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# The Political Socialization of Adolescent Children of Immigrants\*

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## Abstract

**Objectives**—This study aims to evaluate the adolescent political socialization processes that predict political participation in young adulthood, and whether these processes are different for children of immigrants compared to white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation adolescents. We focus on socialization agents based in the family, community and school.

**Methods**—We use a nationally representative longitudinal survey of adolescents to evaluate the predictors of three measures of political participation: Voter registration, voting, and political party identification, and whether the process leading to political participation varies by immigrant status and race/ethnic group.

**Results**—We find that the parental education level of adolescents is not as predictive for many minority children of immigrants compared to white children of native-born parents for registration. Additionally, the academic rigor of the courses taken in high school has a greater positive estimated effect on the likelihood of registration and party identification for Latino children of immigrants compared to white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults.

**Conclusions**—The process of general integration into U.S. society for adolescent children of immigrants may lead to differing pathways to political participation in young adulthood, with certain aspects of their schooling experience having particular importance in developing political participation behaviors.

## INTRODUCTION

Children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the population under the age of 18 (Fortuny and Chaudry 2009). As these children become old enough to vote, their share among the young adult voter population will increase. Politically, this group brings a unique perspective to the polls. Because they are personally connected to the immigrant community, they may be especially attuned to issues that affect immigrants. However, whereas many of their parents are not U.S. citizens, 87% of children of immigrants are citizens (Fortuny and Chaudry 2009), creating a politically represented group within the immigrant community. Additionally, immigrant communities are no longer concentrated among a few “receiving” states. New immigrant destinations are emerging in areas that previously had no or low representation of immigrants, such as the southeast and midwest United States (Massey and Capoferro 2008). Children of immigrants have the potential to

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alter the political landscape throughout much of the United States, if they choose to participate.

As the children of immigrants become a larger part of the voting-age population, it is worth investigating the developmental processes during adolescence that lead to political participation. Decades of research on adolescent political socialization helps identify certain institutions within which young adult political participation and incorporation is fostered: specifically those of the family, community and schooling. Family socioeconomic status is a well-known predictor of later political participation (Verba and Nie 1972), as are parents' civic and political behaviors (Verba, Schlozman and Burns 2005). Additionally, as adolescents spend much of their time in schools, both formal and informal spheres in the education process have been shown to have effects on political behavior outcomes later in life (Niemi and Junn 1998).

The unique position of children of immigrants brings into question whether these established processes leading to political participation are an accurate representation across immigrant generational statuses. Although all adolescents are becoming integrated into the political system as they become of age to vote, children of immigrants are also subject to incorporation processes within the broader society (Stepick and Stepick 2002). Immigrant parents may be less familiar with the U.S. political system themselves and therefore less likely to pass on behaviors that encourage participation of their children. However, these adolescents are educated in U.S. schools, which may provide political socialization similar to non-immigrant students. Although recent research has found that children of immigrants may have similar patterns of civic engagement as children of native-born parents (Stepick, Stepick and Labissiere 2008), we hypothesize that the socialization processes that lead to these outcomes differ.

We use data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to investigate how institutions in the life of adolescents may affect the likelihood of voter registration, voting and political party identification in young adulthood. We specifically look at how processes based in the family, community and school may differ for children of immigrants as compared to children of native born parents. Because our data are longitudinal, we are able to carefully identify indicators within these institutions during adolescence and track their relationship to political engagement in young adulthood.

## BACKGROUND

**Adolescent Political Socialization and Political Engagement in Young Adulthood**—Political participation is not only an indicator of strength of political beliefs, but also of general engagement in and connection to the U.S. political system. In this study, we focus on the specific actions of registering to vote, voting, and identifying with a political party in young adulthood. The decision to engage in any or all of these three measures is not necessarily the result of the same political socialization processes. Although the act of registering is a necessity for those who vote, registering is often facilitated by institutions such as churches or community groups, whereas the act of voting may be considered a more individual cost/benefit decision (Downs 1957). Partisanship is usually discussed as a general measure of political orientation or a predictor of other types of political involvement (Bartels 2000), but it may also be related to an individual's feeling of group identity and social connectedness (Greene 2004; Settle, Bond and Levitt 2011).

To better understand the processes that lead a diverse group of young adults to political engagement, we look to the institutions within which political socialization occurs in adolescence. As Herbert Hyman outlined when introducing the concept of political

socialization, political behavior is learned through societal agents throughout an individual's life (Hyman 1969). Although behaviors such as voting are not practiced during adolescence, young adults are likely to bring information and habits learned from the institutions of their youth to later political decision-making (Flanagan 2003; Hyman 1969). We know from previous research that factors predicting the political participation of adult immigrants differ from non-immigrants (Cho 1999; Ramakrishnan 2005), however we know less regarding how or whether the pre-adult political socialization process differs for young adult children of immigrants. The following sections discuss the political socialization agents of schooling, family and community, how they contribute to political participation decisions in young adulthood, and finally how this process may be different for young adult children of immigrants.

