

Do Social Ties Encourage Immigrant Voters to Participate in Other Campaign Activities?*

Casey A. Klofstad, *University of Miami*

Benjamin G. Bishin, *University of California*

Objective. How do immigrants become politically active? While this process has been extensively studied, the role of ties to formal and informal institutions of society has been understudied. We test whether informal (political discussion) and formal (connections to community organizations) ties encourage immigrant voters to participate in other campaign activities. *Methods.* Data were collected through a 2008 exit poll of Miami-Dade County, Florida, USA voters. Along with assessing the bivariate relationship between social ties and campaign participation, we use a Poisson event count regression model to control for alternative explanations. *Results.* The positive relationship between social ties and campaign participation among immigrant voters disappears once we control for alternative explanations. There is, however, a positive relationship among the native born (including second-generation immigrants). *Conclusion.* Voters need to acquire personal resources, and become assimilated into American political culture, before social ties have an effect on campaign participation.

Immigrants comprise an ever-growing portion of the U.S. population (Camarota, 2007). They are also less politically active than native-born citizens (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet, 1989). If this trend does not change, the American government will become less representative of this growing population. What can pull this important constituency into the processes of democratic governance?

We already know that income, education, ethnicity, and strength of political preferences help explain why immigrants become politically active (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet, 1989). However, we have less understanding of the influence of social ties on immigrant political participation. To answer this question, we examine exit poll data we gathered in Miami-Dade County, Florida in 2008. Many studies of immigrants focus on the State of California. We add a new perspective by examining Miami-Dade County, home to a large and diverse immigrant community in the “swing state” of Florida.

*Direct correspondence to Casey Klofstad, Department of Political Science, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL 33146 (klofstad@gmail.com). We shall share all data and coding for replication purposes. We thank our student volunteers for helping collect the data, and the anonymous reviewers for their insights.

SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

© 2013 by the Southwestern Social Science Association

DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.12040

Our dependent variable is participation in campaign-related activities. In line with research showing that political discussion fosters political participation (McClurg, 2003; Sokhey and Djupe, 2011), informal social ties are measured as the frequency with which respondents discussed politics during the election. In line with research on how ties to civic organizations promote political participation (Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995), formal social ties are measured as having connections to organizations that solve problems within one's community.

We find no relationship between social ties and campaign participation among immigrant voters once we control for alternative explanations, especially personal resources (income and education), and political assimilation (strength of partisan preferences, and contact with organizations that mobilize voters). However, there is a positive relationship between social ties and campaign participation among native-born voters (including second-generation immigrants). These results suggest that voters need to acquire personal resources, and become assimilated into the American political culture, before social ties can influence their campaign participation. This said, as our results are based on immigrant voters, further study is needed to test the robustness of our findings in a more representative sample of immigrants.

Immigrant Political Incorporation

Understanding immigrant political incorporation—the manner and speed with which immigrants become politically active in their new country of residence—is essential to understanding contemporary American politics. In response, research on immigrant political incorporation has examined a wide variety of ethnic groups (Junn, 1999), historical periods (Erie, 1988), generational differences (DeSipio, 1996), sociopolitical contexts to which immigrants arrive (Eckstein, 2006), and the conditions from which émigrés leave (Portes and Mozo, 1985).

With some exceptions (Tam Cho, 1999; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001; Lien, 1994), most of these studies come to a common conclusion: immigrants incorporate into politics slowly because of their relatively low levels of income and educational attainment, both of which are critical antecedents of political participation (Barreto, 2005; Le, 2009; Leighley and Matsubayashi, 2009; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Tam Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck, 2006a; Verba et al., 1995).¹ As such, a wide range of studies show that incorporation increases the longer one resides in the United States, a factor that provides immigrants time to learn English (Bloemraad, 2006), assimilate into American

¹Income and education also increase the likelihood of being mobilized to participate (Barreto, 2005; Brady, Schlozman, and Verba, 1999). Nonetheless, immigrants are still mobilized during times of threat; Arab Americans after 9/11 (Tam Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006b) and Latinos in response to the anti-immigrant movement (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001, 2008).

culture, and enhance their financial standing and level of education (Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet, 1989; Wong, 2002; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001).

