

A Policy Approach to Overcome Pre-Immigration Barriers to Participation in the Latinx Immigrant Community

Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences

1–21

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0739986320956911

journals.sagepub.com/home/hjb

Javier M. Rodríguez¹, Rafael A. Jimeno²,
Carlos A. Echeverría-Estrada¹,
and Sandra P. García¹

Abstract

Policies to encourage socio-political participation of Latinx immigrants in the United States heavily rely on the primacy of assimilation processes resulting from immigrants' exposure to the American political system alone. However, this approach overlooks the potential layers of complexity fostered by pre-immigration factors and how these interact with immigrants' experiences in the U.S. We conduct a multinomial logit analysis using data from the 2006 Latino National Survey and emergent research on the impact of pre-immigration experiences to determine what factors can both activate participation and be influenced by institutions and policy makers in the U.S. Though we find that low levels of socio-political participation among Latinx immigrants strongly correlate with low levels of pre-immigration participation, for the outlier cases we analyze what factors contribute to increase participation once in the U.S. Results demonstrate the need for

¹Claremont Graduate University, CA, USA

²Southeast DREAMS Magnet, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Javier M. Rodríguez, Department of Politics and Government – Inequality and Policy Research Center, Claremont Graduate University, 170 E. 10th Street, Claremont, CA 91711, USA.

Email: javier.rodriguez@cgu.edu

political parties and organizations to increase the long-term investment in young Latinx immigrants.

Keywords

immigrant incorporation, politica participation, pré-immigration, Latinx immigrants, immigration policy

In an era of increasing political polarization election outcomes in the United States have exacerbated the divergences between political paths. Recently, the U.S. presidential election of 2016 and Donald Trump's presidency have shown that both processes—one, who is mobilized during elections; the other, whose interests are crystallized in policy in the aftermath—have different effects across sociodemographic subgroups. In particular, the profile of recently naturalized citizens that are engaging in civic and political life is of interest to comprehend the nuances of these processes of political socialization. This paper focuses on the pre-immigration barriers that Latinx immigrants face in their political re-socialization process and theorizes about the policies that could help overcome such barriers.

Latinx immigrants continue increasing their share of the potential electorate. By November 2020, it is expected that 32 million Latinx voters will be eligible to vote, most of this growth has come from the young U.S.-born Latinx that have come of voting age (Cilluffo & Richard, 2020; Flores & Lopez, 2018). The voter turnout rate of naturalized Latinx immigrants who arrived in the 1990s shifted from 41.2% to 47.2% between the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. In 2016, voter turnout among Latinx naturalized citizens was 53.4%—considerably higher than the 45.5% turnout among U.S.-born Latinx (Krogstad & López, 2017; Nuño, 2007). Yet, as many Latinx immigrants are politically socialized early in their country of origin, their post-immigration socialization into the American political system may be influenced by pre-immigration factors that may constitute determinant moderators of their process of political incorporation and life experiences in the U.S.

There is a rich literature on how Latinx immigrants interact with existing political institutions and other sociodemographic groups in the U.S., and on how their attitudes and behaviors evolve to incorporate themselves into their new political environment. This body of research, however, almost exclusively asserts the primacy of acculturation processes that mostly depend on immigrants' experiences in the host nation (Bedolla, 2006, 2012; Bohon et al., 2005; Chávez et al., 2015; Frasure-Yokley, 2015; Junn, 1999; Lopez-Bunyasi, 2015; Nuño, 2007; Sanchez & Masuoka, 2010; Valenzuela &

Michelson, 2016; Vélez-Ibañez et al., 2002; Wilkinson, 2018; Wong, 2000). Consequently, most of the existing models that inform policy prescriptions to improve immigrants' socio-political participation overlook the implications that pre-immigration factors have on their host country incorporation (Bogdan & Mircea, 2014; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; White et al., 2008; Wong, 2000). The absence of pre-immigration factors in the research agenda has led scholars, policy makers, and civic and political institutions (i.e., advocacy groups, community organizations, and parties) to pursue policy alternatives focused principally on the enhancement of immigrants' civic, yet not necessarily political, engagement, and on their socioeconomic status in the U.S., especially education (Bohon et al., 2005; Santiago & Brown, 2004; Wainer, 2006).

To fill this void, we examine what policies could activate Latinx immigrants' political participation in the U.S. This research builds up on the theory of the pre-immigration factors of socialization and early socialization to inquire which immigrants are most likely to participate in groups of social, political, and civic action in the U.S., conditioned by their participation patterns in socio-political life before migrating. In particular, we focus on the transition between pre- and post-immigration patterns of political participation using the definitions provided by the Fraga et al. (2013): (1) any level of activity in a political party, a political organization, or in any type of interest-seeking organization (i.e., student, labor, or paramilitary) before migrating to the U.S.; and (2) active engagement in any social, cultural, civic or political group in the U.S.

Our normative approach to policy is innovative in assuming immigrants arrive in the host nation at different life stages, bringing with them: different levels of receptivity to new information, usually higher for the young and lower for adults; different needs as a function of life-related events, like marriage and having children, most notable among young adults; and different propensities to continue employing values, attitudes, and information from their country of origin after migrating, arguably higher for adults and lower for the younger ones. Research on early socialization suggests that immigrants arrive with persistent psychosocial characteristics—among them political attitudes, orientations, and ideology—they use as heuristics to assimilate the characteristics of the new environment, as a tool to make sense of the political map in the United States (Pantoja et al., 2013; Wals, 2011, 2013).