**Schools and Political Socialization**—The school is an important institution in which pre-adult political socialization occurs. Level of educational attainment is one of the most consistent predictors of political and civic participation and engagement (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). However, research shows that even before fully completing their education, students who expect high education for themselves have higher civic knowledge (Niemi and Junn 1998) and are more likely to say they will vote when able (Torney-Purta 2002).

On one hand, schooling aids in the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These general cognitive abilities facilitate political involvement by helping an individual understand political issues (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995) and navigate the voting process (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The general academic level of high school course taking has been shown to predict later college entrance and success (Adelman 1999), which also predicts political incorporation for young adults (Lopez and Elrod 2006).

Political and civic incorporation is not only developed through the skills general education offers the student, however. Political education and citizenship training are explicit goals for public education in the United States. Most commonly, these expectations for schooling are manifested in the social science curriculum, such as government, civics or economics courses—all of which research shows to be connected to greater feelings of civic responsibility and political efficacy in adolescence (Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht 2003; Niemi and Junn 1998). These courses teach the specific information necessary to know and understand political processes and provide training regarding the expectations and workings of a democratic system. In general, civic knowledge is connected to many positive civic attributes such as support for democratic values, and higher likelihood of political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Hart et al. 2007; Popkin and Dimock 1999). Some research finds that these courses may in fact lead immigrant students in particular to vote in early adulthood (Callahan, Muller and Schiller 2008).

Schooling also provides several informal opportunities for the development of behavior that can encourage civic involvement in young adulthood. Involvement in extracurricular activities in high school has been shown to be a strong predictor of political involvement in adulthood (Hart et al. 2007; McFarland and Thomas 2006; Sherrod 2003; Smith 1999). Schools also offer a community within which feelings of integration can be fostered—through group membership, or peer and teacher relationships (Smith 1999).

However, the effect of schooling on political participation outcomes could lead to stratification of political activity, as the education system itself is stratified. Racial and economic segregation within schools, as well as common instructional practices such as tracking may leave certain groups of students with not only less opportunity to learn, but

also less of a chance to develop a sense of civic inclusion and responsibility. Tracking literature suggests that not every student is given equal opportunity to develop these skills (Oakes 2005), as students in less rigorous courses are less likely to be taught critical thought and analysis skills (Raudenbush, Rowan and Cheong 1993).

**Parents and Political Socialization**—The lessons learned through schooling are taught in conjunction with the student's experience within the family. The transmission of civic behaviors or practices from parent to child is an important pathway to explore when analyzing the political participation of young adults. Just as with other behaviors and forms of capital, the intergenerational transmission of political behavior and beliefs can happen through several channels. Most easily recognizable is teaching civic and political involvement by example. Children are more likely to be civically and politically active if their parents are involved themselves (Plutzer 2002; Verba, Schlozman and Burns 2005). Parents who believe political involvement is important often directly pass this belief on to their children through the discussion of issues within the family (Andolina et al. 2003; Verba, Schlozman and Burns 2005), or by modeling participation behaviors which in turn are adopted by their children (Beck and Jennings 1982).

However, this seemingly straight-forward transfer from parent to child may in fact be part of a more complicated stratification process. As with other forms of social advantage, participation in the political system is stratified across education and income levels (Pacheco and Plutzer 2008). Socioeconomic status is a well-established indicator of political participation. Research shows that individuals with higher social and economic status are more involved in political and civic activities (Verba and Nie 1972), perhaps because they feel they have more to gain or lose as political climates change. Additionally, those with higher education may have more knowledge of the political system and processes.

There are several mechanisms that possibly connect parental SES to child political participation in young adulthood. In line with social reproduction research, parental SES could at the most straightforward level be an indicator of the child's later socioeconomic status (either education level or income) (Beck and Jennings 1982), which we know to be a predictor of higher political involvement (Verba, Schlozman and Burns 2005). Beyond economic considerations, parents with higher social status may encourage political and civic participation through child rearing practices that foster involvement in several spheres of life (Lareau 2003). These parenting practices may encourage specific democratic practices or political leanings, but it also may create a general sense of entitlement that encourages involvement in the political sphere.

Community and religious involvement is also a factor contributing to the political socialization of youth. Involvement in groups in or out of school may help adolescents develop a sense of identity and connection to the community around them, leading to a higher likelihood of political participation. Research shows that involvement in certain voluntary associations in adolescence, such as boy scouts or girl scouts, is predictive of political involvement in young adulthood (Frisco, Muller and Dodson 2004). Also, both voluntary and school-mandated community service performed during the high school years is related to adult civic and political participation (Hart et al. 2007). McFarland and Thomas' (McFarland and Thomas 2006) comprehensive study using two nationally representative datasets found that community service participation, as well as religious involvement were predictors of adult political participation.

**Political Socialization and Children of Immigrants**—Although these accepted tenants of adolescent political socialization are well-supported through decades of research, they have not been explored for groups from diverse backgrounds, specifically adolescent

children of immigrants. In addition to being subject to the process of political incorporation as they become old enough to vote, children of immigrants are also experiencing incorporation into general U.S. society, possibly changing the relationship between an established predictor and political participation outcomes (Cho 1999; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Stepick and Stepick 2002; Wong 2000). It is important to note that these political socialization processes also vary by race within the group of children of immigrants. As children of immigrants become incorporated into U.S. society, issues affecting their specific racial group may also affect their decisions to become politically involved (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Stepick, Stepick and Labissiere 2008).

