



Why Americans Don't Join the Party: Race, Immigration, and the Failure (of Political Parties) to Engage the Electorate

Zoltan L. Hajnal, Taeku Lee

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Two trends are dramatically altering the American political landscape: growing immigration and the rising prominence of independent and nonpartisan voters. Examining partisan attachments across the four primary racial groups in the United States, this book offers the first sustained and systematic account of how race and immigration today influence the relationship that Americans have--or fail to have--with the Democratic and Republican parties. Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee contend that partisanship is shaped by three factors--identity, ideology, and information--and they show that African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and whites respond to these factors in distinct ways.

The book explores why so many Americans--in particular, Latinos and Asians--fail to develop ties to either major party, why African Americans feel locked into a particular party, and why some white Americans are shut out by ideologically polarized party competition. Through extensive analysis, the authors demonstrate that when the Democratic and Republican parties fail to raise political awareness, to engage deeply held political convictions, or to affirm primary group attachments, nonpartisanship becomes a rationally adaptive response. By developing a model of partisanship that explicitly considers America's new racial diversity and evolving nonpartisanship, this book provides the Democratic and Republican parties and other political stakeholders with the means and motivation to more fully engage the diverse range of Americans who remain outside the partisan fray.

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