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How is the political participation of Asian immigrant communities portrayed by local mainstream media? How does coverage vary over time, by immigrant group, and by host country? This article examines the civic presence of Indian and Vietnamese immigrants in Boston, San Jose, Toronto, and Vancouver from 1985 to 2005. We measure civic presence using a database of 224 articles from the primary newspaper of record in each city, representing a 10% random sample of all articles covering the political participation of these groups. We find that both the frequency and tone of mainstream news coverage vary based on a combination of group-level characteristics and national reception contexts, such that the civic presence of Asian-origin immigrant communities differs significantly between national-origin groups, and for the same group across countries. These findings point to the need for more heterogeneous approaches to the study of "Asian" minority politics in North America.

Keywords: Asian; Vietnamese; Indian; politics; immigration; media; minority representation; participation; United States; Canada

Introduction

The public turns to the media to discover who is participating in politics and how. In this article, we argue that researchers should pay attention to the visibility of immigrant-origin communities in the local mainstream media. Media narratives about the political engagement of particular groups can provide a useful measure of that group's "civic presence" in the eyes of the general public (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008). Existing studies of immigrants and the media often suffer from a positive selection bias: they analyze the portrayal of groups that are present in media coverage. An equally important, but understudied topic, is *lack* of coverage. Just as decision-makers may ignore groups that do not vote, they may not pay attention to groups that are rendered invisible in the media, or that are portrayed as foreign non-participants in politics, irrespective of actual participation. Recent research suggests that a lack of civic presence can shut immigrant groups out of urban planning, marginalize them in local decision-making, and hurt their ability to access municipal social service grants (de Graauw, Gleeson, and Bloemraad 2013; Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005; Winders 2012).

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Beyond level of coverage, we also examine the media narratives, or political stories, told about particular immigrant-origin groups. Past research on media portrayals of minorities has illuminated racism, nativism, or Islamophobia by classifying the tone of coverage as positive, negative, or neutral (Bleich et al. 2015; Chavez 2001; Fleras 2011; Santa Ana 2013; Tolley 2015). We instead draw on Iyengar's (1994) distinction between episodic and thematic media frames to consider the overall political narrative sketched out in the media. Thus, we do not measure groups' actual levels of political participation. Rather, we evaluate how the mainstream media portrays it. Is the coverage of a group's political participation episodic, portrayed as isolated acts of engagement? Or do successive stories create a thematic narrative about the political behavior of a community?

We are interested in how coverage of political engagement varies among immigrant groups and across geographic locations. Our study consequently investigates the political stories told about the Vietnamese-origin and Indian-origin communities in four metro areas in the US and Canada: Boston, San Jose, Toronto, and Vancouver. We examine the frequency and tone of political reporting on these two groups over a 21-year period (1985–2005), paying attention to whether political engagement is portrayed as episodic or as a thematic narrative. We examine whether engagement is portrayed as legitimate, and how the immigrant group's story fits into broader narratives about how political empowerment occurs in the US and Canada.

In studying two Asian-origin communities, we broaden the literature on immigrants and the media, which in the US has focused predominantly on Latinos. We also speak to a lively debate about whether a minority politics framework based largely on the African-American experience can be applied to more heterogeneous groups of racialized minorities (e.g., Jones-Correa and Leal 1996; Kim 1999; Lee 2008; Lien 2001). The question is particularly germane for immigrants from Asia, who have multiple origins, languages, and religions, as well as other lines of potential cleavage (Tam 1995; Wong et al. 2011).

Our analysis is attentive to how group-level characteristics, especially mode of immigrant entry and perceived socio-economic status, shape narratives of either political agency or helplessness. We pay attention to the influence of immigration status beyond the prevalent illegal/legal dichotomy by studying a largely refugee group (Vietnamese) and one composed predominantly of economic and family-sponsored migrants (Indians). Our cross-national comparison allows us to investigate the ways in which group characteristics interact with political systems and country-specific discursive opportunity structures (Koopmans et al. 2005) to produce variation in the portrayal of immigrant communities.

Perhaps surprisingly, we found that the relatively high socio-economic background and predominantly documented status of Indian-origin residents in the US did not translate into a strong political narrative in the cities we studied. Instead, we observed only episodic reporting. In contrast, the coverage of the Vietnamese-American community followed a thematic arc based on a traditional story of ethnic politics and the American Dream. Vietnamese immigrants were portrayed as refugees undergoing a legitimate transition from homeland to domestic politics in part through the use of contentious protest. In contrast, we found no such coverage of the Canadian Vietnamese community, perhaps a function of Canada's weaker Cold War engagement and the lower salience of "dream" narratives. The lack of a Canadian equivalent to the US civil rights history and protest narrative might also be at play. The portrayal of Indo-Canadians evidenced yet another contrast, both with the coverage of Vietnamese Canadians and with the coverage of Indian Americans. Indo-Canadians were reported on with great frequency using a narrative about participation in electoral politics. We speculate that structural differences such as greater party competition and voter volatility in Canadian politics, combined with a critical mass of citizens in the Indian-origin community, might help explain the media coverage of Indo-Canadians as potential political power players.

Taken together, these findings raise questions about the utility of a homogeneous "Asian American" framework for understanding media portrayals and the civic presence of Asian-origin immigrant groups in the US or in Canada. They also show how group portrayals are rhetorically embedded in particular national narratives and structures, producing distinct political stories about the same minority group in different countries.