Research specifically looking at the political socialization of adolescent children of immigrants is sparse; however the studies that do focus on this topic suggest that the traditional models of political participation are not as predictive for this population (Kasinitz et al. 2008). Immigrant parents may be less familiar with the U.S. political system, complicating the pathway between parent participation and child participation. Additionally, the well-established connection between socioeconomic status and voting has been found to be less predictive for some adult immigrant groups (Cho 1999; Lien 2004), which also could affect the political incorporation of their children. In the absence of certain types of parental political socialization, other institutions such as the school may supplement this socialization process.

This study uses a longitudinal, nationally representative dataset in order to explore the pre-adult political socialization processes for children of immigrants within the school and family during adolescence, and their possible connection with later political participation and engagement. We specifically investigate the following research question: How do certain well-established pre-adult political socialization factors based in the family, community and schooling affect the political engagement of children of immigrants compared to their white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation peers—a group for which much of the general political socialization research is based? We explore these processes while considering the racial and ethnic differences among children of immigrants. We also expand previous work on the registration and voting of this population to include identification with a political party.

## Data and Methods

**Data and Sample**—To investigate our research question, we use Waves I through III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) as well as the Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement Study (AHAA). The Add Health survey is a nationally representative longitudinal dataset of adolescents who were enrolled in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades during the 1994–1995 academic year. Over 20,000 students in 80 schools were sampled in the 1994 Wave 1 survey. The dependent variables for our study come from Wave III of the survey, which was collected in 2001–2002 when the respondents were 18–26 years old. Students were out of high school by this time, and the questions aim to look at the respondents' transition into adulthood. We also use the AHAA study, a nationally representative sample of the Add Health sample, which includes the high school transcripts of over 90% of the Wave III sample (Muller et al. 2007). With these data, we are able to consider courses taken in high school (using the standard CSSC coding) and also students' academic achievement in these courses to analyze the effect of schooling on our political outcomes of interest.

Although there is much literature that finds that immigrant non-citizens are civically active (Barreto and Muñoz 2003), our outcomes of interest center around political participation through voting, which is an activity limited to U.S. citizens. For this reason, the sample is limited to respondents who are naturalized citizens or citizens by birth in the United States.



Analyses include white, black, Latino and Asian young adults who answered both the Wave I and Wave III surveys. Because many of our academic schooling measures are taken from the AHAA transcript study, we only include respondents who had a valid transcript. We apply a transcript weight to all analyses, which helps to reduce bias due to this selection on transcript availability (Muller et al 2007). High school dropouts are included in the sample if they have a valid transcript. With the inclusion of these filters, our final analytic sample includes 10,902 students.

## Measures

**Dependent variables:** Our analyses use three binary variables from Wave III asking respondents whether they are registered to vote, whether they voted in the November 2000 presidential election, and whether they identify with any specific political party. Within our whole analytic sample, 75 percent reported having registered to vote, 45 percent voted, and 35 percent claimed a political party identification.

**Individual Background Variables:** Immigrant political participation varies considerably by race and ethnicity (Cho 1999; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Ramakrishnan 2005). For this reason it is imperative that our analyses differentiate between these unique immigrant groups. Our key independent variable is the respondent's race/ethnicity and immigrant status. This measure is a combination of the self-identified race/ethnicity of the student and the immigrant status of the respondent's parents. Any student who had one or more parents born outside of the U.S. is categorized as a child of immigrants. The respondent's race/ethnicity as well as the parent's immigrant status are combined to form a series of seven dummy variables (white child of immigrants, black 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation, black child of immigrants, Latino 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation, Latino child of immigrants, Asian 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation and Asian child of immigrants),<sup>i</sup> with white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation as the reference group. In all our analyses, we include dummy variables for whether the student is female (reference: male) and also the student's age at the Wave I survey.

**Parent and Community Variables:** All parent and family background measures are taken from the base year parent survey. In an attempt to capture parental socioeconomic status, we include both parents' highest level of education and total household income. Although both of these variables measure overall socioeconomic status, parental education may tap resources other than economic that may be related to political participation. Parent education is measured with a variable ranging from 0 (less than high school) to 7 (advanced degree).<sup>ii</sup> Missing values for the parent education question were supplemented with responses to the same question on the Wave 1 student survey. To measure parent political involvement we ideally would like to include parent's voting history. However, as questions about voting were not asked to parents, we rely on information regarding parent civic and political group involvement. By using a more general measure of civic engagement, we are able to consider the level of civic involvement of immigrant parents who may not be citizens, and thus not able to vote. For this measure, we include a count of the number of organizations in which the parent participated as reported in the Wave 1 parent survey. These organizations include: PTO, labor unions, hobby or sports clubs and civic or social groups. We also include an indicator for whether the student lives with both parents. As indicators of community involvement, we consider a measure of whether the student attended religious services within the 12 months preceding the Wave I survey, and also whether the respondent volunteered during adolescence.

