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Introduction

> Despite our relative peace, we live with a persistent undercurrent of tension—Between those who have lived here all their lives and those who are new; Between those born in this country and those who are recent immigrants; Between those who can afford rising housing costs and those who are just getting by; Between those who seek immediate action on development issues and those who seek a different vision. (Curtatone 2004)

Based on a multiyear qualitative study from 2004 to 2009 of a mid-size city adjacent to Boston, this book explores local influences that facilitate or pose barriers to civic and political engagement in the public life of an urban community. The book shows how civic and political engagement play out in Somerville, where residents are divided by class, race-ethnicity, and immigrant diversity and where local government is in the eyes of many an entrenched political structure.

This book informs current debates about the place of immigrants in civic and political life and the role of voluntary associations in local politics and government. Some argue that host communities should actively facilitate immigrant incorporation because large numbers of "nonparticipating, unrepresented, [and] disengaged" residents weaken local democracy and community solidarity (Andersen 2008: 77; Bloemraad 2006). A contrasting view claims that only immigrants who have achieved full legal citizenship are entitled to be politically engaged. As for voluntary associations, some

say these valuable agents of civil society should avoid politics altogether and focus instead on activities that build community cohesion and solidarity.[1] Others argue that voluntary associations are important vehicles for active citizens (and non-citizens) to affect public decisions and for democracy itself to thrive, thus requiring that associational activity connect to politics and government (Foley and Edwards 1997; Mark R. Warren 2001).

At its root, this book is about the practice of local democracy. When people take part in the civic and political life of their own communities, their actions create a strong foundation for democracy. Democracy overall depends, then, on local involvement to build democratic participation from the ground up (Elstub 2008: 181; King 2004; Mark R. Warren 2001: 21). Especially for those who have not previously been engaged, such as new immigrants, local participation is often the starting point for participation at higher levels (Hardy-Fanta 2002: 196; Mark R. Warren 2001: 22).

The central claim of this book is that full community membership, belonging, and acceptance by others—what I call social citizenship—is a key condition for a kind of democratic participation that I term shared governance.[2] Social citizenship is "full membership in the community within which one lives" (Glenn 2011: 3). Citizenship in this broader sociological sense is "not just a matter of formal legal status; it is rather a kind of belonging which requires recognition by other members of the community" and revolves around social relations of exclusion and inclusion (Glenn 2011: 3; see also Bloemraad 2006 and Glenn 2000).[3] Instead of focusing on legal rights of citizenship, my study is, then, concerned with the actual local practice or substance of citizenship as a socially meaningful category (Glenn 2011: 3). In Somerville, as I show, actively engaged residents who were "born and raised" in the city typically have full social citizenship, while Latino,[4] Brazilian, and Haitian "newcomers" do not enjoy this privilege, even when they are legal citizens. This is true, even though, during my study, the mayor of Somerville appealed to what I am calling social citizenship when he regularly and publicly welcomed to his city everybody who "wants to live here, work hard, and make a positive contribution," saying, "I don't care what your [legal] status is" (Dreilinger 2007: 4).

The concept of shared governance refers to a process for making public decisions that involves actors from both inside and outside government in an ongoing and dynamic way.[5] Typical actors are organizations, especially voluntary associations and community nonprofits.[6] Democratic shared governance operates according to "principles of openness, participation, [and] accountability" (Garcia 2006: 745). Civic engagement scholars describe various forms of democratic shared governance, all of which result in socially

produced agreements about public issues arrived at by those in positions of elected authority plus non-governmental actors who challenge state actors to adopt different ends or collaborate with them to achieve common ends.[7]

This social production of public decisions is not intended as a substitute for government, nor is it anti-government. It is a sharing of power, a way for elected officials and engaged members of communities to actively negotiate and adapt to one another's positions. I show how voluntary associations involved in public affairs in Somerville have been able to retain their independence from local government while still engaging with local government in ways that constitute shared governance. Associations do this by determining for themselves when to collaborate with government and when to assume a more distinctive and/or adversarial role. Retaining this choice, I argue, alleviates well-founded concerns about the risks voluntary associations take when they work too closely with government and lose their capacity to speak and act outside the realm of state power.

