jersey (Leonard 1997). Padma Rangaswamy (2000: 291) has identified three types of politically inclined immigrants active in the Indian community in Chicago in the 1990s: those who promoted greater involvement in homeland politics, those who promoted more involvement in local U.S. politics and becoming part of mainstream America, and those who supported both kinds of activities. None of these groups, she suggests, had the support, or for that matter the attention, of the entire community, and few Indians were involved in local politics during the 1990s. She attributes what she calls "disunity and apathy toward political issues" to the small impact they would have, given their numbers locally and the difficulties of

building pan-Asian coalitions (Rangaswamy 2000: 293), but she also acknowledges that with the growth of this community, and as job discrimination, restrictive immigration laws, and more racial attacks have emerged, they have begun to "wake up." A similar disinterest in American political life was reported for New York City Indian immigrants until the late 1990s, when they began to participate more in presidential elections. At that time, *India Abroad*, a New York-based national newspaper for Indians in the United States, founded the India Abroad Center for Political Awareness and opened a Washington, D.C., office (Khandelwal 2002). But Indian involvement in local politics was minimal and offered a striking contrast to other Asian groups (such as Chinese and Koreans) whose levels of local participation were greater.

Although these early studies of Indian communities in different U.S. cities stress a low or barely emerging political profile, it is safe to say that during the first decade of the twenty-first century, while our research was being conducted, this situation had begun to change.[33] At the 2008 Democratic Convention, the Indian American Leadership Initiative, a Washington-based organization, sponsored a cocktail reception to which it invited leading Indian lawmakers from around the country, including six individuals (some first and some second generation) who were serving in state legislatures (Raj Goyle of Kansas, Updendra Chivukula of New Jersey, Jay Goyal of Ohio, Kumar Barve of Maryland, Satveer Chaudhary of Minnesota, and Swati Dandekar of Iowa). On the Republican side, Bobby Jindal, governor of Louisiana, was on John McCain's short list for vice president. Indians in the United States were active in fundraising during the 2007 and 2008 primaries and continued into the fall 2008 election season; and on November 4, 2008, nine of the fifteen Indian Americans who ran for various state and local offices won their races ("Indian Americans Score" 2008). Pollsters reported the largest Indian American turnout ever for a U.S. election (Sohrabji and Springer 2008). Several Indian Americans were involved in the Obama transition team, including Nick Rathod, who was appointed director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and Parag Mehta, who was selected to oversee the affairs of minority groups as deputy director of the same office.[34] Traditionally, Indians in the United States have been affiliated with the Democratic Party, but with their increasing success there has been some gravitation to the Republican side. Some of this, observers note, has resulted from the positive policies toward India fostered by the Bush administration, including the proposed nuclear arms deal. The importance of both parties is evident in South Carolina state legislator and Republican Nikki Randhawa Haley's election as governor of that state in 2010, and Democratic state representative and majority whip Jay Goyal's

identification as a serious candidate for lieutenant governor of Ohio. In June of 2010, the Associated Press ran an article with the headline "Record Number of Indian Americans Seeking Office" (Washington 2010). In the summer of 2010 there were six Indian Americans from across the country running for the U.S. Congress. One of these was Ami Bera, a second-generation Indian whose parents came to the United States in the 1950s and who had a career as a physician and educator before entering politics to run against Republican Dan Lungren in the third congressional district in California.

In comparison with Indians, Vietnamese have participated less in formal spheres of domestic politics in the United States. This difference has generally been attributed to their recent arrival and their ongoing engagement with homeland politics.[35] There has, however, been increased participation among the younger generations. Divisions within the Vietnamese population, such as conflicts between the more "traditional" political activists who are focused on homeland politics and anticommunism and those who are more "Americanized" and focused on domestic issues (Hein 1995), also play a role. Among the arenas identified by Jeremy Hein (1995) as those in which Vietnamese American leaders have became politically engaged after arriving in the United States are mutual assistance associations (MAAs); grassroots, mainstream, and international political arenas; and legal disputes and courts. Examples of Vietnamese political activity cited by Hein range from protests against political repression in Vietnam to activism aimed at establishing a separate Vietnamese Catholic parish in San Jose, to court challenges and housing discrimination. Vietnamese student organizations at universities and colleges have served as other significant arenas for the development of political engagement (Do 1999).[36] As early as 1987, Esther Ngan-Lin Chow (1987: 290) reported that there was a "Vietnamese Women Association" in the United States that worked to "maximize the participation of Asian American women in the larger society." These earlier studies draw attention to the growing political participation of the Vietnamese not only in homeland politics but also in domestic politics. Recent survey research in Orange County, California, suggests that a "protest to politics" model is useful in understanding Vietnamese American civic participation. Collet and Furuya (2005: 1) report that "taking part in a protest increases the likelihood of voting and that interest in, and active engagement with, the homeland contributes to both modes of participation." Their work suggests that the first generation's interest in homeland politics can help it and subsequent generations become more civically engaged overall.