<sup>i</sup>Although there are possibly differences in political socialization processes within these racial groups by country of origin (Lien 1999), low sample sizes of these specific groups inhibit statistical analyses.

<sup>ii</sup>Analyses using parent education as a series of dummy variables resulted in substantively identical results.

**Academic/Schooling Measures:** Based on our knowledge that education is not equitably provided to all students, we aim to take into consideration the overall difficulty of students' coursework in high school. We created an indicator of general academic rigor of the coursework taken throughout high school ranging from 0 (below basic) to 5 (advanced/college prep). Using the AHAA transcript study, we based the categorization of a student into these levels on the number of total Carnegie units in each core subject (math, science, social studies and English), highest math and highest science taken, and AP/honors coursework. These categorizations are loosely based on the levels of academic curriculum used by U.S. Department of Education (Horn, Kojaku and Carroll 2001), and are also an indication of the students' general level of college preparedness (Adelman 1999). For example, students with the highest rigor value of 5 took a highest math of at least pre-calculus, a highest science of at least physics, 3 years or more of foreign language, at least one AP or honors course, and 4 years or more of social studies and English. We also include the total number of social science credits taken throughout high school as a separate measure to tap civic education apart from the general academic level of the student. Social connection to school is measured as a mean of three questions: *I feel close to people at this school; I feel happy to be at this school; I feel like I am a part of this school*. The responses to these questions range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. We also include an indicator of whether the respondent has had enrolled in college by Wave III. To control for verbal ability, we include a test score from Add Health's abbreviated Peabody Vocabulary Test (PVT) measured at Wave I. Finally, we control on the school characteristics of sector (ref: private), region (ref: northeast), urbanicity (ref: suburban), and the schools' percent immigrant and average academic rigor level.

**Analytic Plan—**As each of our dependent variables is a binary indicator of political participation, we employ a logistic regression equation to predict whether the respondent registered to vote, whether they voted in the 2000 presidential election, and whether they identify with a specific political party.<sup>iii</sup> The models that predict voting only include respondents who indicated that they registered to vote, however the models predicting voter registration and political party identification include all respondents who were not missing on the dependent variable. To explore the general effects of the adolescent political socialization variables on each measure of participation, as well as how these factors may affect participation of children of immigrants, we use a series of nested models for each outcome in which Model 1 includes only race/immigrant status variables, and Model 2 adds parental, community and schooling indicators. Lastly, we use interaction terms between the socialization variables and the race/immigrant status indicators to test whether key political socialization processes may differ for children of immigrants compared to children of native-born whites. The interaction terms included in the final models were chosen based on exploratory analyses, run separately by racial/immigrant subgroup. All analyses are weighted using a longitudinal transcript weight and account for clustering within schools by using clustered standard errors<sup>iv</sup>. Additionally, we account for missing data by using multiple imputation.

## Findings

**Immigrants and Political Participation—**Before examining whether the political socialization processes differ for children of immigrants, we first explore the differences in the political socialization measures of family, community and schooling between the race and immigrant groups. We display the weighted means and percentages of these indicators

<sup>iii</sup>We also performed multinomial logistic regression models in which registering but not voting, and registering and voting were both compared to a reference group of neither registered nor voted. Results were similar to the logistic models shown here.

<sup>iv</sup>Confirmatory analyses using the HLM program resulted in substantively identical results.

in Table 1. Table 1 also reports the general patterns of political participation outcomes between groups; however these differences are discussed in more detail in the logistic regression models. We performed tests of statistical difference between each mean and percentage compared to the reference group of white 3<sup>rd</sup> plus generation respondents.

Beginning with family and community, Latino children of immigrants as well as Latino and black 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation adolescents had lower parental education levels than the white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation. These groups, along with Asian children of immigrants also report lower parent volunteering activity than whites. Latino children of immigrants have a higher rate of religious participation, with 80 percent reporting church attendance during high school compared to 74 percent of white native-born adolescents.

Differences in educational measures also highlight stratification within the formal and informal aspects of schooling. Noticeably, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latino and Asian respondents differ significantly from white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation respondents on most schooling measures—however they do so in opposite directions. Latino children of immigrants display lower rates of extracurricular involvement, take lower level academic courses and less social studies credits, and are report lower rates of postsecondary attendance. Conversely, Asian immigrants display higher social connection to school, are enrolled in courses that are higher in rigor, and report higher rates of postsecondary education attendance than 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation whites.

Table 2 reports the log odds from logistic regression models for each political participation outcome in which values greater than zero indicate a positive relationship between the probability of political participation and the independent variable, and values less than zero indicate a negative relationship. For ease of interpretation, our discussion of the findings transforms these coefficients into odds-ratios indicating whether the indicator in question is associated with a higher or lower likelihood of participating compared to the reference group. The first model for each outcome shows the differences in participation between each of the race/immigrant groups and white-3<sup>rd</sup> generation young adults while controlling for the student characteristics of gender and age. The second model considers family and community indicators of political socialization, as well as all measures of schooling.