Immigrants' psychosocial baggage may impact their ability to adapt and effectively participate in the socio-political environment of the host nation. We contend that immigrants' attitudes and experiences generated and occurred in their countries of origin strongly influence their post-migration processes of political socialization, either increasing or decreasing

their likelihood of political participation in the U.S., and that such political re-socialization is malleable to policy interventions. This is consistent with a growing body of research that recognizes the importance of pre-immigration factors in the immigrants' patterns of political participation (Bilodeau & White, 2016; DeSipio, 2006; Finifter & Finifter, 1989; Waldinger et al., 2012; Wals, 2010, 2011, 2013). Data analyses from different surveys exemplify this phenomenon among Mexican immigrants in the U.S. finding a strong influence of prior socialization on their preference to avoid contact with government authorities; on whether they approach government officials to address an issue of concern; and on their naturalization patterns (Jones-Correa & Andalón, 2008; Wals, 2011). Likewise, socialization research suggests that some of these characteristics are more malleable than others. There are groups of immigrants that could be more favorably encouraged to participate in policy initiatives and programs than others. Instead of pursuing a "one-size-fits-all" policy strategy for a community inherently diverse, it is imperative to allocate scarce governmental and institutional resources, at least initially, to those immigrants who would benefit the most from them.

In a review of historic and philosophical principles of immigrant political participation, some scholars have opened an avenue to strengthening the legitimacy of democratic life in the United States, especially for Latinx immigrants (Bedolla, 2006, 2012; Chávez et al., 2015; Erikson, 2010; Junn, 1999; Lopez-Bunyasi, 2015; Wilkinson, 2018). In particular, (Bedolla, 2006) suggested to promote "noncitizen voting at the local level and expanding opportunities for participation within community decision-making structures" (p. 61), using the example of decision-making processes in local governments and school boards. García Bedolla's proposal—particularly on noncitizen voting—would at least involve legislative interventions on younger immigrant communities whose pre-immigration experiences are still salient. We agree with and support García Bedolla's framework and the potentially constructive contribution of these suggestions. Thus, this paper goes one step further proposing an intervention variable to run through bureaucratic and policy channels already in place, particularly the education system and the political parties, accounting for pre-immigration patterns of participation.

Our model accounts for pre-immigration socialization in Latin American nations and for the process of re-socialization immigrants undergo once in the U.S. It captures the behavior of both pre-immigration participants and non-participants given that many Latinx immigrants who participated in their countries of origin do not participate once in the U.S. Therefore, the dominant assessments of the effectiveness of resources put at the service of immigrants to increase their rates of political participation in the U.S. are

incomplete and may be biased if analyzed only from a post-migration perspective. Such approach assumes that variation in key socio-political variables is a process that primarily takes place in the host nation. We recognize the importance and salience of processes that are unique to the environment of the host nation. However, such variation is also influenced by *a priori* political experiences that took place before migrating (Black et al., 1987; Jones-Correa & Andalon, 2008; McCann & Chávez, 2016; Wals, 2010, 2011, 2013), affecting how immigrants engage in voter registration and interpret legislation, and how they react to the current political climate. Some pre-immigration factors, like partisanship, have been captured by the country of origin in the case of Asian immigrants (Phan & Garcia, 2009) and Latinx immigrants in the U.S. Accounting for this, our model uniquely features a dependent variable that captures patterns of pre- and post-immigration socio-political participation.

Following Sears (1981, 1983); Sears and Levy (2003), we take into account four main theories of socialization useful to place immigrants in their early and later contexts of socialization: (1) The Persistence model, (2) The Impressionable Years model, (3) The Lifelong Openness model, and (4) The Life Cycle model. All these theories were developed assuming the continuous influence of contextual factors on an individual's life, yet they are useful in the analyses presented here because deviations from their predictions may be attributed to the experience of immigration. This theoretical framework helps to acknowledge heterogeneity in the migration experience, immigrants' characteristics, and between those who migrate and those that remain in their countries of origin.

The *Persistence model* highlights that certain values and cognitions formed during childhood persist with relative stability throughout the lifetime of the individual despite changes in the environment, historical events, and/or life-related conditions. Thus, resistance to change (i.e., lower levels of adaptability) should increase as the individual ages (Sears, 1981; Sears & Levy, 2003). Even when faced with the significant change in context that immigration entails, the persistence model predicts that after a period of adjustment, individuals should regress to a condition that resembles their previous behavioral and attitudinal profiles.

Similarly, the *Impressionable Years hypothesis* posits that patterns of behavior established during the young-adulthood years do not change much thereafter. Thus, we could identify a pattern that develops in a particular context at a specific point in an individual's life cycle, and patterns of behavior that do not deviate much from that point. Like the persistence model, the Impressionable Years hypothesis predicts little change during adulthood, but offers an opportunity to think more critically about placing immigrants within

their socio-political context at a point in their own individual life cycle to explain future political participation.

In contrast to the previous two models, the *Lifelong Openness model* suggests that immigration might be a transformative experience that changes attitudes and behaviors profoundly, irrespective of age. This model assumes that immigrants have a set of psychological and social tools that equips them to adapt and change their pre-immigration orientations according to present environmental stimuli. In this line of reasoning, such changes should be equally distributed across cohorts and age groups of immigrants within periods, and thus should make post-immigration patterns distinguishable from pre-immigration ones.

Finally, the *Life Cycle model* argues that there are critical junctures in an individual's life when attitudes are more open and less so at others (Sears, 1981). We might detect different patterns of socialization for immigrants who arrived at specific life-stages. Despite the fact that the Impressionable Years hypothesis predicts a higher level of attitude formation among young adults due to their high receptivity, the Life Cycle model suggests that young-adult immigrants may be rather distracted by forming a family, entering the work force, and geographic mobility.