Émigrés' experiences in their home countries also affect how they participate in American politics (Eckstein, 2006). Political participation is habit forming (Fowler, 2006; Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003; Plutzer, 2002), such that immigrants who were politically active in their home countries are more likely to participate in the United States (Eckstein, 2006). An example germane to our case of Miami-Dade is Cuban Americans. Cubans who immigrated to the United States before 1980 are predominantly political refugees who emigrated to escape persecution under Fidel Castro (Bishin, 2009). This population also came to the United States with relatively high levels of education and income, has experienced economic success, and has been subjected to less discrimination, compared to other immigrant groups (Eckstein, 2006; Hill and Moreno, 1996; Moreno and Warren, 1992). Consequently, they have incorporated into American politics more quickly than other immigrant groups. In contrast, more recent Cuban immigrants, who are typically economic refugees, have incorporated into American politics more slowly (Eckstein, 2006; Portes and Mozo, 1985; Bishin and Klofstad, 2009).

Political incorporation is also affected by the fact that an individual's views about politics are formed early in life, largely due to familial socialization and attending school (Beck and Jennings, 1991; Cain, Roderick Kiewiet, and Uhlaner, 1991; Campbell et al., 1960; Jennings and Niemi, 1968). As the political context varies from country to country, immigrants will have been exposed to different socializing experiences during their younger years than those who were born and raised in the United States, and especially so if one emigrated from an undemocratic state (Tam Cho, 1999). Consequently, immigrants tend to have weaker political predispositions germane to American politics. For example, immigrants have weaker partisan preferences than native-born citizens (Alvarez and Bedolla, 2003; Cain, Roderick Kiewiet, and Uhlaner, 1991; Tam Cho, 1999; Wong, 2000). Moreover, each of these studies shows that the longer an immigrant has resided in the United States, the more opportunities that person has had to learn and form preferences about American politics.

What About Social Ties?

The process of creating social connections has received far less attention in the incorporation literature. Incorporation into society is hastened as one generates informal social ties with the people in one's new community (Putnam, 2000). Likewise, the amount of political discussion occurring in an individual's social network correlates with his or her level of political participation (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Klofstad, 2011; Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998; McClurg, 2003; Sokhey and Djupe, 2011). Such discussions promote political participation because they increase one's knowledge of, and engagement with, politics (Klofstad, 2011; McClurg, 2003).

Along with informal social ties, incorporation into society is enabled by building formal group affiliations (e.g., membership in a voluntary civic organization). Research shows that these activities increase the likelihood of becoming politically active (Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995), that building such affiliations takes time (Putnam, 2000), and that participation in formal social institutions is highly contingent on one's level of personal resources (Verba et al., 1995), which take immigrants time to accrue.

Hypothesis

We anticipated that traditionally studied antecedents of the process, such as language acquisition, personal resources, and political engagement, will continue to have a positive influence even after accounting for politically relevant social ties.

Given the discussion above, one might assume that social ties will positively influence the immigrant political incorporation. However, individuals can only be influenced to participate in political activities if they are already predisposed to do so (Klofstad, 2011; Verba et al., 1995). That is, we need more basic requisites of political participation, such as language acquisition, personal resources, and political engagement, before those around us can influence us to become politically active. Given that these prerequisites for participation are more likely to be held by the offspring of immigrants, we assume that the influence of social ties on political participation will be stronger among the children of immigrants than among their parents.

Data and Method

The 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

The poll was conducted in Miami-Dade County, Florida between October 22, 2008 and Election Day, November 4, 2008 (early voting occurred at 20 sites at which any voter in the county could cast a ballot between October 20 and November 2). In line with best practices (e.g., Mitofsky, 1991), interviewers attempted to recruit every third voter leaving the polling place to complete a self-administered questionnaire. In total, 2,399 voters participated, and 1,926 voters refused, yielding an AAPOR Cooperation Rate 2 of 55.5 percent. Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire in either English or Spanish.

Polling was conducted at 19 sites during the 2008 early voting period; sites with higher turnout rates in 2004 were polled more frequently (the sites were the same in 2004 and 2008). On Election Day, 57 of the 766 polling places in the county were surveyed. In line with best practices (e.g., Mitofsky, 1991), these locations were randomly selected after being assigned numbers from a

cumulative probability distribution that corresponded to the proportion of the electorate currently registered to vote at each location.