Column 1 in Table 2 shows that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation black young adults are over two times more likely (odds ratio of  $2.18 = \exp[.779]$ ) than white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults to register to vote. Latino and Asian children of immigrants, however, are both about 40% less likely ( $.38 = 1 - \exp[-.486]$ ;  $.40 = 1 - \exp[-.517]$ ) to register to vote than children of U.S. born whites. Once we add political socialization variables in model 2, the difference in the probability of registering between Latino children of immigrants and the reference group is no longer statistically significantly different from zero. This suggests that the initial difference in voter registration between Latino 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants and white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults may be accounted for by the stratification within the political socialization variables. Even considering these factors, though, black children of immigrants are still more likely to register, and Asian children of immigrants continue to be less likely to register.

Voter registration is greater for those whose parents have higher levels of education, and who volunteer. The students' own volunteering is also an important positive indicator of registering, as respondents who volunteered during adolescence are about 11 percent more likely to register than those who did not volunteer in high school. Religious participation in adolescence is similarly predictive of later voter registration. Focusing on schooling indicators, students who took more social studies credits throughout high school, as well as students who took more rigorous courses were more likely to register, indicating that both



civic education, as well as the overall difficulty of the courses taken in high school serve as predictors for future political participation.

We next predict voting in the 2000 election. These results are displayed in the third and fourth columns in Table 2. Among young adults who registered to vote, there is no difference between white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation and any other race/immigrant group in the baseline model. This implies that once individuals register to vote, the likelihood of actually voting is similar across all groups. However, black 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults are more likely to vote than their white counterparts when political socialization indicators are held constant (shown in Model 2). Similar to the model predicting registration, both parental education and living with both parents are positive and statistically significant predictors of voting among registrants. Not surprisingly, adolescents who volunteered and attended religious services in high school were more likely to vote. All measures of schooling, except extracurricular involvement predict the likelihood of voting.

Finally we investigate party identification in young adulthood. Model 1 shows us that black children of immigrants are about 75 percent more likely to identify with a political party than white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults. Asian children of immigrants are the only immigrant group that is less likely to identify with a political party. Focusing on the main effects of the independent variables in Model 2, we see that parent education is related to party identification, with the likelihood of party identification increasing as parents' highest education increases. Interestingly, parent volunteering is not associated with declaring a political party. As with the other participation outcomes, adolescents who volunteer and those who attend religious services are more likely to identify with a political party in young adulthood. Among academic indicators, social connection to school is the only predictor of party identification. Despite the lack of an academic effect in high school, students who attended postsecondary education after high school are more likely to report identification with a political party.

**Children of Immigrants and Political Socialization Processes**—Our main research question of whether adolescent political socialization processes differ for children of immigrants is best explored through interaction terms between the race/immigrant status indicators and the political socialization variables. Exploratory analyses identified two variables that had significant interactions: Parent education level and the academic rigor of courses taken in high school. Interaction terms allow us to estimate whether the effect of parents' education or the academic rigor of coursework is the same for different types of students—specifically for children of immigrants compared to white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation students. We find statistically significant interaction effects for both registration and party identification. However, the models suggest that neither the effects of parental education nor academic rigor of high school courses have differential effects on the likelihood of voting among young adults who were registered, implying that once registered, the predictors leading to the decision to actually vote are similar for children of immigrants and the white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation. Figures 1 and 2 present the interaction coefficients for each of the immigrant groups as predicted probabilities for the models predicting registration and party identification. We calculated these values by allowing the corresponding socialization variable (parent education or rigor) to vary, while holding all other independent variables at the sample mean. In these figures, the expected levels of participation are represented for each children of immigrant group, as well as the reference of 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation whites. Solid lines indicate that the slope is statistically significantly different from white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation adolescents.

Figure 1 illustrates the differences in the effect of parent education and academic rigor on the expected probability of registering to vote for each immigrant race/ethnicity group.

Looking at the top graph, we see that for 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation white young adults, higher parent education indicates a higher probability of registering to vote. However, for Latino and Asian children of immigrants, the effect of parent education is not positive. The probability of registering between Latino children of immigrants and white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation young adults begins to diverge at parent education levels above high school. Asian children of immigrants have lower predicted probabilities for registering to vote at all levels of parent education, and like Latinos of the same immigrant status, increases in parent education do not translate into higher probabilities of registering as they do for white native born young adults.

The bottom graph in Figure 1 shows the association between academic rigor and the predicted probabilities of registering to vote. In this case, the only group that significantly differs from white 3<sup>rd</sup>-generation is Latino children of immigrants. Although for both groups, adolescents who had a higher level of rigor of course taking are more likely to register to vote as young adults, there is a stronger effect for Latino children of immigrants. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latinos are less likely to register at most values of rigor, but because of the larger effect of high school rigor on the probability of voting, their expected probability passes that of white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation at the highest level of course taking.

Finally, we consider the political socialization processes leading to political party identification in young adulthood. As seen in Figure 2, Latino children of immigrants differed from 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation white adolescents for both variables. Similar to the participation outcomes of voting, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latino adolescents did not show an association between parental education identifying with a political party. Also, level of academic rigor had more of an effect on political party identification than for white children of native-born parents.