In sum, the first two models focus on, and attribute agency to, inherent characteristics of individuals crystallized in their countries of origin. They also explain the origin of attitudes, when they can form or change, and why there is relative stability in such attitudes, as well as in beliefs, expectations and behaviors during adulthood in the host nation including political participation (Barreto et al., 2014). Either model would predict that immigrants who arrive in the U.S. as adults should continue displaying the same behavioral or attitudinal patterns they did in their countries of origin before immigration, while immigrants who arrive in their pre-adult phase are the ones who may incorporate into the U.S. political system more efficiently and participate more actively. Results on survey data from Mexican immigrants suggest that imported socialization strongly influences whether and how immigrants engage or not in post-migration political participation (Pantoja et al., 2013; Wals, 2011).

Further, the latter two models predict substantial change in political attitudes and behaviors throughout the immigrant's lifetime. The Lifelong Openness model and the Life Cycle model mainly focus on, and attribute weight to, permanently open attitudes of immigrants that effectively adjust to changes in context. Related studies conceive these adjustments as *re-learning* processes in which immigrants—especially those who arrived as adolescents or at an older age—maintain an open mind to change their participation patterns, either throughout their lifespan or at critical junctures (Black, 2011).

Table 1. Chi-Square Test of Association for Participation of Latinx Immigrants in the U.S. and Country of Origin (CO).

		Participation in CO		Total
		No	Yes	
Participation in US	No	3,898	453	4,351
		89.6%	10.4%	100%
		87.3%	82.2%	86.7%
		[1]	[2]	
	Yes	568	98	666
		85.3%	14.7 %	100%
12.7%		17.8 %	13.3%	
	[3]	[4]		
Total	4,466	551	5,017	
	89.0%	11.0%	100%	
	100%	100%	100%	

Pearson Chi-squared = 10.941; $p = .001$

Some other studies frame their arguments using a three-forged re-socialization theory—perspectives about exposure, transferability and resistance—to explain the factors that determine immigrants’ political participation (Bogdan & Mircea, 2014; White et al., 2008). Yet, the Sears model of socialization is advantageous for our purposes because it links these factors to the immigrants’ stages of life (Sears & Levy, 2003). Thus, it allows to consider a more comprehensive set of events before and after migrating that can affect the immigrants’ likelihood of participation, especially within a framework open to policy and institutional interventions.

Data and Method

We use data from the 2006 Latino National Survey (Fraga et al., 2013) collected from a national stratified sample of 8,634 Latinxs in fifteen states and the District of Columbia, including 5,717 Latin American immigrants.¹ The sample excludes immigrants who arrived under the age of seven.² In Table 1, we present a cross-tabulation of the outcome events. Outcome “1” corresponds to those immigrants who did not participate in the country of origin and do not participate in the United States—that is, “non-participants across borders.” Outcome “2” represents immigrants who used to participate in the country of origin but do not participate in the U.S.—that is, the “demobilized.” Outcome “3” refers to immigrants who did not participate

in the country of origin but became participants in the U.S.—that is, the “activated.” Finally, outcome “4” corresponds to immigrants who used to participate in the country of origin and continued participating in the U.S.—that is, “participants across borders”. The patterns displayed by LNS here are very similar to those reported in Rodriguez and Jimeno (2007), especially for those who are non-participants across borders—one of the main groups of analysis of this study. Our tabulation of the LNS data shows that 89.6% of those immigrants who did not participate in their country of origin did not participate in the U.S. either ($\chi^2 = 10.941, p < .001$) compared to 88.3% in Rodriguez and Jimeno (2007). Table 1 also shows that 87.3% of those immigrants who did not participate in the U.S. did not participate in the countries of origin before migrating, compared to 78.2% found by Rodriguez and Jimeno (2007).

Our dependent variable is the change or persistence in the participatory patterns of Latinx immigrants, for which we investigate what post-migration factors have contributed to making those immigrants who did not participate before immigrating become active participants in the United States. To address this question, we employ a Multinomial Logit (MNL) regression. The MNL procedure is appropriate because it permits us to estimate the probability of having a specific pattern of participation in the U.S. conditional on pre-immigration participation. More importantly, MNL permits us to calculate the probability of the existence of a specific pattern of participation accounting for the other patterns as comparative alternatives. The MNL regression approach also allows us to gain some traction at formulating policy recommendations for political institutions and actors. This analysis accounts for immigrants’ propensities to follow “undesirable” or less active patterns, conditioned by pre-immigration ones; inversely, it also shows how a simulated policy could influence the propensity of the average immigrant to follow a “desirable” or more active pattern of socio-political participation in the United States.

We constructed the dependent variable by attributing four values to the four, total existing patterns of immigrant participation in Table 1. Because these four patterns comprise a close system of events (i.e., it is not possible to add or remove any pattern to the set of alternatives), the property of independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) is fixed, and therefore the MNL setting is expected to retrieve correct estimates of the model parameters.

Table 2 displays a summary of the LNS 2006 data and main variables. At the bottom, it also shows the control variables in the MNL model that influence the values of the outcome variable “political participation.”

We divided respondents in three main groups to capture the dynamics described by the four theories of socialization: (i) Those immigrants who arrived between 7 and 17 years of age (children/adolescents), (ii) Immigrants

Table 2. Sample Descriptive Statistics. The Sample Excludes Immigrants Who Arrived in the United States Before the Age of Seven.