Because inclusivity of all segments of a population is so important for democracy, I am especially interested in local opportunities and conditions for engagement that bring diverse residents together and those that push them apart (Mark R. Warren 2001: 25). People in Somerville talk about three main groups of residents. First are older residents identified as working class, mainly of Irish and Italian heritage, who were "born and raised" in the city and who still run the local politics. At the time of my study, they constituted the largest ethnic-identified ancestry group (Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development [OSPCD], 2009b: 55) (Figure 1.1). Second is a growing professional middle class, largely white and often (but not always) young. Many of them moved from neighboring towns when housing costs there became prohibitive in the 1980s. Third are newer immigrants, mainly from Central and South America, especially Brazil and El Salvador, and from Haiti (OSPCD 2009b). Some moved to Somerville in the 1980s, driven by violence in their home countries (Figure 1.2).

Based on the old white ethnic working-class power structure, both the newer immigrants of color and the white, middle-class groups are considered newcomers, even though many have lived in Somerville since the 1980s. Being a newcomer in this context often simply means not being "born and raised" in the city or not tracing one's family back three or four generations. One way that the two newcomer groups are excluded from full social citizenship is by the members of "old Somerville" defining them as having arrived in the city more recently than is actually the case.

Immigration is, of course, a major issue in the United States today. The editors of a recent encyclopedic volume on U.S. immigration since 1965

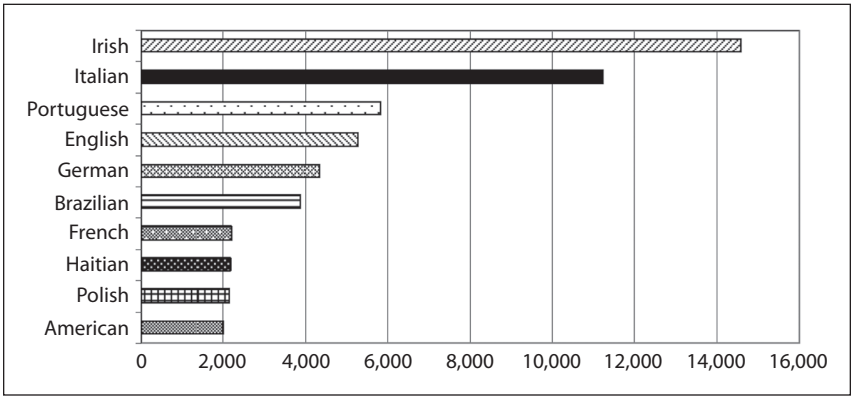

Figure 1.1. Ancestries Most Frequently Reported by Somerville Residents, 2000. *(Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development [OSPCD],* Trends in Somerville: Population Technical Report *[Somerville, MA: City of Somerville, 2009], 55. Data from the U.S. Census.)*

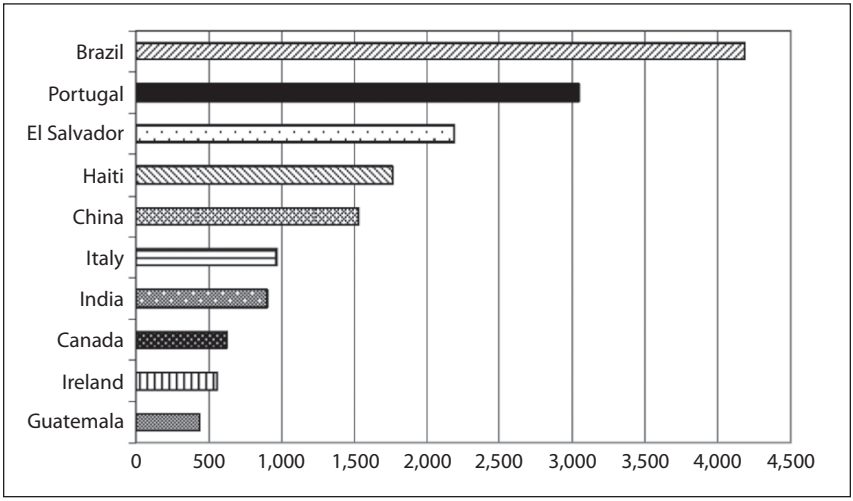

Figure 1.2. Countries of Origin Most Frequently Reported for Foreign-Born Somerville Residents, 2000. *(Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development [OSPCD],* Trends in Somerville: Population Technical Report *[Somerville, MA: City of Somerville, 2009], 55. Data from the U.S. Census.)*

wrote that "Somerville typifies numerous American neighborhoods where multiplying food stands, restaurants, stores, markets, and mass media vendors have been established by the new American immigrants" (Waters and Ueda 2007: 1). Somerville has experienced substantial growth in Latino and other new immigrant populations since the 1980s. Like other cities, it is

dealing with how to adapt to and incorporate these groups into community life. Civic engagement scholars have just begun to explore what it might mean for U.S. democracy if substantial numbers of new immigrants to U.S. towns and cities become more politically engaged (Junn and Haynie 2008: 2). Some research suggests that immigrants today are more engaged than one might expect, even when they are not eligible to vote (Barreto 2003; Marschall 2001). The marches and demonstrations of immigrant groups in the spring of 2006 in the United States brought to light the potential for immigrant engagement (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008a: 1). As U.S. immigrants become more involved in the public life of their communities, how will local power structures change? How could civic leaders and elected officials assist in the incorporation of immigrants into civic and political life? What local policies might increase the civic and political engagement of immigrants? (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008a: 32–33).