## CONCLUSION

As children of immigrants begin to occupy a larger share of the voting age population, research that seeks to understand the pathways to political participation for this group becomes more important. We find that traditional models of adolescent political socialization may not accurately describe the experiences and diversity of this group. Previous literature, mostly based on the experiences of white citizens of native-born parents, identify several traditional predictors of political participation for young adults—many of which are indicators of general social stratification. Following this model of socialization, one would assume that all groups from less advantaged families or with lower educational opportunities are also less likely to be politically represented. However, we find that parental education and academic course taking are actually related to our measures of political participation in unique ways for children of immigrants. First, whereas higher levels of parental education strongly predict registration and party identification among 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation whites, parental education seems to be unrelated to these outcomes for Latino and Asian children of immigrants. Additionally, we find a positive association between the academic rigor of high school courses and political participation outcomes for the sample as a whole. This positive estimated effect is even larger for Latino 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation adolescents when predicting voter registration and political party identification in young adulthood.

The fact that parental education seems to be unrelated to later political participation for Latino and Asian children of immigrants suggests that the measure of education may hold different meaning for immigrant parents than for native parents. Some research suggests that education level for adult immigrants is not necessarily indicative of SES as it may be with native adults (Cho 1999). Wendy Tam Cho in her study of California voters in 1984

suggests that measures of socioeconomic status, such as education level, are associated with political participation “only insofar as its indicators represent exposure to and embracing of the norms for the American political system” (1999:1144). Whereas among native adults, level of education may in fact indicate knowledge and acceptance of the political system through socialization in the U.S., immigrant parents with similar levels of education (who may have earned their education in other countries) may not exhibit similar patterns in political participation. However, other more direct measures of parent political or civic involvement, such as parent volunteering, prove to be significant predictors of registering and voting for both children of immigrants and their 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation counterparts.

Schooling plays a particularly important role in the political development of children of immigrant adolescents. This is evidenced in our finding that the academic rigor of course taking in high school is more consequential for political participation among Latino 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students than it is for white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation adolescents. Unlike 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation students, the academic success of children of immigrants in the U.S. schooling system may be indicative of overall integration into society—translating into a higher likelihood of political incorporation later in life. Taken together, these findings may indicate that for Latino children of immigrants, political participation is less a product of family socioeconomic status, and more a product of the individuals’ own future SES—which in this case may be measured by the academic rigor of the courses they take in high school. Additionally, we find that the overall academic level of schooling is a key factor in predicting political participation above and beyond direct civics instruction.

The inclusion of political party identification to our analyses adds an often-overlooked dimension of political participation that is not necessarily tied to voting.<sup>v</sup> Although the three types of political participation included in our analyses are no doubt related to each other in the lives of individuals, the analyses presented in the paper suggest that the processes leading to participation through registration, voting and identification with a political party are, at least in part, discrete from each other. Additionally, recent research suggests that minority and immigrant citizens are more likely to be disengaged from political participation in any form (Pew Research Center 2011). For this reason we performed subsequent analyses predicting political participation among non-registrants and find that the children of immigrants who did not register to vote were neither more nor less likely to claim a political party affiliation than white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation non-registrants. The relationship between party affiliation and voting behavior, particularly among immigrants compared to native born voters is worthy of further study but beyond the scope of present study.

The findings from our analyses highlight how the process of political socialization is likely somewhat different for children of immigrants. Our knowledge of what drives young adults to become politically active is largely based on studies of white Americans with native born parents. As the population of the United States becomes more diverse, researchers should continue to explore the political development and behaviors of children of immigrants. Our analyses suggest that schools may especially facilitate the political inclusion in young adult children of immigrants.

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<sup>v</sup>Additional analysis (not shown but available upon request) found that these schooling indicators were not predictive of identifying with either the specific Republican or Democratic parties.