Variable	N (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables					
Participate US	5,017				
Yes	666 (13)				
No	4,351 (87)				
Participate CO	5,017				
Yes	551 (11)				
No	4,466 (89)				
Independent variables					
Age	4,657	40.2	14.4	18	97
Time in the US	4,646	17.1	12.2	18	78
Education	5,017	3.0	1.9	0	7
Parental education	5,017	1.6	1.0	1	5
English proficiency	4,964	2.1	0.8	1	4
Number of children	5,017	2.2	1.7	0	14
Income/support	4,696	10,794	9,490	1,000	70,000
Gender (Male = 1)	5,017	0.45	0.50	0	1
Undocumented status (=1)	5,017	0.15	0.36	0	1
Interest in US politics	4,999	1.75	0.71	1	3
Interest in CO politics	4,860	2.19	1.10	1	4
Knowledge of services	5,017	0.75	0.33	0	1
Alienation	5,017	2.47	0.83	1	4
Coming from dictatorship (=1)	5,017	0.09	0.29	0	1

who were between 18 and 28 years old at their time of arrival (young adults), and (iii) Immigrants who arrived when they were 29 years or older (adults). We ran an MNL regression separately for each group.

Our research question delves into whether the improvement of key socio-economic variables would make different age-of-arrival groups of immigrants switch from being “non-participants across borders” to becoming “activated” participants in U.S.-based civic or political groups. Specifically, to facilitate the detection of the directionality of possible effects, our simulated intervention consists of four components. First, a simultaneous increase of one standard deviation (*SD*) in education (e.g., through the promotion of school enrollment and maintenance of graduation rates). Second, an increase of one *SD* in English proficiency (e.g., through programs of language acquisition and access to financial aid for ESL programs at the college level). Third, an increase of one *SD* in immigrants’ interest in U.S. politics (e.g.,

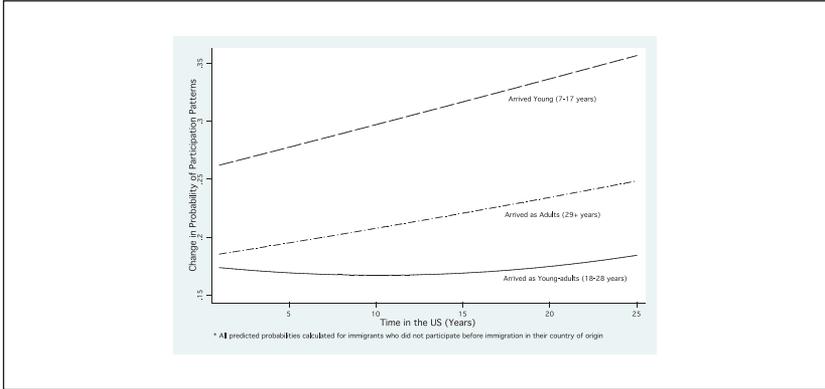


Figure 1. Predicted differences of change in probability of participation patterns (from non-participants across borders to participants in the United States, by age of arrival).

through targeted programs of mobilization enacted by political parties, leaders, and organizations). Lastly, a decrease of one *SD* in alienation levels (e.g., through civic education programs and the enforcement, design, and application of non-discriminatory laws).

To visualize the implementation of our hypothetical policy intervention, we plotted the changes in participation patterns over time of residence in the U.S. Our models control for time in the host nation, immigrant's education, parental education, English proficiency, income per dependent, number of children, gender, non-immigration (or undocumented) status, interest in U.S. politics, interest in country-of-origin politics, knowledge of public services in Spanish, level of alienation, and if the immigrant came from a country governed by a dictatorial regime.³

Results and Discussion

Simulations from our model estimates illustrate the difference between the probability of immigrants becoming non-participants across borders, and the probability of them becoming participants in the United States due to a hypothetical intervention consisting in a one standard deviation change in education, English proficiency, interest in U.S. politics, and alienation, *ceteris paribus*. To illustrate the possible long-term effect of our hypothetical intervention, this change in probabilities is plotted against years of residence in the U.S. on Figure 1.⁴

Non-participants across borders (pattern “1” in Table 1) is the reference outcome for all regressions. Non-standardized coefficients of the intervention variables are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < .05$), and in the predicted direction. As noted, Figure 1 depicts a simulation of the difference-in-differences of participation patterns from country of origin to the U.S. for each age-of-arrival group, which allows for a visual interpretation of the results. From Figure 1, we infer that all immigrant groups would benefit (all change in probabilities are well above zero) from improving educational attainment, language proficiency, and interest in U.S. politics, and reducing alienation by one standard deviation. Yet, those immigrants who arrived in the U.S. under 18 years old accrue would the greatest benefits.

Immigrants who arrived during childhood or adolescence show higher sensitivity than any other group to the implementation of policies aimed at improving the four factors listed above. Our hypothetical intervention would increase their probability of changing from non-participants across borders to participants in the U.S. by about 26% among newcomers (see intercept in Figure 1) and by about 36% for those who have lived in the U.S. for 25 years. Considering that the average age of arrival of this specific group is about 11 years, the average immigrant with these characteristics will be about 30% more likely to become an active participant in the host nation by the time she would have her first experience voting in a presidential election. This is a critical finding considering that about 76% of these immigrants do not participate in the host nation after arriving with no pre-immigration participation experience. This means that by improving their conditions per the simulation, about 23% of these immigrants would become participants in the U.S. after 10 years of residence, a hypothetical increase of participation of about 7% of the total national Latinx immigrant population.⁵

Other age-of-arrival groups offer a different perspective. Immigrants who arrived as young adults show the lowest, still non-trivial difference in change of probability of becoming participants in the U.S. These findings are of high importance considering that 38% of our sample immigrants are in this group. According to Figure 1, our hypothetical intervention would turn 17% of non-participant across borders (who arrived as young adults) into active participants in the U.S., and this effect would remain stable irrespective of their time of residence in the U.S.