Media representations of minority political participation

Scholars have long demonstrated the importance of the media in setting political agendas, shaping representations of groups or topics, and highlighting certain interests over others (e.g., Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Hopkins 2010; Koopmans et al. 2005; McCombs 2004; Merolla, Ramakrishnan, and Haynes 2012). As Bleich, Bloemraad, and de Graauw (2015) outline in a recent review, the media is simultaneously a source of information, an institution that generates representations of groups or issues, and a public sphere within which minorities can engage. Our concern is how media narratives represent the political engagement of particular groups and shape their "civic presence" (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008). Even when it reports the news, media coverage filters reality, using particular frames, metaphors, and narratives. For example, American media researchers have found significant evidence of racialization, such as the black "welfare queens" trope (Gilens 2001; Hancock 2004) or differential reporting of black versus white members of Congress (Zilber and Niven 2000). Canadian studies have concluded that media depictions often equate racial minorities with violence, danger, and criminality (Bauder 2008; Fleras 2011; Henry and Tator 2002; Indra 1979).

We build on prior studies by considering not only the quantity and tone of media stories, but also the broader political narratives that the media communicate. To do so, we draw on Iyengar's distinction between episodic and thematic media frames, which he argues have a powerful effect on public perceptions of politics (1994, 13). Episodic framing is oriented around seemingly isolated events; thematic framing contextualizes issues or events with information about actions or the broader structural forces behind them (Iyengar 1994, 2–3). Since Iyengar focuses on large social and political issues such as crime, poverty, and terrorism, we modify his approach to study the political stories told about immigrant-origin groups. We do not consider media stories as stand-alone examples of a group's portrayal in the public sphere. Rather, we ask whether they form part of a longer term narrative, and if so, what that narrative suggests.

Media distortions are particularly salient for immigrant communities, as the general public may not have much knowledge of or interaction with them. When the media cover a community's political engagement sporadically or not at all, immigrant-origin groups can be rendered invisible to the broader public. Negative portrayals can prime the public to delegitimize their political engagement (Chavez 2001; Indra 1979; Santa Ana 2013; Tolley 2015). Alternatively, a thematic arc from new arrivals to engaged citizens can frame the coverage of a group and portray it as a legitimate political force.

Studies of immigrant-origin minorities in the US reveal that media often depict Latinos as foreign invaders (Chavez 2001; Santa Ana 2013) and Asian Americans as foreign, apolitical, and not fully citizens (Chang 2001a, 24–25; Ono and Pham 2009; Volpp 2001). Along these lines, we might expect to find portrayals of Asian-origin immigrant communities as a coherent racialized minority. While such homogenized portrayals can frame Asian-origin people as a "model minority," especially around educational and economic success, such discourses can also render Asian Americans a "forever" or "perpetual foreigner" group, delegitimizing participation in politics or acts of citizenship (Kim 1999; Lee, Wong, and Alvarez 2009; Park 2008; Tuan 1998; Volpp 2001; Xu and Lee 2013). Many studies of Asian American political behavior

treat the group as a unit, at times for theoretical reasons, but also because of survey data limitations (Chang 2001b; Cho 1999; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Lai 2011; Lien 2001).

Recent scholarship has, however, begun to question and complicate the concept of an "Asian American" politics. Lee argues that an "expectation of a preordained identity-to-politics link can potentially distort our understanding of race and ethnicity, especially when taken as prior to, rather than subject to, empirical study" (2008, 461). Quantitative studies show that different national-origin groups within the "Asian American" category engage in different patterns of political participation (Wong et al. 2011; see also Tam 1995). Recent qualitative work has found that some Asian American groups have been more successful at constructing group-based politics than others, given domestic and transnational contexts (Chung, Bloemraad, and Tejada-Peña 2013). Similarly, Aptekar (2009) illustrated how mainstream whites celebrate one Asian-origin community's political acquiescence as a model minority's focus on education while denigrating another group's activism as acting (too) black.

We take inspiration from work emphasizing the multiplicity and complexity of Asian American group construction, and we use the media as a lens on it. A US–Canada comparison is compelling in this regard, because the concept of pan-ethnic Asian politics does not translate easily to the Canadian context, where the focus is instead on national-origin, ethnicity, or religious communities (Bloemraad 2006; Harles 1997; Satzewich and Liodakis 2013; Wallis and Fleras 2009). Rather, our cross-national comparison reveals that mode of migrant entry and socio-economic status are significant factors for understanding variation in coverage between Asian immigrant-origin groups.

Beyond these factors, we posit that group-based differences are embedded in what Koopmans et al. (2005, 6) call a nation's "discursive opportunity structure," the political culture and national identity of a country that privileges particular discourses over others. Media coverage can exaggerate small differences when it uses explanatory frameworks driven by distinct national narratives. For example, Abu-Laban and Garber (2005) show that while geographic settlement patterns do not differ significantly between immigrants in the US and Canada, American media tend to describe these patterns as a natural result of individual economic choices, while the Canadian media discuss settlement as a matter of governance, reflecting a more statist orientation.

Political tropes can also vary across nations. In the US African-American struggles for political inclusion provide a particular narrative of a group with second-class citizenship shut out of politics, one that successfully forced change through collective struggle and mobilization. The US immigrant rights movement has explicitly drawn on these narratives and tactics of the civil rights movement, including organizing immigrant workers freedom rides in 2003. Such a narrative, absent in Canada, might influence thematic representations of contemporary immigrant groups, and affect the significance attached to political protest relative to electoral participation. Perhaps surprisingly, while there is some evidence of a modest spillover from the US of an Asian "model minority" discourse around educational success and family cohesion (e.g., Findlay and Köhler 2010; Pon 2000), we did not find evidence of this discourse in media coverage of politics in either country.

Ultimately, we suggest that media coverage and civic presence can be best understood by employing an embedded context-of-reception framework that examines the interplay between groups' mode of migrant entry and national discursive opportunity structures (Bloemraad, de Graauw, and Hamlin 2015). Our comparison of media portrayals of Asian-origin political engagement across two national contexts illustrates the utility of this framework.