Miami-Dade is a useful laboratory for examining immigrant political participation for a number of reasons. First, the immigrant population is large (2007 Census estimates show that 24 percent of Miami-Dade residents are naturalized citizens). Second, the immigrant population in Miami-Dade is diverse. While our sample of immigrants is predominantly Hispanic/Latino² (64 percent), these individuals emigrated from a number of different nations, including Cuba (40 percent), Columbia (7 percent), Nicaragua (6 percent), and Puerto Rico (5 percent). Moreover, while a majority of the immigrants in our study voted for Barack Obama in 2008 (63 percent), over 30 percent did not (due to the Cuban-American community's support for the Republican Party). Third, as the most populous area in the "swing state" of Florida, Miami-Dade is a politically relevant area to study.

We cannot make inferences about nonvoters with our data. However, by studying voters, we are able to gain a better understanding of how social ties influence the behavior of immigrants who have already become, at least somewhat, politically incorporated. Moreover, this feature of our study could be seen as an asset because voters are a "most likely" case (Gerring, 2001) of social ties leading to political participation. More specifically, voters are politically engaged. As such, they should be more likely to discuss politics, participate in community groups, and participate in campaign activities than nonvoters. Consequently, we would expect to find a positive relationship between these variables in our sample of immigrant voters. Since we did not, we are unlikely to find such a relationship among immigrants who do not vote.

Immigration Status

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for participants in the exit poll. Immigration status was determined by asking: "Which of your relatives first immigrated to the US: 'I did', 'Mother/Father', 'Grandparent(s)', or 'Other'?" Respondents who answered "I did" are treated as immigrants ($N = 363$), while all other respondents are treated as native born ($N = 2,035$).

Dependent Variable: Campaign Participation

Respondents were asked: "During the 2008 election year did you: work/volunteer for a political party or candidate, attend meetings or rallies for a candidate or political party, post a yard sign/bumper sticker/wear a campaign button, or donate money to a political party or candidate?" The measure of campaign participation is a zero-to-four count of how many of these types of activities the respondent reported engaging in.

²Following de la Garza (2004), we use these terms interchangeably.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Political participation	2,399	0.00	4.00	0.93	1.10
Political discussion	2,399	1.00	4.00	3.58	0.76
Ties to formal community organizations	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.35	0.48
Immigrant	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.15	0.36
Strength of partisanship	2,399	1.00	3.00	2.17	0.73
Education	2,399	1.00	6.00	4.08	1.49
Income	2,399	1.00	7.00	4.09	1.79
Contacted by party or other organization	2,399	0.00	2.00	1.20	0.78
Date of immigration	2,399	1.00	6.00	2.20	1.32
Non-English language spoken at home	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.59	0.49
Sex (female)	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.55	0.50
Race (white)	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.32	0.47
Race (black)	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.20	0.40
Race (Hispanic)	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.46	0.50
Country of origin (Cuba)	2,399	0.00	1.00	0.30	0.46

NOTES: To account for missing data, the data were processed using the Amelia II multiple imputation package for R (Honaker et al., 2007; King et al., 2001). The data set was imputed five times. All dichotomous variables were imputed using the nominal transformation, and all other variables (other than age) were imputed using the ordinal transformation.

SOURCE: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll.

Social Ties

Informal social ties were measured by asking: “Over the past few months, how often have you talked with other people about the election: often, sometimes, rarely, or never?” This approach is more parsimonious than the multi-question “name generator” procedure used in other social network studies (see Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe, 2009 for a review). Since exit poll participants are motivated to complete the questionnaire quickly, we used a simpler single question approach. Formal social ties are operationalized as having connections to community organizations; in response to the question that asked respondents what they do to resolve problems in their community, individuals who selected “work through existing groups or organizations” are treated as having such ties.

Traditionally Studied Antecedents of Political Incorporation

Two measures of cultural assimilation are included in the analysis. We examine date of immigration, as immigrants who have lived in the United

States for a longer period of time are more likely to have been socialized to American politics, making them more likely to participate in the process (Wong, 2000). As language acquisition is also an antecedent of immigrant political participation (Wong, 2000), we also include a measure of whether the respondent speaks a language other than English in the home.

A second set of measures captures respondents' personal resources. Based on the strong relationship between education and political participation (Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998; Verba et al., 1995), education is included in the analysis by employing a question that asked: "What was the last year of school that you completed: less than high school, high school graduate, some college, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, or postgraduate study/degree?" Under the same logic, we also account for yearly income.