While this finding apparently contradicts the Impressionable Years hypothesis, our analysis suggests that immigrants get exposed to new environmental stimuli, but several life-stage related events distract them from politics (as is the case for those immigrants who arrive as young adults). For that reason, they lose some significant opportunity for understanding and involving themselves in the socio-political dynamics of the host nation. This

“other side” of the Impressionable Years hypothesis explains their medium-level sensitivity to our hypothetical intervention, not only among the newly arrived but also among those who have lived for longer in the U.S. This could be especially the case of those immigrants that get incorporated into the low socioeconomic strata of the host nation (Massey & Fischer, 2000). A possible explanation could be that these immigrants are getting socialized, but not strictly political in political life.

Figure 1 also suggests that immigrants who arrive as young-adults get immediately invested in a type of “survival-economics socialization”—one in which they focus their time and energies on work and financial stability, especially because as young adults, this group is in their prime years to have children. The Impressionable Years hypothesis suggests the formation of attitudes during young adulthood happens according to *whatever* the environmental stimuli are, even if not political. Considering many immigrants arrive with little to no political participation experience, there is no expectation for their pre-immigration lack of experience to change if, in addition to this vacuum, there is little or no exposure to politics-specific stimuli in the U.S.

These findings lay bare the difficulty that life-stage related events bring to changes in participation patterns, providing evidence for the Life Cycle model and highlighting new aspects of the Impressionable Years hypothesis. Special attention should be devoted to the development of policy alternatives to mitigate the impact of life-related events on processes of political re-socialization in immigrant populations.

Immigrants who arrive as adults depict a different scenario. These immigrants have already resolved much of the life-related conditions that distract those who arrive as young-adults. The trend depicted in Figure 1 for this group of immigrants is practically parallel to that of immigrants who arrived during childhood or adolescence—the main difference is in the intercepts on the “y” axis. Given our hypothetical intervention, 18% of newly arrived adult immigrants would become active participants in civic or political groups in the U.S. as opposed to becoming non-participants. For illustration purposes, should our hypothetical intervention be applied to non-participants across borders who arrived as adults and who have been living in the U.S. for 25 years, 25% of them would become active participants in U.S. politics.

Interestingly for this group (with an average age of 49 years at the time of arrival), increasing their educational levels may not be a priority. Additionally, their language acquisition is much more inefficient than that of the younger immigrants and improving their feelings of alienation would have no influence on them becoming participants in U.S. civic or political groups. Nevertheless, even though a one-*SD* increase in political interest would not bring as many returns as can be expected from immigrants who arrived

during childhood or adolescence, improving political interest among adult immigrants alone shows to be a strong stimulus for participation. Accordingly, increasing interest in American politics among adult immigrants should be the political institutions' and actors' (e.g., Spanish-speaking media) driving strategy toward this group. Much of the institutional infrastructure (such as schools) is already in place, thus diminishing startup costs of comprehensive education and ESL programs that could facilitate the older immigrants' chances of becoming active participants in the United States.

To increase interest in U.S. politics and reduce political alienation, some scholars show coincident conclusions in the political parties' lack of capacity and interest to mobilize new immigrants into the political process and build their bases from within them (Hajnal & Lee, 2006). Accordingly, Nuño (2007) finds that both parties' ability to engage the Latinx electorate is instrumental, especially for the Republican party. In the past, ethnic mobilization, or the strategy of contacting potential voters by campaign staff from their same ethnic group, proved to be efficient mechanism to obtain Latinx votes for the GOP (Nuño, 2007). Our findings suggest that these types of mobilization strategies can be further refined by tracking the pre-immigration participation of Latinx immigrants and their age at time of arrival to the U.S.

Looking at the effects of each of the intervention variables (not displayed here), education and interest in American politics are particularly dominant in increasing the probability of turning non-participant immigrants across borders into participants. The education variable shows to be mainly responsible for intercept differences between age-at-arrival groups, suggesting the education immigrants attain in their countries of origin is their main point of departure upon arrival for future participatory incorporation. Also, the independent effect of English proficiency could be interpreted in the context of the groups to which these immigrants belong. Specifically, as low-English proficient 1.5-generation immigrants increase their language acquisition, they will also transition to become participants in U.S. politics.

These findings agree with previous studies that stress the paramount role of public education in forming engaged citizens, especially for young immigrants whose primary means of socialization during their first years in their host country is school life (Bedolla, 2012; Bohon et al., 2005; Loving, 2017; Nuñez-Alvarez et al., 2018). Immigrants who arrive to the U.S. as young adults or as adults tend to learn English earlier in life and despite many limitations Latinx immigrants face at school (e.g., segregation, low resources, differential treatment, low-quality teaching), the educational system has a unique placement to simultaneously increase immigrants' levels of education and language proficiency, and therefore their political participation.