A portrait of two Asian immigrant groups

Indian and Vietnamese immigrants to North America both hail from Asia, but there are many important differences between the groups.[1] In both the US and Canada, residents of Indian

origin are more likely to be highly educated, enjoy high incomes, and speak English better relative to those of Vietnamese origin, even though Indians have a greater proportion of recent arrivals, especially in the US (Lindsay 2007a, 2007b; Rkasnuam and Batalova 2014; Zong and Batalova 2015). Higher levels of education and language proficiency can ease naturalization, but Indians' newcomer status, and for some, lack of permanent residency, explain why only 49% have become US citizens, compared to 76% of Vietnamese immigrants (Wong et al. 2011, 53, 55). In Canada, both Indian and Vietnamese immigrants have higher levels of citizenship acquisition, 73% and 85%, respectively. This difference reflects the high naturalization rates in Canada more generally, and the fact that until recently immigrants to Canada usually entered with permanent resident status rather than temporary visas (Bloemraad 2006, 38–39; Janowski 2010).

Indian migration has a longer history, beginning with Punjabi Sikhs arriving on the West Coast of North America around the turn of the twentieth century (Basran and Bolaria 2003; Leonard 1997). Numbers were limited, however, as Canada and the US introduced restrictions on South Asian migration in 1908 and 1917, respectively. After these policies were reversed in the 1960s, the number of migrants from India grew dramatically and diversified to include a wider range of sub-national ethnic and religious groups and socio-economic statuses. In the last 20 years, Indian migration to the US has become predominantly high-skilled via the use of H1-B visas as a pathway to permanent residency (Zong and Batalova 2015). In Canada, the country's economic selection system has privileged the immigration of highly educated Indians since the 1970s, but has also allowed family sponsorship of migrants with more modest backgrounds (Lindsay 2007a). As a result, Indo-Canadians are a more socio-economically diverse group than Indo-Americans.

Vietnamese migration is more recent, beginning when communist North Vietnamese forces took over South Vietnam in 1975. During the first wave of Vietnamese refugees in 1975–1976, about 130,000 resettled in the US and 7800 in Canada (Dorais 2000; Kelly 1977). Between 1979 and 1982, the US took in an additional 450,000 Vietnamese refugees and Canada 60,000 (Hawkins 1991, 184; Hein 1993, 90). Vietnamese refugees continued to be resettled through the mid-1980s, and tens of thousands more entered the US in the 1990s through the Humanitarian Operation Program, as the Vietnamese government allowed the orderly departure of former political detainees (Bloemraad 2006; Richard and Dorais 2003). More recently, Vietnamese migration has continued steadily, aided by the sponsorship of family members already resettled in North America (Rkasnuam and Batalova 2014).

Despite different migration timelines, the number of Vietnamese and Indian migrants living in the US converged by 2000, totaling about one million each. By 2001, Canada had received just over 150,000 Vietnamese and 320,000 Indian immigrants (Bloemraad 2006). As a result of replenished migration, both groups remain overwhelmingly foreign-born: in the US, 93% of Indian-origin people and 89% of those of Vietnamese origin are immigrants (Wong et al. 2011, 61). In Canada, around 70% of both groups are foreign-born (Statistics Canada 2003, 10–11).

We argue that the two groups' dominant migration pathways to North America generated a distinctive media framing of each community. Refugee entry suggests a narrative of a group requiring sympathy and overcoming struggle (Bauder 2008; Chavez 2001). In the US, such a framing is further influenced by the long-standing relationship between refugee policy and Cold War foreign relations (Hamlin 2012). Thus, unlike some research showing negative portrayals of refugees or "false" asylum-seekers in Canada or Europe (Bauder 2008), Vietnamese in the US are better understood through the lens of "allied aliens," which Hein defines as "foreigners who are the responsibility of an interventionist state as a result of foreign policy defeats" (1993, xi). The predominantly high-skilled background of the Indian community in the US, a substantial proportion of which initially migrate via temporary student or high-skilled visa categories, provides a frame of the wealthy, short-term resident. Such a discourse

is less available in Canada since that country, until recently, had more limited temporary visa pathways to permanent residence; most migrants "landed" with permanent immigrant status.

Data and methods

This analysis draws on our Civic Visibility Media Database, a set of 1205 newspaper articles representing a 10% random sample of all articles mentioning the Vietnamese- and Indian-origin communities published between 1985 and 2005 in the major mainstream newspaper for metro Boston, San Jose, Toronto, and Vancouver.[2] Each city has multiple media outlets, including other English-language newspapers, radio, television, and ethnic and foreign-language media. However, we purposely focus on the primary regional newspaper of record – the *Boston Globe*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Toronto Star*, and *Vancouver Sun*. Our choice is partly shaped by data constraints: full archives of print media are more available than radio transcripts or TV tapes. More importantly, our concern is to capture the dominant, mainstream media narrative for each city, to get a sense of what a typical reader might learn about the Vietnamese or Indian communities. Newspapers often drive reporting agendas for other media (Benson 2013) and some research suggests that they are better than TV and online publications at raising the public's awareness about a range of issues, certainly during the time period of our study (Schoenbach, de Waal, and Lauf 2005). Newspapers consequently offer a superior way to understand media narratives and the civic presence of each immigrant-origin group.

We focus on the 1985–2005 period as it predates the decline in print-based journalism connected to the rise of internet news and social media.[3] Our time period also comes after Vietnamese and Indian immigrants had established a significant numerical presence in each city, though not necessarily a political presence in the form of ethnic representation, as Table 1 outlines.

This article presents a qualitative content analysis of the subset of articles in our database that are focused on politics. During our coding process, we assigned each article a primary and secondary topic code.[4] Articles given the topical code of politics included any discussion of elections, voting, campaigns, parties, candidates, protests, boycotts, marches, policy, legislation, lobbying, advocacy, implementation, rule-making, foreign affairs, immigration, citizenship and naturalization, or attention by political actors to the group in question. Two hundred and twenty-four articles, or 18.5% of the total database, received either a primary or secondary code relating to politics.