Third, the analysis accounts for political assimilation. As strength of political preferences is an indicator of a person's propensity to participate in civil society (Verba et al., 1995; Wong, 2000), we include strength of partisan preferences in our analysis. The exit poll questionnaire asked respondents: "No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as a(n): Strong Democrat, Democrat, Independent, Republican, or Strong Republican?" The partisan strength measure "folds" the partisanship scale into a one-to-three ordinal scale that runs from Independent to Strong Partisan. Also given that individuals who are asked to become politically active are more likely to do so (Klofstad, 2011; Verba et al., 1995), and given that political parties and other political organizations tend to only recruit individuals who are already likely to become politically active (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba, 1999), we account for whether respondents were contacted by a political party or other political organization during the course of the 2008 election.

Demographic Controls

We also account for sex, age, and race. Race is broken into indicator variables for whites, blacks, and Hispanics to account for interethnic differences in political behavior (Bishin and Klofstad, 2012). The omitted racial categories were Haitian and "other." We also account for whether the respondent is of Cuban heritage, as Cuban Americans are a plurality of our immigrant sample, tend to be more Republican, and many have higher incomes and levels of education than other immigrant groups (Eckstein, 2006). This is especially the case among Cuban-American voters, who are more incorporated into the American political system than Cuban-American nonvoters (Bishin and Klofstad, 2009).

Method of Analysis

The relationship between political discussion (i.e., informal social ties) and political participation has been challenged because it is difficult to determine

if discussion influences us or if our own patterns of behavior influence how we select and interact with our discussants (see Klobstad, 2011 for a review). The influence of political discussion on campaign participation can be measured with greater precision, however, by preprocessing observational data with a matching procedure (Dunning, 2008; Ho et al., 2007a, 2007b). Akin to a controlled experiment, under this procedure, the influence of political discussion is measured by comparing the participation levels of respondents who are similar to one another, save that one engaged in political discussion and the other did not.³

More specifically, we performed a “full matching” procedure (Gu and Rosenbaum, 1993; Hansen, 2004; Ho et al., 2007a, 2007b; Rosenbaum, 1991; Stuart and Green, 2008), using the “MatchIt” package for R (Ho et al., 2007a, 2007b), which makes use of the “optmatch” package (Hansen, 2004). In total, 24 pretreatment variables were used in the matching procedure. This set of variables included demographics, political preferences, strength of political preferences, and political engagement.

The procedure involved three steps. First, respondents who engaged in an above-average amount of political discussion during the 2008 election were classified as having been treated ($N = 1,693$), while those who engaged in a below-average amount of political discussion were classified as untreated ($N = 706$). Second, the variables included in the matching procedure were used to estimate a score of one’s propensity to engage in political discussion (Hansen, 2004; Ho et al., 2007a, 2007b). Third, at least one untreated case was matched to at least one treated case based on how close the propensity scores were between treated and untreated (i.e., a process of creating “subclasses” where more than one treated subject could be matched to an untreated subject, and vice versa). Each untreated case was only matched to one treated case, and vice versa (i.e., matching without replacement). After a case was matched, it could be moved and matched to a different case in order to improve the overall similarity between treated and untreated subjects (i.e., the process is “optimal” not “greedy”). Unlike other forms of matching, each case in the original data set is included in the matched data set (i.e., cases are not discarded).

The matching procedure successfully increased the similarity, or “balance” (Ho et al., 2007a, 2007b), between subjects who did and did not engage in political discussion. The overall improvement in balance, as measured by the subject’s estimated propensity to engage in political discussion (i.e., the propensity score created by the matching procedure), increased by 99.88 percent.

The results of the matching procedure were incorporated into the analysis by weighting the regression models presented in the results section. Treated

³While matching does not directly account for unobserved differences between those who did and did not discuss politics (Arceneaux, Gerber, and Green, 2006), the procedure accounts for an extensive set of covariates. Moreover, unobserved differences are accounted for by proxy because they correlate with observed differences (Stuart and Green, 2008).

cases were given a weight of 1, while untreated cases were assigned a weight equal to the number of treated cases in the subclass that they were assigned to, divided by the number of untreated cases in the subclass that they were assigned to. This weight causes the regression model to pay more attention to untreated cases that are similar to treated cases, and less attention to untreated cases that are dissimilar to treated cases, making the analysis a more precise comparison of the treated and untreated cases.