Vietnamese Americans have started to participate at high levels in the U.S. government. Most notably, Viet Dinh, who served as an assistant attorney gen-

eral in the Bush administration, was the primary author of the Patriot Act. A former refugee, H. B. Le is now serving as the first Vietnamese American naval commander.[37] Vietnamese American Linh Nguyen, who served as a team leader in government operations, was among several Asian Americans on the Obama transition team.[38] The growing political clout of Vietnamese Americans is particularly evident in California, where the largest concentration of this population resides. For example, in Orange County there are now ten Vietnamese American elected officials, and 40 percent of all registered voters in the city of Westminster are Vietnamese Americans. Tony Lam became the first Vietnamese American elected official in the United States when he was elected to the Westminster City Council in 1992 (Tran 2008). Vietnamese in Louisiana and Texas are also demonstrating new political participation in a wider arena. In 2008, a Vietnamese American born in Vietnam and raised in Louisiana, Republican Anh (Joseph) Cao, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.[39] And Democrat Hubert Vo, mentioned earlier and also born in Vietnam, serves in the Texas House of Representatives. Vietnamese Americans are frequently affiliated with the Republican Party because of their strong anticommunist stance, but this can vary.[40] In California, there are significant regional differences, with more Vietnamese registered Republican in southern California and more registered Democrat in San Francisco (Ong and Lee 2001: 162). In a recent survey, 22 percent of Vietnamese claimed Democratic affiliation—the lowest percentage among Asian ethnic groups surveyed (Junn et al. 2008). However, many (49 percent) claimed independent or nonpartisan status.

Within both the Indian and Vietnamese immigrant populations there is evidence that the second generation in particular is beginning to participate more directly in the political process. In some cases, political candidacies have energized local communities (including those outside the relevant state), and if they have not generated monetary support, they have at least generated pride. Such pride can in turn enhance the forms of participatory citizenship that we explore in this book in the context of local communities of practice. As we demonstrate in Chapters 5 and 6, those who have succeeded in the more formal public political sphere are sometimes showcased in the activities of organizations that emphasize the practice of citizenship in a more informal civic sphere.

Research Methods

We employed three types of ethnographic research in this project: (1) contextual research on the cultural landscapes of the two immigrant groups, (2) participant-observation research, and (3) semi-structured interviews. Our

contextual research included demographic and historical background research on Vietnamese and Indians in the United States and the DFW region. We also mapped the commercial centers, religious institutions, and other public places where our two populations tended to gather. In addition, we documented the breadth of media outlets and their role in the community.

Over the three years of our research, between 2005 and 2008, we conducted many hours of participant observation at a variety of community events (voluntary association meetings, fundraising and other banquets, ethnic festivals, religious ceremonies, youth group meetings, political protests, and so on). Informal discussions with members of voluntary associations, including religious assemblies, occurred throughout the duration of the research project. Such discussions often took place at people's homes before and after more formal interviews, or because we were included in some family or community event. Our involvement with young adults of the second generation of each of these groups on university campuses also meant that we interacted with these individuals in more informal contexts—in coffee shops and before and after events in which they were involved.

Doing fieldwork in regions characterized by suburban sprawl is challenging and often required us to be in many locations during the course of any given week. DFW is replete with highways connecting scattered cities, and our research involved a great deal of driving, or "car fieldwork," as we traveled across the region to attend events or meet with interviewees. Our commitment to participant observation required this approach but also offered a wealth of opportunities to engage in informal ways with members of the research populations. We certainly also took advantage of the unexpected as it occurred—for example, Reed-Danahay tracked a controversy involving the display of the Vietnamese flag on a university campus, and attended a press conference organized by the Vietnamese community regarding a racially charged incident involving a Vietnamese police recruit in one inner-ring suburb; and Brettell participated in two fundraisers for political candidates held at the homes of local Indian families. Much of what we observed during the course of our fieldwork could not make it into the book, but it informed our understanding of the issues we discuss.

We conducted three types of semi-structured interviews but did not begin these until we had done preliminary fieldwork and established contacts within the two immigrant populations. We also wanted to make sure that we were formulating questions that would make sense to our two groups. Different sets of questions were developed for (1) one-on-one interviews with community leaders and media professionals, (2) group interviews with college students, and

(3) one-on-one interviews with parents of high school- and college-age children. We conducted these interviews in phases. We began interviewing community leaders early in our research, and continued this throughout the project as we identified research participants. We met with and interviewed not only various leaders in the Indian and Vietnamese communities, but also community leaders from other ethnic groups who interacted with at least one of our groups. In these interviews, we sought to elicit details on the mechanisms by which people learned the skills necessary for leadership, their attitudes toward civic participation in the United States (including pan-Asian activities), and their senses of ethnic identity. We also asked background questions about religious participation, education, migration history, and so on. A range of professionals involved in ethnic media were also interviewed (including publishers, editors, and journalists, in print media as well as radio and TV).