Table 2 shows that the amount of coverage this topic received varied widely by newspaper and national-origin group. In prior work, we used our complete database to demonstrate that intergroup variation in newspaper coverage is not driven by immigrants' demographic presence in

Table 1. Population share and political presence of Vietnamese- and Indian-origin residents, metro areas (2000/2001).

	Vietnamese origin		Indian origin	
	% of metro population	Political presence	% of metro population	Political presence
Boston	0.6	None	0.9	None
San Jose	6.4	Incipient	4.2	None
Toronto	0.7	None	6.0	Moderate
Vancouver	0.9	None	6.2	High

Sources: Population percentages compiled by authors using 2000 US Census and 2001 Census Canada data; political presence compiled by authors based on Bloemraad (2008) and public data on the ethnicity of local, state/provincial, and national elected officials.

Table 2.   Newspaper articles on politics and the Vietnamese- and Indian-origin communities, 1985–2005.

	Vietnamese origin		Indian origin	
	No. of "politics" articles	% of all articles	No. of "politics" articles	% of all articles
Boston Globe	15	13.6	4	12.9
San Jose Mercury News	70	28.0	21	16.9
Toronto Star	6	12.7	53	18.9
Vancouver Sun	1	3.5	54	16.1
Total	92		132	

Source: Civic Visibility Media Database (compiled by authors). $N = 224$.

the regional population (Bloemraad, de Graauw, and Hamlin 2015). The size of a national-origin group, whether measured in absolute or percentage terms, does not correlate with the total newspaper coverage the group receives. The same is largely true if we consider only those articles focused on politics. Groups accounting for less than 1% of the metro population (Indians and Vietnamese in Boston, Vietnamese in Toronto and Vancouver) were covered less frequently, but we still see a range from 1 to 15 stories during the 1985–2005 period. Groups with over 4% of the metro population (Vietnamese and Indians in San Jose, Indians in Toronto and Vancouver) were covered more frequently, but numbers ranged from 21 to 70 stories about politics between 1985 and 2005. Given our 1-in-10 sample, this variation translates into a difference of hundreds of articles across the study period, even for groups of similar size in their metro areas.

Table 2 shows that levels of political reporting were relatively similar across the four metro areas for those of Indian origin, ranging from 13% to 19%. However, for articles covering the Vietnamese, the focus on politics varied from under 4% to 28%. The larger number of articles on Indo-Canadians in both Toronto and Vancouver, and for Vietnamese Americans in San Jose, allowed us to conduct in-depth qualitative analysis of media coverage for these three cases. The cases with less coverage also provide a window into the limited information that news consumers receive about those groups' engagement in politics. As we argue below, these differences stem partly from aggregate group-level generalizations and partly from distinct modes of immigrant incorporation in the US and Canada.

Vietnamese Americans: allied aliens en route to citizenship

Vietnamese Americans have a high level of civic presence in the local mainstream newspapers we considered. Additionally, a regular reader of the *San Jose Mercury News* during the 21-year period of our study would have been exposed to a clear narrative arc about the local Vietnamese-origin community. The paper portrayed the Vietnamese as initially focused on home-country politics, eventually triumphing over adversity to become important players in local politics. Articles focused on politics were frequent, making up 25% of the overall sample, second only to the topic "culture and religion," with 26%.[5] Throughout the period, the tone of *Mercury News* political reporting presented an overwhelmingly sympathetic and positive image of the Vietnamese community, portraying them as allied aliens to whom the US owed support, and in many cases, emphasizing their Christianity (Watanabe 1989). Vietnamese Americans' political participation, whether through the electoral system or protest politics, was portrayed as an appreciation of freedom, not as a threat.

A major theme over the years was the issue of party affiliation and voter turnout. When large numbers of Vietnamese first settled in San Jose in the mid-1980s, they were featured in multiple

stories about how best to reach and engage them politically. The executive director of the Republican Central Committee of Santa Clara County was quoted as saying that the party welcomes the Vietnamese as "a potent new political force" (Rockstroh 1987). Another article quoted a local attorney asserting that the Vietnamese "are only starting to realize that their power is not only in economics and business but in politics as well" (Trounstine 1987). The *Mercury News* did not just rely on outside experts as sources, but also gave members of the Vietnamese-American community space to reflect upon their own political trajectory. One article interviewed a local Vietnamese-American activist who claimed that too many Vietnamese immigrants are still focused on home-country politics:

> It's time for Vietnamese-Americans to realize their role in the United States. They should pay attention to issues of importance to everyone, topics such as public safety, education and health reforms … They're no longer on the outside looking in; they're part of the system … They should be participants. That's not only a privilege, it's a right (De Tran 1994a).

Another article quoted local leader Nguyen Tan Duc saying that "the communities that know how to unite are strong. Look at the Cuban, the Jewish, the Chinese, the Korean and the Japanese communities here" (De Tran 1994b). The Vietnamese community is portrayed as proactive in shaping their political fortunes, part of a long history of American ethnic politics.

Considerable coverage in the late 1980s and early 1990s focused on Vietnamese community activation in connection to home-country politics. The Vietnamese community in California had become the center of the Saigon nationalist movement, which worked to reconstruct and preserve Vietnamese identity in exile, build ethnic solidarity, and promote representation of Vietnamese interests. This movement, which initially focused exclusively on US relations with Communist Vietnam, "has become increasingly rooted in present-day local and state politics" in San Jose and Orange County (Furuya and Collet 2009, 73). The *Mercury News* demonstrated awareness of and support for the nationalist movement and its links to domestic politics, publishing several editorials in the mid-1990s. One called on Vietnam to protect human rights in order to attract business investment from Vietnamese Americans; another criticized US officials for offering "false hope" to people in camps (and their families in the US) if they were unlikely to be resettled (Editorials 1994, 1995).