Using the weight describe above, we conducted a multivariate regression analysis of native-born, immigrant, and second-generation immigrant campaign participation. These analyses were conducted using Poisson regression in the Zelig package of the R statistical computing program (Imai, King, and Lau, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Poisson was used because our dependent variable is a count of campaign activities (ordered probit, ordered logit, and negative binomial models produce comparable results). As Poisson coefficients are not readily interpretable, substantive interpretations were derived using the “setx” and “sim” procedures in Zelig. All substantive interpretations of coefficients are calculated holding all other factors in the regression model at their means.

Findings

Immigrant voters scored a mean of 3.5 on the political discussion scale, while native-born voters scored a mean of 3.6 ($t = -0.47, p = 0.46$). Substantively, this means that both groups engaged in political discussion somewhere between “sometimes” and “often.” In contrast, immigrant voters were less likely to have ties to formal institutions in the community (immigrants: 26 percent, native born: 37 percent; $t = -4.12, p < 0.01$).

Table 2 shows that native-born voters who discussed politics were 63 percent more active in campaign activities (an expected increase from 0.60 acts to 0.98 acts); ties to community groups increased participation by 32 percent (an expected increase from 0.77 acts to 1.02 acts).⁴ Second-generation immigrant voters who engaged in political discussion were 59 percent more active in campaign activities (an expected increase from 0.56 acts to 0.89 acts); ties to community groups increased campaign participation by 44 percent (an expected increase from 0.68 acts to 0.97 acts).⁵ In contrast, we find no systematic relationship between social ties and campaign participation among immigrant voters.⁶

⁴If disaggregated by the individual campaign acts, the relationship between ties to community organizations and donating money is not significant ($b = 0.23, p = 0.14$).

⁵If disaggregated by the individual campaign acts, the relationship between exposure to political discussion and volunteering for a campaign is only a trend ($b = 0.72, p = 0.11$). The same is true of the relationship between ties to community organizations and posting a sign, and so forth ($b = 0.36, p = 0.11$), and donating money ($b = 0.40, p = 0.11$).

⁶Without matching, *Discussion* is close to significant ($b = 0.25, SE = 0.17, p = 0.14$), and *Community Organizations* is significant ($b = 0.37, SE = 0.17, p = 0.02$). If disaggregated by the individual campaign acts, the relationship between ties to community organizations and volunteering for a campaign is marginally significant ($b = 1.19, p = 0.09$).

TABLE 2

The Relationship Between Social Ties and Campaign Participation

	Native Born	Immigrants	Second Generation
Social ties			
Informal (political discussion)	0.51*** (0.10)	0.21 (0.20)	0.48** (0.17)
Formal (ties to community organizations)	0.28*** (0.05)	0.29 (0.22)	0.33*** (0.08)
Cultural assimilation			
Date of immigration	—	-0.06 (0.07)	—
Non-English language spoken at home	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.22)	0.12 (0.14)
Personal resources			
Education	0.05*** (0.02)	0.10* (0.06)	0.03 (0.03)
Income	0.05*** (0.02)	0.15** (0.06)	0.06* (0.03)
Political assimilation			
Strength of partisanship	0.22*** (0.04)	0.47*** (0.10)	0.27*** (0.06)
Party/other contact	0.30*** (0.04)	0.40*** (0.10)	0.33*** (0.06)
Demographic controls			
Sex (female)	0.04 (0.05)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.10)
Age	-0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.01)	-0.004 (0.003)
Race: white	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.25)	-0.01 (0.10)
Race: black	-0.10 (0.09)	0.04 (0.27)	-0.26* (0.15)
Race: Hispanic	-0.14 (0.08)	0.12 (0.21)	-0.19* (0.11)
Ethnicity (Cuban)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.10 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.10)
Constant	-1.67*** (0.20)	-3.23*** (0.84)	-1.73*** (0.34)
Akaike's information criterion (AIC)	5,179	790	2,121
N	2,034	363	884

NOTE: Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) is twice the number of parameters in the model, minus twice the value of the model's log likelihood.

MODEL TYPE: Poisson (Imai et al., 2007a).

SOURCE: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll.

* $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$ (robust standard errors in parentheses).

Table 2 also suggests that cultural assimilation has little influence on campaign participation, likely because the variance in campaign participation that might be explained by cultural assimilation is explained by other control variables. For example, more recent immigrants have weaker partisan ties ($r = -0.12$, $p = 0.04$). Likewise, speaking a language other than English in the home correlates with weaker partisanship among all three groups of respondents (native born: $t = -82.49$, $p < 0.01$; immigrants: $t = -30.24$, $p < 0.01$; second generation: $t = -46.79$, $p < 0.01$).