Unlike many studies of civic and political engagement that focus on individual-level characteristics as explanations for civic engagement, this book emphasizes external conditions and circumstances in the community and local politic that create both opportunities and barriers for engagement. A number of leading scholars have identified individual-level characteristics that facilitate and inhibit engagement, such as education and being socially well connected (social capital).[8] Individual-level analysis seems to imply a deficit model to explain why some communities have low levels of engagement because it assumes that low engagement is caused by problems with residents themselves, such as a lack of political and civic skills, experience, and interests (Levine 2007: xiv). In contrast, a community-level analysis such as this one points to the need for reform in the policies and practices of local institutions if certain segments of the population are not engaged. Higher levels of community engagement not only strengthen democracy but also contribute to higher standards of living and well-functioning local institutions, such as schools and city government (Levine 2007: 28).

While it seems well established that the individual-level factors most associated with high levels of engagement are education and income, this may not be true for diverse populations of immigrants. For immigrants, how politics works to either accommodate or constrain their participation may be a more significant factor (Espiritu 2009: 223; Junn 1999: 1417). Research shows that local responses to immigration in terms of providing these opportunities vary widely. Some local communities in the United States take measures to affirm and protect immigrant residents in ways that encourage incorporation into their communities. Federal government efforts may instead deny and limit the incorporation of immigrants (Wells 2004: 1308).

The positive changes in Somerville that I describe here have been hard won. Beginning in the early 1960s and continuing into the 1980s, this city was known around the region as Slumerville, a decidedly pejorative term despised by today's longtime residents.[9] This widely used local slur brings to mind deteriorating homes, empty storefronts, gritty streets and neighborhoods, and corrupt city administrations associated with organized crime. The 2006 critically acclaimed film *The Departed*—starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, and Jack Nicholson—vividly portrayed Somerville's all too real and horribly violent Winter Hill Gang of those earlier decades (Hassett 2008b).

The changes that have occurred in Somerville happened in large part because of active engagement by Somerville residents, both inside and outside government. From the mid-1960s and continuing to the present, reform-minded residents launched a transformation of what was once a city in decline to one now celebrated for its racial-ethnic and class diversity, thriving arts scene, local festivals, and trendy restaurants and café venues. Somerville is well suited, then, to this study of civic and political engagement. In 1972 and again in 2009, the National Civic League designated it an All America City, which a local newspaper described on the occasion of the 2009 award as a "civic Oscar," celebrating civic engagement, community activism, innovation, and inclusiveness (Federico 2009b).

Local voluntary associations are common vehicles for residents to become involved in local public affairs, not only in Somerville but also elsewhere. Civic engagement scholars define associations as the heart of civil society, providing "a strong community foundation . . . for a vibrant political life" (Mark R. Warren 2001: 15). Associations of greatest interest here are genuine political actors that seek to both influence and participate directly in public decision making (Fung 2003a) through what I call shared governance.

The amount of civic engagement that takes place in Somerville can perhaps be explained in part by two contextual and historical factors: (1) the presence of a city government that, while it has undergone enormous improvement, is still emerging from older patronage practices; and (2) the absence of a strong and vibrant business sector after the decline of an industrial economy. Somerville's city government is also under-resourced because of the loss of its earlier industrial economic base and the more recent loss of revenue from the state of Massachusetts (Hassett 2007c). The lack of a strong local commercial base means that Somerville must rely on resident property taxes for three-quarters of its annual budget. Funding from the state of Massachusetts has been the source of most of the remaining quarter of the budget. As elsewhere in the United States since the national 2008 recession, state

budget cuts have resulted in loss of revenue to local cities and towns. These past and current factors have prevented the formation in Somerville of what political scientists characterize as the typical urban regime, made up of powerful combined business and political sectors (Kilburn 2004; Mossberger and Stoker 2001; Stone 1993). This absence opens a space for civic engagement, allowing civil society associations and organizations to obtain greater influence and power in Somerville than might otherwise be the case.