Better organization of San Jose's Vietnamese community went hand in hand with more *Mercury News* reporting about elected officials' responsiveness to them. When in 1995, President Clinton supported the repatriation of Vietnamese still living in refugee camps back to Vietnam, San Jose's Congressman Mineta split with fellow Democrat Clinton because he had been "flooded" with letters from Vietnamese Americans living in his district, asking him to support resettlement in the US (Galvan 1995). When community involvement spread from homeland politics to local issues, the *Mercury News* continued to portray this engagement as legitimate, implying the incorporation of Vietnamese American concerns into "American" politics. In 1998, when several thousand Vietnamese gathered to protest mismanagement of San Jose's Indochinese Resettlement and Cultural Center, County Supervisor McHugh addressed the protestors and accepted their "petition for a full investigation" (Garcia 1998). The paper also covered tensions between the Vietnamese community and local police, such as the questionable circumstances surrounding the 2003 San Jose police shooting of a Vietnamese woman. The *Mercury News* provided sympathetic coverage of protests calling for the officer's resignation, interviewing a community activist about the incident. "Bao emphasized that the Vietnamese community is still angry, and those feelings wouldn't diminish, nor would the activism stop. 'For us,' Bao said, 'this is a trigger event'" (Nguyen 2003).

In the fall of 2005, *Mercury News* coverage focused on a city council election contest between two Vietnamese-American candidates: Linda Nguyen and Madison Nguyen. The election, which drew record numbers of Vietnamese Americans to the polls, resulted in Madison Nguyen becoming the first Vietnamese American to sit on the San Jose City Council. One article quoted the head of the South Bay Labor Council claiming that "the Vietnamese vote is going to be critical for this election … 'This election is an opportunity for the Vietnamese community to show its influence'" (Foo 2005). By 2005, political coverage of San Jose's Vietnamese community had shifted from focusing on how to best engage a new immigrant group to asking which members of the group would best represent the community at large. Throughout its coverage, the *Mercury News* consistently portrayed Vietnamese-American participation as legitimate.

Boston's Vietnamese community is much smaller than San Jose's, and the *Boston Globe*'s coverage of their political activity was correspondingly more minimal. However, from a qualitative perspective, the arc of *Globe* coverage reveals parallel themes to those in the San Jose paper. As one 1993 article phrased it, "although still a small group numerically, their impact on the city belies their size" (Tong 1993). The *Globe* often focused on the ways in which the Vietnamese-American community organized in response to some kind of trigger event, similar to the police shooting in San Jose. It also portrayed such mobilization as normal and community-driven.

In 1992, when a Boston City Council member was recorded remarking that the sight of Vietnamese immigrants "makes [him] sick," the *Boston Globe* reported that the event was a "shock" that "forced citizens to turn from combating communism and human-rights abuses in Vietnam to local politics" (Tong 1993). As in San Jose, the paper portrayed the Vietnamese as a group shifting from homeland to domestic political issues and relied on Vietnamese-American community leaders as news sources. Another article about this controversy highlighted the growing size of the community: "with new arrivals every week, demographers say that Vietnamese immigrants are the fastest growing population sub-group in the city" (Rezendes 1992). As in San Jose, critical mass and trigger events helped make Boston's Vietnamese Americans more visible to the general public.

The Vietnamese community continued to develop its civic presence during Boston's competitive 1993 mayoral race. The *Globe* published several articles discussing which mayoral candidate the Vietnamese-American community might endorse, suggesting that it was becoming a normalized ethnic constituency, like the Irish and Italians before them. One article talked about Councilor O'Neil's controversial remark from a year prior as a catalyst for Vietnamese Americans' increased engagement in electoral politics, quoting one man as saying: "We realize that having a political voice in this country is important … If we want people to listen to us, we have to vote" (Bennett 1993). As in San Jose, the *Globe* narrative portrayed Vietnamese immigrants as taking the initiative to get involved.

Also similar to the *Mercury News*, later years of *Boston Globe* coverage focused on the responsiveness of local elected officials to the Vietnamese community. In 2003, the Boston City Council unanimously recognized the old South Vietnamese flag as the official symbol of Boston's Vietnamese community, even though the US had officially recognized the new Vietnamese government in 1995 (Daniel 2005). Similarly, when the Prime Minister of Vietnam visited Boston in 2005, the *Globe* reported that "several elected officials in Boston appear to be heeding pressure from some Vietnamese-American groups, which are asking them to boycott or speak against the Vietnamese government" (Daniel 2005). Boston City Council President Flaherty skipped the event, saying "my first concern is to my constituents, and my constituents are Boston's Vietnamese community" (Daniel 2005). The quotation, and the article's overall tone, rendered a very particular homeland political issue into legitimate domestic politics. Such a domestication of "ethnic" politics may not be surprising in New England. However, the strong parallels with coverage in San Jose – an area without the same legacy of ethnic politics – suggest a broader national narrative in which Vietnamese-American inclusion in US politics is normal

and positive. It evolved from protest about homeland concerns to protest about local conditions and, finally, more influence over local electoral politics.

Indo-Americans: wealthy and less involved

Coverage of the Indian community in the US was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from coverage of the Vietnamese. Even though Indo-Americans made up a larger proportion (0.9%) of the Boston metro area than Vietnamese Americans (0.6%), our sample included only four *Boston Globe* stories about Indo-American political involvement between 1985 and 2005 compared to 15 for those of Vietnamese origin. The *Globe*'s coverage of the Indian community focused mostly on culture and religion, with those articles making up 39% of all coverage. In contrast, articles coded as political made up a mere 4% of the total. Similarly, San Jose's Indo-American community is two-thirds the size of its Vietnamese-American community, yet *Mercury News* political coverage of Indo-Americans occurred at less than one-third the volume of Vietnamese coverage, 21 articles versus 70, respectively. In San Jose, articles about culture and religion also dominated, making up 38% of the total.