Our group interviews on two university campuses (one public and one private) were conducted in spring 2006. We solicited participants for these interviews both through broad campus networks we had established among these groups during initial fieldwork, and through the Asian, Vietnamese, and Indian student associations on these campuses. Each group interview was composed of between five and ten students, both male and female. In these interviews, our questions were intended to elicit college students' views on and experiences with civic engagement and ethnic identity. All the interviews were tape-recorded and anonymous (each participant chose a pseudonym). Three group interviews (two with Vietnamese, one with Indians) were conducted at a major public university in the area, and four (three with Indians, one with Vietnamese) were conducted at a major private institution. Each of these interviews was conducted by one of us, using a script of questions that we developed together and with the help of a research assistant who took notes and managed the tape recorder. In addition, at the private institution, two additional interviews were conducted with the leaders of the Indian Student Association. At the public institution, a short questionnaire that probed similar issues was distributed to members of the Vietnamese Student Association. The student leaders of the Vietnamese and Asian student associations at the public institution were interviewed separately and not in a group format, and issues similar to those addressed in other leader interviews were explored.

A third set of interviews was conducted among parents of high school- and college-age youth who were in midlife and raising families. We did not begin the parent interviews until spring 2007, permitting a long period of ethnographic research before we formulated the questions for those interviews. We

conducted them with thirty-four first-generation Indian parents and thirty-three first-generation Vietnamese parents.[41] We attempted to select a broad and representative range of individuals through networking and multiple-entry techniques. Because we waited to get a better sense of the overall demographic characteristics of our two research populations before we began to solicit interview participants, we were mindful of creating a balanced group, including both males and females across the range of religious backgrounds that characterize the Indian and Vietnamese immigrant populations. These interviews elicited general demographic details about the families and their migration histories. We also asked questions about political behavior, civic engagement, citizenship, education, and religious participation. In addition, we explored questions of ethnic identity. The questions were translated into Vietnamese for use when those interviewed did not speak English or were not fluent in English.

In our interviews with parents, as well as in those with community leaders and college students, we were particularly sensitive to personal narratives or life stories that touched on ethnic identity and civic engagement, and many of these narratives are incorporated into the chapters of this book. Our interviews complement the materials we collected through participant observation and background research, providing the voices of our participants and a sense of their agency in learning forms of civic engagement as immigrants or as the children of immigrants living in the United States. Where we have included these narratives and other references to particular individuals, we use pseudonyms rather than real names. We do this to protect the privacy and anonymity of our research participants. Some minor details of personal characteristics were also altered. None of these changes affect information about the socioeconomic status of the person, and no changes were made to directly quoted material. When we refer to public figures from our two populations, we use their real names.

Organization of the Book

In this book we juxtapose details and observations about Indians and Vietnamese in order to bring into focus the commonalities that cut across these two populations. We weave personal stories of individual immigrants into our observations in order to convey their experiences. In Chapter 1 we set the stage for the chapters to follow by providing an overview of Indians and Vietnamese in the DFW region—the circumstances under which they arrived and settled there, and the cultural landscapes they have created and in which they dwell. In Chapter 2 we explore the fluid and situational aspects of ethnic identity as well as what they mean for understanding the cultural dimensions of civic engagement.

We draw on our interviews with parents and with college students in order to unpack the meaning of citizenship and the expressions of identity articulated by those of the first and second generations.

Starting with Chapter 3, we draw increasingly on our participant-observation research and turn to the specific communities of practice in which immigrants learn about and engage in participatory forms of citizenship in the United States. We begin by focusing on the religious assemblies—temples, mosques, and churches—that are attended by our two populations, and on the modes of engagement fostered by these institutions. In Chapter 4 we turn to Indian and Vietnamese ethnic associations in order to discuss the ways they form important communities of practice and the ways in which they may differ from one another according to their emphases on local, national, or transnational engagement and mobilization. We highlight the personal narratives of men and women in both groups who have taken leadership roles in these ethnic associations.

In Chapter 5 we turn to a realm that has received scant attention in the literature on contemporary immigration. Here we draw on ethnographic research conducted at festivals and banquets in order to address how each of these contexts provides opportunities for immigrants to acquire civic knowledge and civic skills, as well as opportunities for them to claim a place as participatory citizens in the public sphere. These claims are often implicit but sometimes explicit. In these contexts, Indians and Vietnamese, young people and adults, express their sense of belonging and their desire to participate as members of American society. Although we begin to address pan-Asian contexts for civic engagement in Chapter 5, these are explored more fully in Chapter 6, which also addresses broader arenas of sociality and more formal contexts in which leadership skills are learned as part of teaching curricula. We also share the stories of four immigrants who became civically engaged on a pathway from ethnic to pan-ethnic or through involvement that extends beyond ethnic affiliation.

In our concluding chapter we review the importance of the community-of-practice model to an understanding of processes of civic and political incorporation, as well as the various dimensions of civic engagement that inform our analysis and extend the understanding of participatory citizenship beyond formal naturalization and electoral participation. We end the book with a look toward the future. We consider the implications of our research for scholarship on these two groups and for understanding their modes of belonging and of becoming "American."