Finally, the negative, although weak effects of alienation for all groups of immigrants, suggest that possible participants may be having adverse experiences with the governmental apparatus. Data analysis confirms that higher levels of alienation predominate at the lower tail of the socioeconomic spectrum, confirming a similar pattern to that of Segmented Assimilation, most detectable usually in second-generation immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Considering the predictions of the Persistence Model, one solution for problems of immigrants' alienation and their general lack of interest in U.S. politics may lie in creating socio-political groups for children and adolescents enrolled in school. For instance, local governments may support the creation of extracurricular activities with democracy-building orientations. Advocacy groups, schools, churches and community organizations may serve as useful platforms for parent-child interactions that bolster the role of children as active socializers of their parents.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present a mixed picture about increasing immigrant political participation. For the high percentage of immigrants who arrive to the United States as young adults (18–28 years-old) without pre-immigration participatory experience, the process of being uprooted, finding work, and caring for children compound language difficulties and poverty, make their civic and political participation less likely, although still possible. These constraints exert an impact throughout the years residing in the host nation, and while they are somewhat sensible to policy interventions, these immigrants may be in disadvantage and will underperform compared to other immigrants who arrived in the U.S. at different life stages.

Therefore, the prescriptive approach to policy in this paper suggests advocacy groups, political parties and civic organizations should pursue a policy agenda that motivates larger groups of Latinx immigrants, integrating life stage considerations to actively engage them in civic and political groups. In an institutional context of scarce resources, these institutions should prioritize targeting adolescent immigrants, or young-adult immigrants who otherwise arrived in the U.S. during childhood and adolescence. The experience of political parties and the current hostile political climate are examples of how political organizations fail to focus their attention on this group of immigrants. These failures crystallize in three main features. First, the resources required to attempt to “convert” young adult immigrants into participants have not been considered a priority by any party. Second, both parties have shown a tendency to focus on getting candidates elected; instead of cultivating the youth and adolescents as future voters, contributors, and members of

their constituencies into periodically reaching out to their most reliable voters during campaigns, and in some instances become indifferent, or even hostile, to immigrant groups (Bedolla & Michelson, 2012; DeSipio, 2011; Hajnal & Lee, 2006; McCann & Chávez, 2016; Phan & Garcia, 2009). Third, from a strategy perspective in national politics—not necessarily at state and local levels—Latinx populations, in general, tend to live in the most populated states, but not in those that have been the most contested in presidential elections. This fact let parties portray their outreach to Latinxs using symbolic campaign artifacts instead of building party affiliation and conducting political mobilization among Latinxs (Ricardo, 2007). Some possible paths to ameliorate these negative national effects are to re-focus attention to local mobilization efforts and to incentivize community-level organizations to decentralize the political party system.

Despite these difficulties, our findings signal that impressionable, young potential participants are ripe for investment with dividends more likely in the medium and long terms. Starting early in immigrants' lives and avoiding the adoption of a one-fits-all policy and mobilization approach matters for institutional success to encourage civic and political engagement among Latinx immigrants. Lopez-Bunyasi (2015) and Sanchez and Masuoka (2010) found that, culturally and politically speaking, most Latinx respondents in the LNS perceived a linked or common fate based on ethnicity. This "common fate" is intimately linked to their shared experiences of marginalization in the U.S. that stem from economic disadvantage, and immigration and discrimination experiences (Sanchez & Masuoka, 2010; Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016). However, sentiments of disadvantage have not been stable in time, so that for political institutions and civic organizations, intervening during earlier periods in the life cycle of Latinx immigrants would be more productive at building base among them than intervening during later stages of assimilation. As many immigrants arrive to the U.S. pushed by economic disadvantage and disillusionment with politics at home, future research should analyze how these pre-immigration experiences shape their linked fate once in the U.S.

On this side of the border, the current political climate and contemporary policies discourage immigrant political engagement and naturalization (Zepeda-Millán & Wallace, 2018). Thus, the political parties should revise their policy platforms and their outreach strategies and priorities. Political parties are not only experiencing a critical generational turnover but also the decisive challenge to institutionalize the youngest voters. Either U.S.- or foreign-born, this generation of the electorate would shape our participatory and representative democracy in the next decades. The path toward party institutionalization of 1.5-generation immigrants, both on the Democrat and

Republican ends, suppose an important phenomenon over which to extend research on policy and immigrants' socio-political participation. This is especially true as the socioeconomic, health, and political fates of minority and disadvantaged populations depends on how different constituencies and their interests are represented differently by parties and political actors (Cottrell et al., 2018).

Following up on the proposal from García Bedolla (2006) referred above, local governments and school districts could also enable immigrants' participation through promoting their vote at the local level—for example, in decisions related to their children's education and extra-curricular activities—and expanding the opportunities for their participation in structures of community decision-making. This role would provide immigrants with additional life-long channels to participate in addition to any strategies undertaken by the political parties to engage them when younger.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the services and support of the Inequality and Policy Research Center at Claremont Graduate University.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Rodríguez and Jimeno (2007) implemented the same two questions in their instrument for participation in the country of origin (pre-immigration) and in the US (post-immigration). Explicitly, they asked about participation in “social, cultural, religious, or political groups.” Here we use two items of the LNS that, though not identically worded, attempt to assess a general pattern of group membership and participation both pre- and post-immigration. For US participation, the question asks: “Do you participate in the activities of one social, cultural, civic, or political group, more than one such group, or do you not participate in the activities of any such groups?” For homeland participation, the question

- asks: “Before you came to the United States, how active were you in a political party, a political organization, or in any other type of organizations such as labor unions, student organizations or paramilitary organizations?”
2. Reported participation in the country of origin among immigrants who arrived in the U.S. during childhood may be at school—for example, student organizations.
 3. The Supplemental Appendix, which can be obtained upon request to the authors, includes a thorough description, theoretical justification, and the specific coding specifications of the variables used in the models.
 4. Tables 2A, 2B, and 2C in the Supplemental Appendix show the MNL regression parameter estimates according to age-of-arrival groups. The Appendix is available upon request.
 5. This calculation considers 30.5% of our sample arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 7 and 17.