A few caveats: My purpose here differs from research that shows how voluntary associations imbue individuals with knowledge of how to become active citizens by developing civic skills and virtues, increasing their sense of efficacy, or providing political information (Fung 2003a: 518). While political socialization of this kind can indeed encourage participation such as voting, membership in civic and political groups, and attendance at public meetings (Sampson et al. 2005), that is not the focus of this book.

This book also is not intended as an organizational study. It is instead in the tradition of ethnographic studies of entire communities, though focused specifically on characteristics that either facilitate or threaten collective engagement. My interest here, discovered rather than pre-assumed, is local voluntary associations as vehicles for that engagement. Unlike formally constituted community nonprofits, the voluntary associations I studied do not typically keep records of formal membership, so what I was able to learn about numbers and demographics was based on my observations of those who attended meetings. Readers will also note the absence of data on budgets or staff because these associations have neither. I also derived information about why and how these associations were formed and the extent to which they operate according to democratic structures and processes from the kinds of sources used for this study, which I detail in the section on methods.

Finally, this book is by no means a comprehensive look at the city and community of Somerville. Other studies could focus more than this one does on, for example, what is occurring among the city's youth, in schools, religious, cultural, and social service organizations, or on issues of crime, public health, and safety.

Issues of gender might also deserve greater attention, and a gender imbalance in Somerville's elected officials is certainly evident.[10] Feminist scholars have sometimes argued that women tend to focus their civic and political involvement mainly around issues of immediate importance to them, such as families and children as well as women's safety and security (Naples 1998a, 1998b). Because this study centers on the major forms of engagement occurring in the city at the time of my research, concerning redevelopment and immigrant issues, I may have missed some aspects of engagement particular

to women. I did note that women were often in positions of leadership in the voluntary associations of greatest interest here and in the more formally constituted community organizations sometimes affiliated with those associations. In the years of my study, both the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP) and East Somerville Neighbors for Change (ESNC) were led by women, one white, the other black Haitian. The executive directors of Centro Presente and the Community Action Agency of Somerville were both women (one Latina and one African American). The executive director of the Haitian Coalition was a black Haitian man, although its board of directors was predominantly composed of women. The immigrant advocacy organization called the Welcome Project and the city's community development agency called the Somerville Community Corporation had white men in the top staff positions, but the boards were made up of a majority of women.

In my systematic observations of meetings of various kinds, I saw neither gender differences nor inequalities in how people treated one another, and a search through interview transcripts for references to gender issues or concerns turned up few. My past gender research (Ostrander 1984, 1999, 2004b) suggested that this is somewhat surprising, and I can only speculate that Somerville's enormous changes, whose effect has related primarily to class, race, and immigrant status, may have obscured or overridden more gendered concerns.

Gender issues, however, were not totally absent in interviews. One woman immigrant activist who had founded a women's group spoke about sexual harassment, especially for the women who worked as domestics and were undocumented and therefore afraid to complain. She also noted that immigrant women made less money than the men and reported that some men objected to their wives being employed and said this issue caused conflict and sometimes divorce. Another immigrant woman activist talked about how she had learned her leadership skills while involved in an association well known in the Boston area called One Hundred Black Women, and she spoke about the valued influence of her mother as a "woman full of wisdom and a powerhouse woman." A lifelong female resident of Italian American descent who had risen to be an important leader in the city's business community told about how she had first gone to nursing school, a traditional woman's occupation. When telling me about their family histories, people often spoke with respect and admiration of the struggles their mothers and grandmothers, in particular, had experienced in coming to America and raising children in a foreign culture. The woman who was the first person of Portuguese descent to be elected to public office in Somerville, as a member of the school board, attrib-

uted her involvement in education to her mother's inability to be involved at all because she could not speak English. A young man of Irish American heritage who is a youth organizer told of his grandmother, who worked at the local Hostess factory and earned enough to buy the house where he and the rest of his family still live.

Preview of Major Research Findings and Conclusions

At the center of civic and political engagement in Somerville today is public decision making regarding huge redevelopment projects that are fundamentally remaking the city. A critical challenge is how to create a new economic base for this formerly industrial city without displacing its long-standing working class and newer immigrant groups. Somerville residents often discuss this challenge as being about the tension between the benefits and dangers of gentrification, a topic of much interest to urban scholars.