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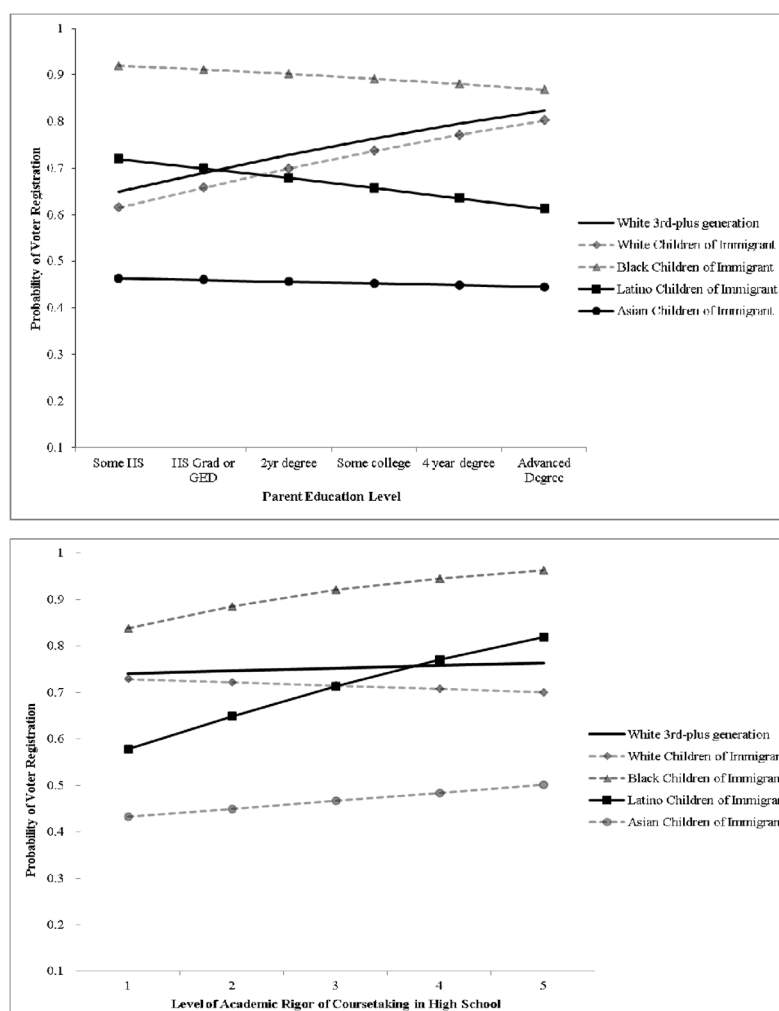
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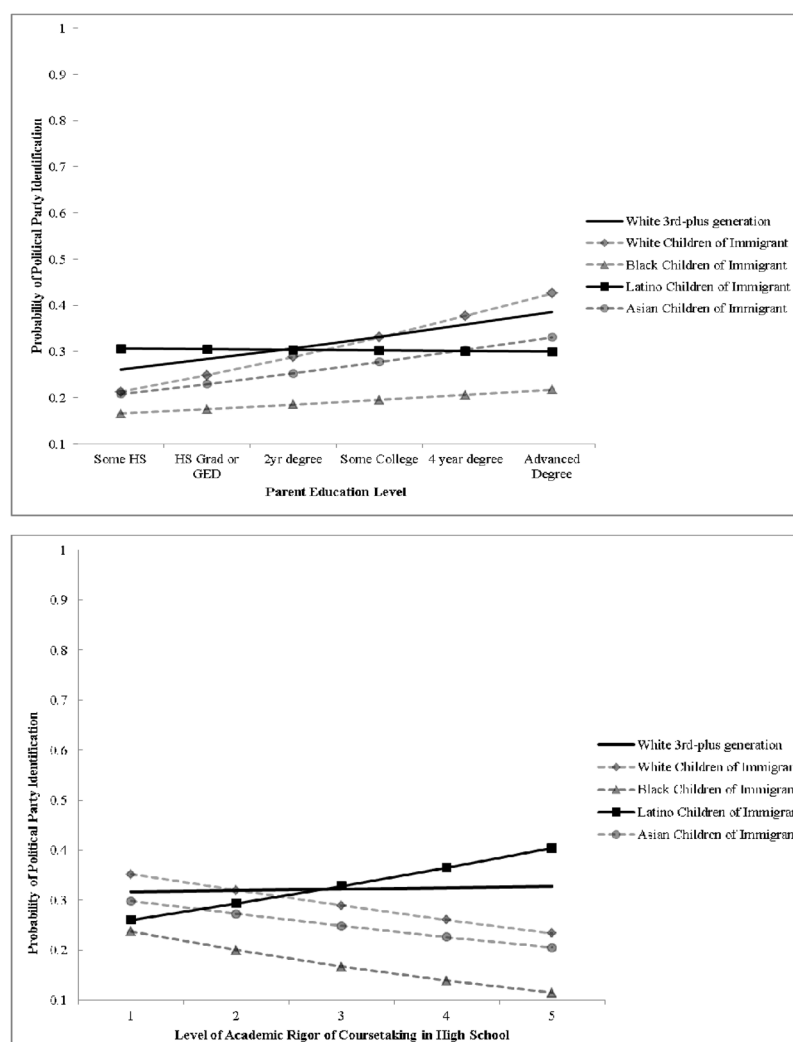
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**Figure 1.**  
 Predicted Probabilities of Voter Registration across Parent Education and Academic Rigor  
 by Race/Immigrant Group  
 Note: Bold lines indicate statistically significant difference from white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation at  
 the  $p < .05$  level



**Figure 2.**  
 Predicted Probabilities of Political Party Identification across Parent Education and Academic Rigor by Race/Immigrant Group  
 Note: Bold lines indicate statistically significant difference from white 3<sup>rd</sup>-plus generation at the  $p < .05$  level

Table 1

Weighted Means and Percentages of Political Participation and Socialization Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and Immigrant Generation