In contrast to the Vietnamese-American narrative of evolving political mobilization and engagement, neither American paper portrayed the Indian community as developing a political voice over time. Rather, political coverage of the Indo-American community was scattered, indicative of a more episodic approach to reporting. In San Jose, coverage centered primarily on individual people of Indian descent or on one-time events. For example, the *Mercury News* ran a story about a Sikh man running for local office, portraying him as an individual who just happened to be Sikh, with no discussion of ties to the Indo-American community. Some articles focused on homeland politics, but largely divorced the topic from domestic concerns, such as an article about tensions within the Bay Area Indo-American community over support for Hindu nationalist groups back in India: "Silicon Valley's Indo-American community has an influence over homeland politics perhaps unprecedented for an immigrant group … [They] contribute financially and ideologically to … Hindu nationalist organizations" (Kuruvila 2003). Homeland political engagement was not portrayed in a negative light, but it was not tied to a narrative of domestic political incorporation over time.

Indeed, coverage frequently mentioned Indo-Americans' relative lack of political involvement in American politics. An article about the denial of a Fremont city permit for an Indo-American festival stated: "The larger question is whether that irritation will finally push Asian residents to participate in local politics, assimilating into the civic system even as they seek to serve their own needs" (Kuruvila and Lubman 2002). Several articles covered the ability and potential desire of Indo-Americans to make campaign contributions. An article about a successful fundraiser for Al Gore suggested that this event "signals a political coming of age for the Bay Area's Indian community, which isn't yet known for its political activism." The article also quotes an Indo-American entrepreneur saying that "The Indians are spreading their wings … The political parties are beginning to discover that Indians have a desire to participate, and they are beginning to tap us" (Stocking 2000). The focus on donations might reflect greater wealth in the Indian community, but also suggests that amassing large amounts of money is a prerequisite for running for political office in the US.

Survey data indicate that Indians "have relatively high rates of contact with government officials" and high levels of community activism, especially considering their lower rates of citizenship (Wong et al. 2011, 56). However, Indians are more linguistically and religiously diverse than many other immigrant groups, leading scholars to observe that "the internal diversity within the Asian Indian community … probably has a dampening effect on their collective political action" (Khagram, Desai, and Varughese 2001, 270–271). The *Mercury News* picked up on this theme,

suggesting that there were tensions within the community between the mostly Punjabi Sikhs who came in the 1970s and the more contemporary wave of tech workers from all over the sub-continent:

> The rift has played a part in preventing the community from realizing its shared goal: gaining political power. "We have to stop backbiting," said Mahesh Pakala, 40, a Fremont entrepreneur who is friends with both groups. "We're killing ourselves. We have to think big. We have to get ourselves a politician." (Fernandez 2005)

The article goes on to claim:

> Ironically, the high levels of education and affluence among the 150,000 Indo-Americans now living in the Bay Area are key reasons why they do not have a strong political voice … "Everyone came in as professionals," said Baldish Gill, 48, a school director in Fremont. "There is no need for community because everyone was instantly wealthy. There is too much competition for power that drives these people. I don't see them ever coming together." (Fernandez 2005)

The article suggests that because many Indian immigrants come in pursuit of professional goals, they do not have to struggle to overcome economic adversity. In contrast, the American Dream story, where immigrants come with nothing, mobilize, and eventually make it, is precisely the narrative the *Mercury News* attributed to the Vietnamese community.

Indo-Canadians: political power players

Indo-Canadians received the most political coverage among the immigrant groups we studied, serving as the topic of 107 out of 224 articles, or 48% of the total. This pattern is consistent with our larger data set, in which Indo-Canadians were the most covered group overall. The political coverage was generally positive, portraying Indo-Canadians as an established community of active participants. Politics, however, was only the third-most common topic for Indo-Canadian coverage in the *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun*. The most frequent topics were "culture and religion" and "violence, crime, and the law," both of which included more mixed reporting that at times emphasized the dangerousness of Indo-Canadians.[6]

The frequency of reporting about Indo-Canadians is somewhat perplexing. Certainly, people of Indian origin make up a significant percentage of both the Vancouver and Toronto metro populations, at 6.2% and 6.0%, respectively. However, simple demographics cannot account for the entire difference in coverage, since Indian-origin individuals also make up a large proportion of the population of the San Jose area, where they received proportionally less coverage. Further, there were notable qualitative differences in coverage across the two countries. In contrast to the episodic coverage of Indo-Americans, the coverage of Indo-Canadians highlighted their pivotal role in local politics as a consistent theme. These differences reveal that media consumers are receiving very different pictures of Indian community members as political actors in each country.

The thematic narrative in both the *Vancouver Sun* and *Toronto Star* was that Indo-Canadians were politically activated, yet uncommitted swing voters, being courted by political parties. As the *Sun* put it in 1996:

> The parties recognize the growing political role played by the province's more than 150,000 Indo-Canadians … The winning candidates at two Surrey Liberal provincial nominations last week stacked the meetings with thousands of Indo-Canadians, signed up recently as new members. (Munro 1996a)

Another article during the 1996 elections described a party nomination meeting where "nearly half of those at the meeting were Indo-Canadian, cementing the ethnic community's role as a

major force in Surrey politics and prompting some candidates to distribute campaign leaflets in Punjabi" (Munro 1996b). In such stories, Indo-Canadians were savvy political operators who were using party nomination rules to advance particular candidates. Although sometimes cast as narrow ethnic politics, the narrative suggested that the community could not be ignored.