While some Somerville immigrants who are active in their community do concern themselves with redevelopment issues (especially the preservation of affordable housing and the availability of jobs), active engagement by the city's immigrant groups tends toward more immediate local events that threaten immigrant safety and security. As I explain, this is one of the reasons why I argue that members of newer immigrant groups in the city, whether legal citizens or not, do not enjoy full social citizenship. In recent years, one event demanding immigrants' attention was the 2004 adoption of a local gang ordinance that Latino leaders see as marginalizing and stigmatizing Latino youth. Another was the summer 2007 and 2008 federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids that brought fear to anyone in the city who "looked Latino" and led to a flurry of organizing aimed at protecting immigrants.[11]

I claim here that at the root of active involvement of Somerville residents lies a deeper and larger struggle about who should be the city's elected leaders and how they should conduct the city's affairs. On one side of this struggle are the relative newcomers to the city, both newer immigrants and members of a new non-immigrant middle class, who are trying to gain a foothold in the city's politic. I conceptualize this as an effort to be admitted to full community membership (social citizenship) and participation in shared governance. On the other side is Somerville's political "old guard," which has changed very little since 1929, when Irish working-class immigrants wrested control from the city's Yankee elite founders.

The circumstances and opportunities for Somerville's two newcomer groups to participate in community affairs are, of course, both different and

unequal. The growing professional, largely white middle class includes politically active progressives who have lived in the city since the 1980s, some forced to move from the contiguous city of Cambridge as housing costs rose rapidly in that community. Somerville's new middle class also consists of young professionals who value the city for its proximity to Boston, its relatively lower housing costs, and its hip urban feel. They can be characterized as devotees of a new urban renaissance culture that sees life in the suburbs as one of bland homogeneity. Both segments of this growing middle class have begun to make inroads into elected offices, with one elected to the Board of Aldermen and several to the School Committee.

The other population making up Somerville's "newcomers" is a relatively well-established but politically unorganized population of immigrants who are mainly working-class; mostly Latino, Brazilian, and Haitian; and largely of color. For them, English is a second or third language. Even though some of these "new" immigrants have lived in Somerville for two decades or more, up to the time of my study, they had not gained a single elected position in the city. Their few attempts to gain elected office have ended in failure, and a small number of administrative appointments of individuals from this population have been short-lived.

Somerville city government and the city generally are officially welcoming to new immigrants. The city's popular mayor, a second-generation immigrant[12] of Italian heritage, took office in 2004, when he was only thirty-eight years old. In 2009, he was reelected without opposition for a third two-year term. He is well known for the creation of new civic spaces for the city's young urban professionals[13] (referred to as yuppies by old-timers) and for his public support of immigrants. All of the city's elected leaders with whom I spoke or whom I heard speak at public meetings or whose quotes I read in local newspapers regularly expressed pride in Somerville's legacy as an immigrant city. They want new immigrants to continue to come to the city to live, and they support the rights of immigrants to have equal access to local jobs, affordable housing, city services, public protection of their safety, and freedom from ethnic and racial prejudice. To a person, they oppose using local police to enforce federal laws about illegal immigrants, and they have no interest in actively pursuing or even identifying an unknown number of undocumented immigrants who live in their city.

At the same time, when I asked longtime elected officials what the city might *do* to bring the city's newer immigrants into the polity as full members, their answers focused on the responsibility of new immigrants themselves to "just get involved," with the idea that eventually they would "just naturally" begin to ascend to elected posts in city government. When local

immigrant leaders and advocates proposed concrete institutional reforms, such as routine language translation at city meetings, regular printing of city documents and public announcements over the city's call system in multiple languages, routine voter registration drives in immigrant neighborhoods, multi-lingual ballots, and extension of the ability to vote in local elections to non-citizens, the response of elected officials, with very few exceptions, ranged from passivity to active resistance.

In 2008 and 2009, for example, Somerville's Board of Aldermen declined to sign on to an immigrant-led initiative, even though the mayor and subsequently the elected School Committee readily endorsed it. That initiative, known as Welcoming Somerville, called for the community to be "hospitable, welcoming and inclusive of diversity" and stated that "harsh immigration enforcement policies violate civil and human rights of immigrants, that workplace and home raids must end immediately and that our nation must implement a humane and just reform of our immigration laws" (website of Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, accessed June 11, 2009). I return to this initiative in my discussion of immigrant civic engagement (see Chapter 5).[14] Old-time city officials' lack of support for measures that would open up local politics to the one-third of the population that is made up of newer immigrants reinforces my conclusion that underneath the most visible and active forms of resident civic and political engagement lies a deeper ongoing local power struggle over who and how this city will be governed.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Contribution

I began my study with a broad definition of civic engagement as "individual and collective action to identify and address public concerns and to participate in public life" (Ostrander and Portney 2007: 1). This definition suggests that engagement with debates about community issues and concerns, that is, with politics, broadly defined, is necessary for people to exert some control over public matters that affect their lives (Foley and Edwards 1997; Mark R. Warren 2001). I term that measure of control as shared governance. This definition of civic engagement also implies the value of widespread public participation that includes the community's newest members in what I am calling social citizenship.