	Full Sample	3rd-plus White	Children of Immigrants				3rd-plus generation			
			White	Black	Latino	Asian	Black	Latino	Asian	
Dependent Variables										
Registered to Vote	0.75	0.75	0.79	0.87 **	0.65 ***	0.64 *	0.79 *	0.75	0.72	
Voted in 2000 Election	0.45	0.45	0.50	0.59 *	0.38 *	0.37	0.52 *	0.40	0.34	
Party Identification	0.35	0.34	0.38	0.48	0.33	0.27 *	0.41 **	0.24 ***	0.15 **	
Parent Background										
Highest Parent Education	3.54 (1.67)	3.75 (1.43)	4.01 (1.40)	3.83 (2.09)	2.09 *** (2.34)	3.94 (2.53)	3.07 *** (1.78)	3.17 *** (1.86)	3.72 (2.56)	
Parent Volunteering	0.76 (0.88)	0.83 (0.81)	0.83 (0.77)	0.78 (1.09)	0.38 *** (0.86)	0.62 * (1.13)	0.66 * (0.96)	0.67 * (0.97)	1.08 * (1.65)	
Community										
Adolescent Volunteering	0.43	0.44	0.47	0.54	0.42	0.52	0.38 **	0.39 *	0.56 *	
Religious participation	0.76	0.74	0.75	0.80	0.80 *	0.78	0.82 **	0.72	0.71	
Schooling										
Extracurricular Participation	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.65 *	0.66 ***	0.83	0.76 *	0.69 ***	0.81	
Social Connection to School	3.77 (0.87)	3.77 (0.80)	3.74 (0.75)	3.60 (1.00)	3.76 (1.09)	3.92 ** (1.03)	3.72 (0.93)	3.79 (0.98)	3.89 (1.10)	
Academic Rigor	2.27 (1.64)	2.36 (1.49)	2.66 * (1.37)	2.14 (2.03)	1.91 *** (2.09)	3.18 *** (2.18)	1.90 *** (1.74)	1.86 *** (1.83)	2.66 (1.91)	
Number of SS Credits	3.48 (1.45)	3.56 (1.29)	3.70 (1.11)	3.58 (1.47)	3.11 *** (2.05)	3.55 (1.54)	3.32 * (1.68)	3.08 *** (1.74)	4.07 * (1.78)	
Attended Some College	0.34	0.36	0.47 *	0.42	0.28 *	0.52 **	0.26 ***	0.24 ***	0.45	
N	10,902	5,986	289	129	979	598	2,153	600	168	

Note: Standard Deviations in parentheses.

Race/Immigrant group different from 3rd-plus generation white young adults at p&lt; \*.05; \*\*.01; \*\*\*.001.

Table 2

Logistic regression predicting political participation in young adulthood

Variables	Voter Registration		Voted		Party Identification	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Race/Immigrant Status</b> (ref: White 3rd-plus gen)						
White children of immigrants	0.319~ (0.189)	0.195 (0.186)	0.126 (0.153)	0.066 (0.154)	0.155 (0.149)	0.066 (0.154)
Black children of immigrants	0.779* (0.360)	0.877* (0.334)	0.355 (0.303)	0.547~ (0.317)	0.568* (0.284)	0.668~ (0.340)
Latino children of immigrants	-0.486*** (0.116)	-0.082 (0.128)	-0.056 (0.131)	0.212 (0.130)	-0.047 (0.149)	0.290 (0.154)
Asian children of immigrants	-0.517** (0.180)	-0.768*** (0.199)	-0.097 (0.181)	-0.189 (0.190)	-0.360~ (0.193)	-0.497* (0.207)
Black 3rd-plus generation	0.231~ (0.133)	0.536*** (0.123)	0.239~ (0.123)	0.595*** (0.124)	0.302** (0.108)	0.584** (0.117)
Latino 3rd-plus generation	0.037 (0.150)	0.349* (0.156)	-0.226 (0.155)	0.007 (0.152)	-0.473*** (0.136)	-0.268~ (0.139)
Asian 3rd-plus generation	-0.105 (0.264)	-0.254 (0.221)	-0.422 (0.258)	-0.506~ (0.256)	-1.049* (0.436)	-1.128* (0.417)
<b>Parent Background</b>						
Parent highest education level		0.128*** (0.024)		0.071** (0.022)		0.092** (0.025)
Parent volunteering		0.107* (0.044)		0.022 (0.039)		0.020 (0.034)
Intact family structure		0.011 (0.077)		0.241*** (0.061)		-0.001 (0.066)
<b>Community</b>						
Volunteering		0.412*** (0.072)		0.198** (0.070)		0.389*** (0.068)
Religious participation		0.249** (0.074)		0.192* (0.079)		0.288** (0.079)
<b>Schooling</b>						
Number of SS credits in HS		0.078** (0.027)		0.091** (0.029)		0.057~ (0.026)
Academic Rigor		0.065* (0.027)		0.053* (0.024)		0.038 (0.028)
Extracurricular involvement		0.202* (0.089)		-0.137 (0.087)		0.104 (0.097)
Social Connection to school		0.138** (0.041)		0.148*** (0.036)		0.158** (0.037)
Attended some college		0.507*** (0.091)		0.212* (0.087)		0.310** (0.072)
Constant	-0.565 (0.392)	-4.144*** (0.580)	-0.658~ (0.348)	-3.969*** (0.545)	-1.345*** (0.337)	-4.813*** (0.496)
Observations	10868	10868	8,217	8,217	10809	10809

Standard errors in parentheses;



\*\*\*  
p<0.001,  
\*\*  
p<0.01,  
\*  
p<0.05,  
~  
p<0.1

Models also control for: gender, age, family income and pvt score