Coverage portrayed Indo-Canadians' party allegiance as up for grabs. The *Vancouver Sun* reprinted an editorial from an Indo-Canadian newspaper, warning that "the Liberal government should be ashamed of its arrogance in assuming that the Indo-Canadian community and other minorities will continue to support them" (News from the Ethnic Press 1996). A *Toronto Star* article described how different parties were trying to attract Sikh voters, and another discussed how local Sikh leaders had threatened to support challenger candidates unless Premier Peterson paid more attention to the community's needs. These threats prompted Peterson to announce that he had met with Sikhs on several occasions and would be "happy to meet with anybody" (Will Meet with Sikhs Anytime 1990). Indeed, the Canadian newspapers reported that even the highly conservative Reform Party had reached out to Indo-Canadians, but had difficulty breaking its reputation of catering only "to middle-aged white Canadians" and not supporting Canada's multiculturalism policy (O'Neil 1996).

Canadian papers also devoted significant coverage to Indo-Canadian elected officials, including Moe Sihota, the first Indo-Canadian to be elected to a major office and the first Indo-Canadian provincial cabinet minister. Many more Indo-Canadians were elected to office following his rise to power, including several members of parliament. The *Vancouver Sun* provided particularly extensive coverage of Ujjal Dosanjh, who ran for Premier of British Columbia in 1999. Coverage was generally favorable and focused on how, as a moderate, he opposed the violence of Sikh extremist groups (Bolan 1999). When Dosanjh became the first Indo-Canadian Premier of a Canadian province, the *Sun* reported a joke made at the New Democratic Party's leadership convention: "NDP means New Delhi Party now" (Parry 2000).

Four articles in our sample of political stories covered the 1985 bombing of Air India flight 182 by Sikh terrorists, which killed all of the mostly Indo-Canadian passengers. The *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun* reported extensively on this incident; 54 articles in our larger database were devoted to it, representing 9% of Indo-Canadian coverage across all topics. However, most of these articles were coded under the topic "violence, crime, and the law" because they focused on the related criminal investigation without mentioning politics. The four political stories discussed politicians' reactions, such as a proposal to establish a no-fly list. One article quoted Sikh MP Gurmant Grewal speaking out in opposition to the proposal (Woods 2005). Like the rest of the *Star* and *Sun* coverage on Indo-Canadian political engagement, the Air India coverage portrayed the community as politically engaged, as well as represented in government via traditional channels.[7]

The generally positive narrative laid out by Canadian papers about Indo-Canadian political engagement remains surprising compared to the more mixed portrayal of Indo-Canadians across a range of topical codes. It also contrasts to the relative silence of major newspapers in Boston and San Jose on the political engagement of Asian Indians in the US. Certainly, Indo-Canadians have higher levels of citizenship than Indo-Americans, and Canada has a relatively more fragmented political party landscape and many small electoral districts. These structural differences seem exaggerated, however, by the sharp difference in thematic coverage of political participation by Indian-origin individuals in Canada, with a strong focus on electoral competition, compared to episodic reporting in the American papers.

Vietnamese Canadians: invisible victims

Of the four immigrant group/national context combinations analyzed here, the Canadian newspapers' coverage of Vietnamese political participation was by far the most minimal. Our sample

contained only seven articles in the politics category for the *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun* combined. This paltry coverage cannot be explained by demographics alone. People of Vietnamese background make up 0.7% of the Toronto metro population and 0.9% of the Vancouver metro population, no smaller than Boston's Vietnamese community, which received more political coverage. Further, while overall coverage of Vietnamese Canadians was low in our larger database, it was especially low in the politics category compared to other group/country combinations. The dominant topical categories were "violence, crime, and the law," "profiles, demographics, migration," and "social issues." Thus, as political actors, Vietnamese Canadians are largely invisible to the newspaper-reading public. If the Vietnamese community participated in politics during the time period of this study, mainstream media consumers did not learn about it.

So few articles make it difficult to draw conclusions about the tone of coverage, but the majority focused on their refugee status. *Toronto Star* stories had a particularly sympathetic tone, including a 1990 article about the plight of the boat people, remarking that Canada has been "one of the most welcoming countries in the world" for the Vietnamese (Kelly 1990). Our sample also included several articles on family reunification, including an article about a man trying to bring his family from Vietnam who hit road blocks due to his son's cerebral palsy (Goodspeed 1994), and a story about a Vietnamese woman who asked the *Star* to help her secure a visa to see her dying mother in Toronto for the last time (Gombu 1995).

Since the dominant mode of entry for Vietnamese migrants to both the US and Canada has been as resettled refugees or through related visa categories, cross-national differences in coverage cannot be based on immigration status. Rather, the framing of the refugee experience seems to differ across national contexts depending on how it is embedded in broader discursive structures. In Canada, the *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun* portrayed the Vietnamese community as either invisible or as helpless victims, implying that refugee status is incompatible with political empowerment. This framing clearly contrasts with the portrayal of Vietnamese Americans, first as partners in the war against Communism, and later as engaged fellow US citizens. It is unclear whether this media treatment of the Vietnamese is generalizable to other refugee groups in Canada. The Canadian media have not always portrayed humanitarian migrants as vulnerable victims, especially when would-be refugees are viewed as "false" asylum-seekers or undocumented economic migrants (Hamlin 2014).

Discussion and conclusions

Our analysis suggests that a combination of generalized group characteristics and national context affect media portrayal of immigrant political participation. First, group features such as migration status or socio-economic status seem to affect coverage. The political involvement of Vietnamese immigrants in the US received a distinct narrative arc as "allied aliens" evolving from refugees into engaged US citizens. Canadian coverage of the Vietnamese also focused on their refugee status, but with a more pronounced victimization angle that portrays Canada in a charitable light. American papers covered Indo-Americans in an episodic manner, portraying them as high-skilled, high-status, often temporary, and relatively uninvolved in domestic politics. Indo-Canadians were consistently portrayed as active, engaged citizens, at least in articles on political issues. Future research should investigate whether the episodic or thematic nature of political coverage of immigrant-origin communities differs in substantive ways from other topical foci. Politics, after all, was often less prevalent as a topic than stories about religion and culture or about crime, violence, and the law.