Driven by what I saw and heard in Somerville, I became especially interested in forms of engagement that go beyond trying to influence local government to exerting real power in making public decisions and becoming at times an integral part of true governing. This idea draws on current

understandings of relations between the civic and political realms—between civil society and the state (Choup 2006)—as interactive. It is consistent with notions of democracy that go beyond the state toward a democratic society (Boyte 2005). It draws on emerging frameworks that try to link civil society (where public issues are deliberated, opinions created, and agendas set) to official political realms, where actual decisions about public issues are made (Elstub 2008; Hendriks 2006).

Here is where the concept of mutual or shared governance assumes special importance. As I have said, while conventional views of governance are limited to actions by government (Chaskin 2003: 162), broader notions of governance see public decision making as an outcome of dynamic and ongoing engagement by multiple involved actors, both inside and outside government. Flowing broadly from Foucault's concept of governmentality, civic actors are then seen in relation to multiple sites of governing beyond the traditional boundaries of the state (McKee 2009: 469).

As I show, actions by civic associations in Somerville are, at times, able to at least approach genuine mutual or shared governance. I also demonstrate that this level of participation is much less available to newer immigrant groups because they are not fully accepted and participating members of the community—that is, they lack social citizenship. This is sometimes true even of those who do hold legal citizenship. The point is starkly made by what my research shows about the occasions when Somerville's newer immigrant groups are most likely to become engaged—occasions most often limited to local events that immediately threaten immigrant safety and security, such as raids by federal ICE agents or local actions that are racist and anti-immigrant.

Somerville's civic actors sometimes choose to preserve their independence from local government and avoid cooptation by strategically shifting between being collaborative and adversarial in relation to local government. This avoids their having to depend on the invitation of local government to participate in public decision making.[15] Several conditions in Somerville support civic actors' capacity to function relatively autonomously from city government. As noted earlier, the relative absence of a typical urban regime in Somerville, dominated by business and governmental sectors, creates the potential for genuine political power by voluntary associations and community organizations. While this city's earlier model of political patronage has not completely disappeared, the loss of revenue in recent decades, due in large part to the city's declining economic base, has weakened both governmental and business sectors. Because city government is not well resourced, it cannot wield the kind of power it might otherwise, and that cir-

cumstance increases the potential for influence (and real power) of civil society groups.

Collaboration with local government around public decision making is facilitated in Somerville by a relatively harmonious fit between what civically engaged residents want to achieve and what the city administration wants to achieve in terms of community and economic development. I discuss this later by, for example, showing the commonality between two community visions developed, on one hand, by a process sponsored by the city administration and, on the other, by a parallel but separate process run by a coalition of civic organizations.

The possibility for mutual or shared governance is further strengthened by a shared allegiance to the Democratic Party. I later describe a bitter relationship between the city's more traditional blue-collar, working-class, "lunch bucket" Democrats and the newer, largely middle-class Progressive Democrats of Somerville known as PDSers. Members of both groups acknowledge that their conflict is more a concern about process and style than a substantive disagreement about issues. I see their conflict as reflecting a fundamental struggle in the city about who does and does not deserve full community membership (social citizenship) and who, therefore, will have the most opportunities to take part in public affairs (shared governance). One source of conflict is the support of the Progressive Democrats of Somerville for candidates who represent newer immigrants and the newer middle class and for affirmative measures that would make it easier for newer immigrants to be politically engaged. Traditional Somerville Democrats are opposed to both, perhaps not surprisingly, because these actions threaten their established position in the city politic.

This larger struggle about who the city's elected leaders will be and how they will govern is a major area where politically engaged civic associations sometimes take an adversarial stance toward Somerville's political establishment. The outcome of this struggle is centrally important to this city's capacity to extend local democracy and to incorporate into its public life newer residents who are immigrants of color (often low-income and/or working-class people), and a new, relatively privileged, often young and white professional middle class.