Personal resources and political assimilation positively affected all three groups examined in Table 2, with the exception of the education among the second generation (the coefficient is positively signed, however).

Sex, age, race, and ethnicity have little influence on campaign participation. The variance in campaign participation that might be explained by these demographics is likely explained by other control variables. For example, among the entire sample women earn less income than men ($t = 5.03$, $p < 0.01$), individuals with higher incomes are more likely to be contacted by parties or other political groups ($r = 0.11$, $p < 0.01$), whites earn more income than all other racial groups ($t = 11.42$, $p < 0.01$), blacks and Hispanics are less well educated than all other racial groups (blacks: $t = -6.61$, $p < 0.01$; Hispanics: $t = -1.77$, $p < 0.01$), and Cuban Americans have weaker partisan preferences than all other ethnicities ($t = -5.95$, $p < 0.01$).

This said, second-generation blacks and Hispanics were less active in campaign activities. Second-generation blacks may be less active because they have weaker partisan preference than all other blacks ($t = -2.84$, $p < 0.01$). The case of second-generation Hispanics is more complicated; when compared to all other Hispanics they engage in equal amounts of political discussion ($t = 0.36$, $p = 0.72$), have stronger ties to community organizations ($t = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$), have equally strong partisan preferences ($t = 1.07$, $p = 0.29$), are marginally more well educated ($t = 1.73$, $p = 0.10$), have higher incomes ($t = 3.00$, $p < 0.01$) and were equally likely to have been contacted by a political organization ($t = -1.06$, $p = 0.30$). However, second-generation Hispanics are younger than all other Hispanics in the sample ($t = -6.23$, $p < 0.01$). Consequently, it could be that this subgroup of our sample is mimicking a common pattern, whereby college-educated, well-to-do, younger Americans are engaged with their community, and yet simultaneously disengaged from “traditional” party politics (Klofstad, 2011).

Discussion and Conclusion

We find that while immigrant and native-born voters engaged in the same amount of political discussion during the 2008 election, this informal social tie had no influence on campaign participation. The same can be said of formal ties to community organizations. In contrast, both types of social ties increased the likelihood that native-born voters participated in campaign activities.

The magnitudes of these effects were equal between the native-born and second-generation immigrants. Otherwise stated, when it comes to campaign participation, our data suggest that second-generation immigrant voters are nearly identical to all other native-born voters in our sample (DeSipio, 1996).

These findings suggest that personal resources and political assimilation are more critical to the process of immigrant political incorporation than ties to social institutions. However, despite the fact that we do not find a relationship between cultural assimilation and campaign participation, we do not conclude that cultural assimilation is irrelevant to immigrant political incorporation. Our results show that the variance that might have been explained by cultural assimilation is explained by personal resources and political assimilation. As such, we conclude that cultural assimilation is farther back, and personal resources and political assimilation closer, in the causal chain between the initiation and completion of the political incorporation process.

Our results also resonate with recent findings from the social networks literature that show that the relationship between political discussion and political participation is mitigated by individual-level characteristics. For example, McClurg (2003) finds that less well-educated individuals participate in fewer civic activities as a consequence of engaging in political discussion than their more well-educated counterparts. Klofstad (2011) finds that individuals who lack prior experience participating in civic activities, have low levels of political interest, and have weak political preferences, do not become more civically active as a result of discussing politics. Likewise, our data show that discussion only stimulates participation among those who are likely to already be more incorporated into the American political system, namely, the native born.

This study is among the first to examine immigrant political incorporation in light of research on social networks and political discussion. Our study is also among the first to study immigrants living outside of California. While our inferences are based on a unique set of political activities (campaign activities), and a unique sample of immigrants (voters in Miami-Dade County, Florida, USA), they provide insight into the political behavior of immigrants who, by way of voting, have already been incorporated to some degree into the American political system. Our data thus represent a “most likely” case of social ties leading to political participation. Voters are more likely to discuss politics, participate in community groups, and participate in campaign activities than nonvoters. Consequently, there should be a positive relationship between social ties and campaign participation in our sample of first-generation immigrant voters. Since we did not find such a relationship, we are unlikely to find such a relationship among immigrants who do not vote, that is, those who are not yet incorporated into the American political system.