To the extent that a "model minority" trope might exist in North America, it was not prevalent in the coverage we analyzed. In the US, the Vietnamese were sometimes portrayed as a model of the American Dream, moving up in politics as in economics, but for Indo-Americans, wealth and

high education was portrayed as an obstacle to politics. In Canada, while a "model minority" discourse might increasingly be imported from the US in reference to Asian-origin Canadians' academic success, especially for those from "Confucian" traditions (Findlay and Köhler 2010; Pon 2000), this lens was not used when newspapers discussed savvy political maneuvering in the Indo-Canadian community. Newspapers also did not use this lens in their minimal reporting on Vietnamese Canadians.

Part of the variation in coverage may be the result of actual differences in levels of participation, although it is unclear which leads to which. We know that Canadian papers cover Indo-Canadian political behavior far more frequently than Vietnamese Canadian participation, and we know that Indo-Canadians are more likely to be elected to political office at every level. In other words, they have a higher level of both political presence in government and civic presence in the media. Nevertheless, those of Vietnamese origin have run, and at times been elected, for major parties across the political spectrum in Canada, a fact that was not covered in the press (Bloemraad 2006).

Citizenship differences might also play a part in the relative lack of political articles on Indo-Americans, although American survey data suggest that the votes of both the Indian and Vietnamese communities are "in play" and thus arguably of interest to political parties. One recent survey found that 56% of Indians and 49% of Vietnamese claimed not to identify with either major American political party (Wong et al. 2011, 132). Rather than simply tracking political involvement, media coverage (or non-coverage) can seemingly exaggerate a perception of engagement (or non-engagement) among the public. Future research should explore causality by comparing journalistic practices with participation data more closely.

Political action goes beyond electoral politics, however. Local media can also render immigrant communities visible by reporting on protest and non-electoral mobilization. This path to visibility is especially evident for the Vietnamese population in the US. Again, it is unclear whether coverage reflects higher levels of protest activity by the community or simply fits a particular narrative about Vietnamese political integration – from homeland exile politics and protest to domestic electoral integration – in the US. The narrative of protest-to-voting also hints – without explicit reference – at the African-American experience, and these parallels with black mobilization might resonate with American journalists and readers. It may also reflect an American journalistic tendency to suggest that immigrants must mobilize themselves first, before attracting the notice of politicians. A similar message arises from the coverage of Indo-Americans' campaign contributions: displays of individual and community "maturity" will increase civic presence and responsiveness by political actors. In contrast, Canadian reporting is far more focused on candidates and political parties actively trying to garner votes from ethnic communities. There is language of ground-up mobilization, but as much, or more, about elite efforts to court ethno-racial communities.

The small but growing literature on media representations of immigrant-origin minorities has painted a relatively pessimistic picture of how the mainstream media portray immigrants. Researchers document how magazines (Chavez 2001), television (Santa Ana 2013), and newspapers (Benson 2013) communicate particular metaphors – for example, of tidal waves or viral infections – that cue media consumers to view immigrants in negative ways. This literature raises the question of whether minorities would be better off remaining invisible in the mainstream media. Yet there is good reason to believe that invisibility results in groups being excluded from politics and ignored by officials. Interestingly, while existing scholarship documents multiple ways that those of Asian origin experience feelings of being treated as "perpetual foreigners," we did not find this to be a dominant trope in media coverage of political participation across groups. The political legitimacy of the groups we studied was rarely in question beyond some hints of temporariness for Indo-Americans. Whether beneficial or harmful, we contend

that scholars of minority politics need to pay attention to civic presence and the political stories told to the public as potentially consequential aspects of democratic engagement.

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Notes

1. While the two communities are obviously internally diverse, we focus on group-level trends because we posit that group-level perceptions help to explain differences in media reporting.
2. We used electronic databases to conduct full-text searches for all articles mentioning Vietnamese- or Indian-origin residents. We drew a random sample from the full set of articles, stratified by year, newspaper, and group. Human coders read each article and engaged in three stages of coding. In stage one, we deleted articles that were not germane to our study (e.g., an article about West Indians or American Indians, rather than people with origins in India). In stage two, we captured basic descriptive information and assigned each article a primary and secondary "topic" code. In stage three, we conducted detailed coding for a subset of articles, recording who was quoted and mentioned. For this article, we engaged in a fourth round of analysis, using qualitative evaluation of media narratives. More information on the methods as well as article counts and foci beyond politics can be found in Bloemraad, de Graauw, and Hamlin (2015).
3. Advertising revenue for US newspapers and the number of paid newsroom staff peaked around 2005–2006 before plummeting with the rapid expansion of electronic and social media (Edmonds et al. 2013). Since online access for the *Vancouver Sun* only starts in 1991, our time period for that paper is shorter than for the other three newspapers.
4. Our topical codes fell into 10 categories, with multiple sub-codes under each: (1) violence, crime, law, (2) religion, (3) cultural issues, (4) social policy, (5) politics and legislation, (6) education, (7) economics, business, work, (8) social issues, (9) health care, and (10) immigrant profiles or demographic stories.
5. These percentages represent the primary topical coding for each article to allow for comparison with other topics. Our content analysis includes articles with a secondary topic of politics. For the number of articles included in this analysis, see Table 2. For further discussion of topical coding in the Civic Visibility Media Database, see Bloemraad, de Graauw, and Hamlin (2015).
6. Indra (1979) documents similar themes of danger, violence, and foreignness in earlier decades of reporting on Indo-Canadians in Vancouver newspapers.
7. Some of the broader coverage of the Air India bombing in the *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun* was negative, highlighting "bad elements" in the community. However, this coverage also frequently underscored law-abiding, loyal Indo-Canadians, communicating a mixed rather than wholly negative image.

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