Research Methods

This book is based on interviews with forty-five actively engaged Somerville residents; extensive review of city documents, local and regional newspaper articles, and city and community websites; plus attendance at some thirty

community and city meetings. The locally engaged residents interviewed for this study were involved in various aspects of local public life: voluntary associations, community nonprofit organizations, business, the arts, elected city government, and church and neighborhood groups. Although I include some elected officials and paid staff of prominent community organizations who also resided in and were active in Somerville, I focus primarily on residents who were involved in their community in a voluntary capacity rather than as paid staff of community organizations or of the city administration. Interviews were conducted between March 2007 and June 2009.

My study's emphasis on the five years between 2004 and 2009 reflects the first five years of the current reform mayor's term in office, during which time he was reelected twice. (As of January 2012, this same mayor began his fifth term in office.) It is always difficult for social scientists doing qualitative field studies like this one to determine when to end data collection and leave the field. This book is, then, like all such studies, inevitably a snapshot in time. In an effort to provide some sense of historical context, I make use of a locally published city history going back to Somerville's earliest years (Haskell n.d.) and one focused on the 1960s and 1970s (Johnston 2009; see also the scholarly studies of Somerville by Levenstein [1976] and Ueda [1987]). I also obtained background information from an online search of local newspapers dating back to 1997.

I left the field in December 2009, at the point when a coalition of community groups and the city administration had completed separate parallel processes that created a set of principles to guide the city for the next twenty years (2010 to 2030). These vision statements, reproduced in Chapter 3, provide a map for civic and political engagement over the next decade. While the story told here ends at that point, the story of the organizations and the people I studied, of course, continues to unfold.[16]

I selected people to interview by perusing lists of involved individuals on city and organization websites, noting individuals and groups that received multiple mentions in the local newspapers, and making contacts when I attended meetings. I also asked interview subjects to provide additional names, and I interviewed only people who were independently suggested by at least two others. Although I do not live in Somerville, I am a longtime engaged faculty member at Tufts University, which is located partially in Somerville. My more than two decades of practice placing students in Somerville agencies gave me the access I needed and the opportunity to become familiar with the city and to become known and trusted by key local actors (Ostrander 2004a; Ostrander and Portney 2007).

People who were interviewed were chosen in roughly equal numbers from the different main segments of Somerville's population: ten lifelong residents of Irish and/or Italian heritage; fourteen relative newcomers who were white Anglo and members of the professional middle class; and thirteen members of the city's largest newer immigrant groups of color, namely Latinos of varying nationalities, Brazilians, and Haitians. Eight people of Portuguese or Greek origin were also interviewed. They provide an interesting contrast to the earlier Irish and Italian immigrants who took over the city's political establishment, plus a different and earlier view of the race-based hostility later faced by Latinos, Brazilians, and Haitians.

Interview subjects ranged from twenty-five to seventy-six years of age, with fifty-three years of age the median. Eighteen were women and twenty-seven were men. Confidentiality limits a more detailed description of interview subjects, although they are more fully described as they are quoted throughout this book. Pseudonyms match subjects' ethnic background. Interviews dealt with personal and family history; class, race, and ethnic meaning and identification; and education and job history. Most importantly, I asked about Somerville's social and political divisions and conflicts (and lack thereof), impressions of the city's political leadership, types of civic and political involvement, and visions of the future of the city. Interviews were sixty to ninety minutes long and took place in subjects' homes or offices. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

City reports, documents, and materials are readily available and are posted on the city's active and extensive website. Because Somerville is in a period of intense redevelopment, city reports are frequent and voluminous, including detailed city plans required as a condition of funding from federal Community Development Block Grants through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program for lower-income areas of the city. The city plan for the years 2008 to 2013 is some five hundred pages long (OSPCD 2008). I also regularly read two Somerville weekly newspapers considered locally as representing different political points of view, and I monitored websites of key community organizations and associations engaged in city issues. To supplement the interviews and review of written and published materials, I periodically attended meetings of various community nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations, including neighborhood associations, in addition to meetings sponsored by the mayor's office and city department, such as the Human Rights Commission and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development.

I analyzed all data—interview transcripts, documents and publications of various kinds, and field notes—using standard qualitative research practices, which aim for the inductive emergence of new ways of thinking (theory broadly defined). The first step is to create analytic categories that arise from the data. This contrasts with research where these categories are deduced post hoc from pre-existing theory. The next step is to use these emergent categories to systematically code all materials. Finally, I searched for relationships among categories as the basis for developing arguments informed by current theoretical knowledge and debates. The literature on this kind of methodology is well established (Berg 2009; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Esterberg 2002; Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Because this research is an in-depth qualitative study of the civic and political engagement and power politics of a single city, it contains both the strengths and weaknesses of a study that was not based on random samples of a population and was not intended to test hypotheses derived from existing theory. An important value of this kind of study is to provide rich close-to-the-ground qualitative data capable of inductively generating new thinking on a particular topic. Future research may assess that new thinking and its validity in other settings and under other conditions.