Future research should seek to address the limitations to this study. By employing a more representative sample of immigrants, and gathering information from both immigrants and their political discussants to identify whom immigrants choose to engage in political dialogue with, and what occurs during these discussions, scholars can better assess whether the types of social

ties held by immigrants are sufficient to encourage political participation (e.g., perhaps their ties are less knowledgeable about politics).⁷ More extensive data should also be gathered on formal forms of social ties. For example, it would be useful to know what types of community organizations immigrants belong to, and how active they are in them, rather than rely on a simple dichotomous measure as we have in the current study. Data also need to be collected on a more diverse array of political activities. In examining campaign participation, we have focused on a relatively “sophisticated” form of political activism. Additional data are needed to see if social ties influence other forms of civic acts, such as voluntarism, protesting, and voting.

The past 50 years have seen the American public become less civically active just as the foreign born have begun to comprise a larger portion of the population (Putman, 2000; but also see McDonald and Popkin, 2001). To the extent that immigrants are less politically active than native-born citizens, these trends pose a serious challenge to the strength of participatory democracy because the needs of this growing population are unlikely to be recognized by the government. As the foreign-born population grows, there is a need to continue discussing this problem as it is becoming more acute. We see this study as a useful first step in incorporating social ties into the political incorporation debate.

REFERENCES

- Alvarez, R. Michael, and Lisa García Bedolla. 2003. “The Foundations of Latino Voter Partisanship.” *Journal of Politics* 65:31–49.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, Alan S. Gerber, and Donald P. Green. 2006. “Comparing Experimental and Matching Methods Using a Large-Scale Voter Mobilization Experiment.” *Political Analysis* 14:37–62.
- Barreto, Matt A. 2005. “Latino Immigrants and the Polls: Foreign-Born Voter Turnout in the 2002 Election.” *Political Research Quarterly* 58:79–86.
- Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. “Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations.” *Journal of Politics* 53:742–63.
- Bishin, Benjamin G. 2009. *Tyranny of the Minority: The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Bishin, Benjamin G., and Casey A. Klofstad. 2012. “The Political Incorporation of Cuban Americans: Why Won’t Little Havana Turn Blue?” *Political Research Quarterly*. 65(3):586–99.
- . 2009. “Deceit, Diversity, or Mobilization?: Intra-Ethnic Diversity and Changing Patterns in Florida’s Hispanic Vote.” *Social Science Journal* 46:571–83.
- Bloemraad, Irene. 2006. *Becoming a Citizen*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

⁷Results not presented here suggest that the fact that immigrants exchange fewer opinions while discussing politics could explain the lack of a relationship between discussion and participation. However, this result was not significant ($p = 0.25$).

- Brady, Henry E., Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 1999. "Prospecting for Participants: Rational Expectations and the Recruitment of Political Activists." *American Political Science Review* 93:153–68.
- Cain, Bruce E., D. Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole J. Uhlaner. 1991. "The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(2):390–422.
- Camarota, Steve A. 2007. "Immigrants in the United States, 2007: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population." Center for Immigration Studies Background Paper. Available at <<http://www.cis.org>>.
- Campbell, A., P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller, and D. E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O. 2004. "Latino Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7:91–123.
- DeSipio, Louis. 1996. "Making Citizens or Good Citizens? Naturalization as a Predictor of Organizational and Electoral Behavior Among Latino Immigrants." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18(2):194–213.
- Dunning, T. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61:282–93.
- Eckstein, Susan. 2006. "Cuban Émigrés and the American Dream." *Perspectives on Politics* 4:297–307.
- Erie, Steven. 1988. *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fowler, James 2006. "Habitual Voting and Behavioral Turnout." *Journal of Politics* 68:335–44.
- Gerber, A., D. Green, and R. Shachar. 2003. "Voting May be Habit-Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 47:540–50.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gu, X., and P. Rosenbaum 1993. "Comparison of Multivariate Matching Methods." *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics* 2:405–20.
- Hansen, B. B. 2004. "Full Matching in an Observational Study of Coaching for the SAT." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 99:609–18.
- Hill, Kevin A., and Dario Moreno. 1996. "Second-Generation Cubans." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 18:175–93.
- Ho, D., K. Imai, G. King, and E. Stuart. 2007a. "Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference." *Political Analysis* 15:199–236.
- . 2007b. Matchit: Nonparametric Preprocessing for Parametric Causal Inference. Available at <<http://gking.harvard.edu>>.
- Honaker, J., G. King, and M. Blackwell. 2007. Amelia II: A Program for Missing Data. Available at <<http://gking.harvard.edu>>.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.
- Imai, Kosuke, Gary King, and Olivia Lau. 2007a. "Poisson: Poisson Regression for Event Count Dependent Variables." In Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Olivia Lau, eds., *Zelig: Everyone's Statistical Software*. Available at <<http://gking.harvard.edu/zelig>>.
- . 2007b. "Toward a Common Framework for Statistical Analysis and Development." *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics* 17:892–913.

- . 2007c. *Zelig: Everyone's Statistical Software*. Available at <<http://gking.harvard.edu/zelig>>.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review* 62:169–84.
- Junn, Jane. 1999. "Participation in Liberal Democracy: The Political Assimilation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in the United States." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42: 1417–38.
- King, G., J. Honaker, A. Joseph, and K. Scheve. 2001. "Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data." *American Political Science Review* 95:49–69.
- Klofstad, Casey A. 2011. *Civic Talk: Peers, Politics, and the Future of Democracy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple Press.
- Klofstad, Casey A., Scott D. McClurg, and Meredith Rolfe. 2009. "Measurement of Political Discussion Networks." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73:462–83.
- Lake, R. L., and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation." *Political Psychology* 19:567–83.
- Le, C. N. 2009. Demographic Characteristics of Immigrants. *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*. Available at <<http://www.asian-nation.org>>.
- Leighley, Jan E., and Tetsuya Matsubayash. 2009. "The Implications of Class, Race, and Ethnicity for Political Networks." *American Politics Research* 37(5):824–55.
- Lien, Pei-te. 1994 "Ethnicity and Political Participation: A Comparison Between Asians and Mexican Americans." *Political Behavior* 16:237–64.
- McClurg, Scott D. 2003. "Social Networks and Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 56:449–64.
- McDonald, Michael, and Samuel Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95:963–74.
- Mitofsky, Warren J. 1991. "A Short History of Exit Polls." In Paul J. Lavrakas and Jack K. Holley, eds., *Polling and Presidential Election Coverage*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Moreno, Dario, and Christopher L. Warren. 1992. "The Conservative Enclave: Cubans in Florida." In Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Louis DeSipio, eds., *From Rhetoric to Reality: Latino Politics in the 1988 Elections*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity." *Political Research Quarterly* 54:729–50.
- . 2008. "Commentary on 'Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity'." *Political Research Quarterly* 61:50–52.
- Plutzer, E. 2002. "Becoming a Habitual Voter." *American Political Science Review* 96:41–56.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Rafael Mozo. 1985. "The Political Adaptation Process of Cubans and Other Ethnic Minorities in the United States." *International Migration Review* 19:35–63.
- Putnam, R. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick. 2005. *Democracy in Immigrant America: Changing Demographics and Political Participation*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick, and Thomas J. Espenshade. 2001. "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States." *International Migration Review* 35:870–909.
- Rosenbaum, P. 1991. "A Characterization of Optimal Designs for Observational Studies." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 53:597–610.

- Sohkey, Anand E., and Paul A. Djupe. 2011. "Interpersonal Networks and Democratic Politics." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44:55–59.
- Stuart, Elizabeth A., and Kerry M. Green. 2008. "Using Full Matching to Estimate Causal Effects in Nonexperimental Studies." *Developmental Psychology* 44:395–406.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K. 1999. "Naturalization, Socialization, Participation: Immigrants and (Non-)Voting." *Journal of Politics* 61:1140–55.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K., James G. Gimpel, and Joshua J. Dyck. 2006a. "Residential Concentration, Political Socialization, and Voter Turnout." *Journal of Politics* 68:156–67.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K., James G. Gimpel, and Tony Wu. 2006b. "Clarifying the Role of SES in Political Participation: Policy Threat and Arab American Mobilization." *Journal of Politics* 68:977–91.
- Uhlener, Carole J., Bruce E. Cain, and Roderick Kiewiet. 1989. "Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s." *Political Behavior* 11:195–231.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wong, J. S. 2000. "The Effects of Age and Political Exposure on the Development of Party Identification Among Asian American and Latino Immigrants in the United States." *Political Behavior* 22:341–71.