References

- Aparicio, S. C. W. (2010). *Immigrants’ political suitcases: A theory of imported socialization* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Barreto, M., Segura, G. M., & Pantoja, A. D. (2014). Unity and diversity. In M. Barreto & G. M. Segura (Eds.), *Latino America: How America’s most dynamic population is poised to transform the politics of the nation* (pp. 13–31). PublicAffairs. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/claremont/detail.action?docID=1681926>
- Bedolla, L. G. (2006). Rethinking citizenship: Noncitizen voting and immigrant political engagement in the United States. In T. Lee, S. K. Ramakrishnan & R. Ramirez (Eds.), *Transforming politics, transforming America: The political and civic incorporation of immigrants in the United States* (pp. 51–70). University of Virginia Press.
- Bedolla, L. G. (2012). Latino education, civic engagement, and the public good. *Review of Research in Education*, 36(1), 23–42. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X11422666>
- Bedolla, L. G., & Michelson, M. R. (2012). *Mobilizing inclusion: Transforming the electorate through get-out-the-vote campaigns*. Yale University Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=490942&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Bilodeau, A., & White, S. (2016). Trust among recent immigrants in Canada: Levels, roots and implications for immigrant integration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(8), 1317–1333.
- Black, J. H. (2011). Immigrant and minority political incorporation in Canada: A review with some reflections on Canadian-American comparison possibilities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(9), 1160–1188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211407843>
- Black, J. H., Niemi, R. G., & Powell, G. B. (1987). Age, resistance, and political learning in a new environment: The case of Canadian immigrants. *Comparative Politics*, 20(1), 73–84.

- Bohon, S. A., MacPherson, H., & Atilas, J. H. (2005). Educational barriers for New Latinos in Georgia. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 4(1), 43–58.
- Chávez, M., Monforti, J. L., & Michelson, M. R. (2015). *Living the dream: New immigration policies and the lives of undocumented Latino youth*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Cilluffo, A., & Fry, R. (2020). *An early look at the 2020 electorate*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved April 16, from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/an-early-look-at-the-2020-electorate/>
- Cottrell, D., Herron, M. C., Rodriguez, J. M., & Smith, D. A. (2018). Mortality, incarceration, and African American disenfranchisement in the Contemporary United States. *American Politics Research*, 47(2), 1532673X18754555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X18754555>
- DeSipio, L. (2006). Do home-country political ties limit Latino Immigrant pursuit of U.S. civic engagement and citizenship? In R. Ramirez, S. K. Ramakrishnan & T. Lee (Eds.), *Transforming politics, transforming America: The political and civic incorporation of Immigrants in the United States* (pp. 106–126). University of Virginia Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=508810&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- DeSipio, L. (2011). Immigrant incorporation in an era of weak civic institutions: ImmigrantcivicandpoliticalparticipationintheUnitedStates. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(9), 1189–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211407842>
- Erikson, R. S. (2010). Hispanic voting in the American States: The case of 2004. In L. DeSipio & D. L. Leal (Eds.), *Beyond the Barrio: Latinos in the 2004 elections* (pp. 73–95). University of Notre Dame Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/claremont/detail.action?docID=3441041>
- Finifter, A. W., & Finifter, B. M. (1989). Party identification and political adaptation of American migrants in Australia. *The Journal of Politics*, 51(3), 599–630. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131497>
- Flores, A., & Lopez, M. H. (2018). *Key facts about Latinos in the 2018 midterm elections*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/15/key-facts-about-latinos-in-the-2018-midterm-elections/>
- Fraga, L. R., Garcia, J. A., Hero, R., Jones-Correa, M., Martinez-Ebers, V., & Segura, G. M. (2013). *Latino national survey (LNS), 2006 (ICPSR 20862)*. Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Frasure-Yokley, L. (2015). Conclusion. In L. Frasure-Yokley (Ed.), *Racial and ethnic politics in American suburbs* (pp. 130–146). Cambridge University Press.
- Hajnal, Z., & Lee, T. (2006). Out of line: Immigration and party identification among Latinos and Asian Americans. In R. Ramirez, S. K. Ramakrishnan & T. Lee (Eds.), *Transforming politics, transforming America: The political and civic incorporation of immigrants in the United States*. University of Virginia Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=508810&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Jones-Correa, M., & Adalon, M. (2008). *The prior socialization of immigrants and their political participation in the United States*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA.