I have been somewhat involved in Somerville outside my role as a researcher, a practice that is not uncommon among ethnographic and qualitative researchers. I have for many years arranged for students at my university to do volunteer projects in Somerville community organizations. In the spring semester of 2007, students from one of my classes plus a class taught by a colleague conducted fourteen of the forty-five interviews used in this book. In 2008, I joined the board of directors of a Somerville immigrant advocacy organization called the Welcome Project, which I discuss in later chapters. My invitation to join that board and my acceptance of the offer demonstrate my sympathy toward the concerns and interests of the city's newer immigrants before and during my research.

Plan of the Book

Chapter 2 describes the city that is the subject of this book. The chapter offers a brief economic and political history, introduces its people in all of their diversity, and highlights the fundamental changes that Somerville is experiencing.

Chapter 3 tells the stories of how civic associations of various kinds—advocacy groups, neighborhood associations, and satellite groups affiliated with the city's community development corporation—act and how they

have both influenced and become an integral part of public decision making. I show how associations that were not listened to by earlier city administrations turned to an oppositional strategy, bringing several successful legal suits against city government for failing to include community input. The chapter explains how, as the city's reform-oriented young mayor came into office in 2004, active associations, along with city officials, chose more collaborative ways to achieve their goals, while retaining the option of a more adversarial relationship when needed.

Chapter 4 describes immigrant experiences in old and new Somerville as the actively engaged city residents I interviewed described them to me. I talked with first-generation Latino, Brazilian, and Haitian immigrants; first- and second-generation Greeks and Portuguese; and second-, third-, and fourth-generation Irish and Italians. A key focus of these interviews was the similarities and differences between different generations and racial-ethnic groups. The main points include the importance to actively engaged residents of Somerville's tradition as a city where immigrants are welcome and can make a better life for themselves and their families. Common themes are learning English and becoming American citizens. Defying stereotypes of white working-class ethnics as insensitive to matters of race, the actively engaged older white Irish and Italian immigrants I talked with seemed to recognize (often without my asking) that newer immigrants of color face barriers that white immigrants of earlier generations did not.

Chapter 5 is about immigrant civic and political engagement in Somerville, focusing on the newer Latino, Brazilian, and Haitian immigrants and their local allies and advocates. This chapter shows how these newer immigrants actively respond when events threaten them directly. It suggests that an essential condition for immigrant engagement is a local community that offers some measure of protection so that newer immigrants feel relatively safe to act collectively, even at a minimal level. The chapter suggests, as did the people I talked with, ways that local government might act affirmatively to remove barriers to full incorporation into the public life of the community (i.e., barriers to social citizenship that then become barriers to participation in shared governance and local democracy).

Chapter 6 examines what the people I interviewed had to say about the future of their city. Residents told me about the advantages and disadvantages of gentrification, and they offered differing views about their willingness to incorporate both non-immigrant middle-class and immigrant newcomers into the life of the city. This chapter discusses how Somerville residents came together despite their differences to express a common vision for their city. Here I give voice to expressions of appreciation for Somerville's

diversity, pride in its working-class and immigrant heritage, and excitement (along with worry) about improvements coming to the city in the next decade. Here in this common vision lies the possibility for Somerville to become a city where all residents can become full members of the community in an extension of social citizenship.

In Chapter 7, class, race, and immigration rise to the center of my analysis as I explore what seems to be the city's most bitter division: the struggle over who occupies elected positions in city government and how they are going to govern. Where Chapter 6 is about coming together, Chapter 7 is about coming apart and the possibility of remaking a city government and democratic process that today is not representative of the population of this changing city. I argue that the deeper struggle that underlies much of the civic and political engagement in the city is about how to extend or withhold the full membership of two very different groups of relative newcomers to Somerville: a community of immigrants, mostly from Central and South America and Haiti, some of whom who have lived in the city for two decades, and a growing number of middle-class, mostly white professionals. Some of the members of this new middle class are decades-long residents, and others are young families or young singles recently graduated from college. It is this struggle that will define who is and who is not able to obtain full social citizenship, with its accompanying opportunity to participate in local shared governance. Here rests the future of politics and power and the state of democracy in the public life of this rapidly changing city.