- Junn, J. (1999). Participation in liberal democracy: The political assimilation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(9), 1417–1438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921954976>
- Krogstad, J. M., & López, M. H. (2017). *Black voter turnout fell in 2016, even as a record number of Americans cast ballots*. Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/12/black-voter-turnout-fell-in-2016-even-as-a-record-number-of-americans-cast-ballots/>
- Lopez-Bunyasi, T. (2015). Brown ballots in the Buckeye State. In G. R. Sanchez (Ed.), *Latinos and the 2012 election: The new face of the American voter* (pp. 109–128). Michigan State University Press. www.jstor.org/stable/10.14321/j.ctt14bs138.13
- Loving, K. A. (2017). *The effect of high school junior reserve officers' training corps (JROTC) on civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes of hispanic cadets* (Doctoral dissertation). Grand Canyon University.
- Massey, D. S., & Fischer, M. J. (2000). How segregation concentrates poverty. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(4), 670–691.
- McCann, J. A., & Chávez, K. A. (2016). Partisanship by invitation: Immigrants respond to political campaigns. *Journal of Politics*, 78(4), 1196–1210.
- Núñez-Alvarez, A., Clark-Ibáñez, M., Ardón, A. M., Ramos, A. L., & Pellicia, M. R. (2018). Cultivando respeto (cultivating respect): Engaging the Latino community. *Metropolitan Universities*, 29(2), 118–134. <https://doi.org/10.18060/21758>
- Nuño, S. A. (2007). Latino mobilization and vote choice in the 2000 presidential election. *American Politics Research*, 35(2), 273–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06297032>
- Pantoja, A. D., Jimeno, R. A., & Rodríguez, J. M. (2013). The political consequences of Latino immigrant transnational ties. In D. L. Leal & J. E. Limón (Eds.), *Immigration and the border: Politics and policy in the new Latino century*. University of Notre Dame Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/claremont/detail.action?docID=3441135>
- Phan, N., & Garcia, J. A. (2009). Asian-Pacific-American partisanship: Dynamics of partisan and nonpartisan identities. *Social Science Quarterly*, 90(4), 886–910. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42940646>
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. University of California Press.
- Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Espenshade, T. J. (2001). Immigrant incorporation and political participation in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 35(3), 870–909. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2001.tb00044.x>
- Ricardo, R. (2007). Segmented mobilization: Latino nonpartisan get-out-the-vote efforts in the 2000 general election. *American Politics Research*, 35(2), 155–175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06296578>
- Rodriguez, J. M., & Jimeno, R. A. (2007). *The non-participant across borders: Linking immigrant political behavior in the country of origin to the United States*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Las Vegas, NV.

- Sanchez, G. R., & Masuoka, N. (2010). Brown-utility heuristic? The presence and contributing factors of Latino linked fate. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 32(4), 519–531. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986310383129>
- Santiago, D. A., & Brown, S. (2004). *Federal policy and Latinos in higher education*. Pew Hispanic Center.
- Sears, D. O. (1981). Life stage effects on attitude change, especially among the elderly. In T. A. RL Kahn, J. G. March, S. B. Kiesler, J. N. Morgan & V. K. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Aging: Social change* (pp. 183–204). Academic Press.
- Sears, D. O. (1983). The persistence of early political predispositions: The roles of attitude object and life stage. *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4(1), 79–116.
- Sears, D. O., & Levy, S. (2003). Childhood and adult political development. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 60–109). Oxford University Press. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2003-88243-003>
- Valenzuela, A. A., & Michelson, M. R. (2016). Turnout, status, and identity: Mobilizing Latinos to vote with group appeals. *American Political Science Review*, 110(4), 615–630. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541600040X>
- Vélez-Ibañez, C. G., Sampaio, A., & González-Estay, M. (2002). *Transnational Latina/o communities: Politics, processes, and cultures*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Voicu, B., & Comşa, M. (2014). Immigrants' participation in voting: Exposure, resilience, and transferability. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40(10), 1572–1592.
- Wainer, A. (2006). The new Latino South and the challenge to American public education. *International Migration*, 44(5), 129–165.
- Waldinger, R., Soehl, T., & Lim, N. (2012). Emigrants and the body politic left behind: Results from the Latino National Survey. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(5), 711–736. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.667978>
- Wals, S. C. (2010). *Immigrants' political suitcases: A theory of imported socialization University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/14589>
- Wals, S. C. (2011). Does what happens in Los Mochis stay in Los Mochis? Explaining postmigration political behavior. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(3), 600–611. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912909358577>
- Wals, S. C. (2013). Made in the USA? Immigrants' imported ideology and political engagement. *Electoral Studies*, 32(4), 756–767.
- White, S., Nevitte, N., Blais, A., Gidengil, E., & Fournier, P. (2008). The political resocialization of immigrants: Resistance or lifelong learning? *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 268–281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908314713>
- Wilkinson, B. C. (2018). Stepping back or stepping out? Latinos, immigration, and the 2016 presidential election: An introduction and commentary. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 51(2), 277–281.

- 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(4), 341–371.
- Zepeda-Millán, C., & Wallace, S. (2018). Mobilizing for immigrant and Latino rights under Trump. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The Resistance: The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement* (pp. 90–108). UK: Oxford University Press.

Author Biographies

Javier M. Rodríguez is an Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Inequality and Policy Research Center at Claremont Graduate University. His research incorporates theoretical and methodological principles from economics, demography, psychology, and public health to study the political causes and consequences of socioeconomic and racial inequalities. He received master's and doctoral degrees in political science from UCLA, and a master's in political science from Arizona State University in Tempe. He earned an undergraduate degree in history from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Rafael A. Jimeno is a Social Studies Teacher at Southeast DREAMS Magnet in the Los Angeles Unified School District. His research centers on immigrant sociopolitical incorporation, Latinx political behavior, and issues of educational access and equity. He received a doctoral degree in political science from Arizona State University in Tempe, a Social Science Teaching Credential from CSULB, and an undergraduate degree in political science from Washington State University, Pullman.

Carlos A. Echeverría-Estrada is a Doctoral candidate and master's in policy and evaluation studies at Claremont Graduate University. He also obtained a Master's in Public Policy from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He specializes in local policies of incorporation of unauthorized immigrants, evaluation of migration policy, and international development. Since 2019, he is a Visiting Fellow at the Migration Policy Institute.

Sandra P. García is a Research Fellow in the Division of Politics and Economics at Claremont Graduate University and Founder of Summa Analytics LLC. In her research, she uses economics and data science techniques to solve questions on health economics, consumer behavior, and optimization. She received a doctoral and master's degree in Economics from CGU. She did a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan.