

6-10-2009

The Political Discussion Networks of Immigrants and Native Born Voters

Casey A. Klofstad

University of Miami, klofstad@gmail.com

Benjamin G. Bishin

University of California - Riverside, bishin@ucr.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/pn_wp

Recommended Citation

Klofstad, Casey A. and Bishin, Benjamin G., "The Political Discussion Networks of Immigrants and Native Born Voters" (2009).
Working Papers. Paper 23.

http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/pn_wp/23

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Networks Paper Archive at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Working Papers by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

The Political Discussion Networks of Immigrants and Native Born Voters

Casey A. Klofstad
University of Miami
klofstad@gmail.com

Benjamin G. Bishin
University of California, Riverside
bishin@ucr.edu

This is a work in progress; please do not cite without permission. We thank Scott McClurg, Christopher Mann, Anand Sokhey, Elizabeth Stuart, and the members of the University of Miami Politics Research Workshop for useful feedback. The University of Miami Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies provided funding for data collection. The University of Wisconsin Survey Center (Madison, WI) assisted in the design of the exit poll questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

Despite that fact that political discussion has become a more common topic of research in political science, and despite the fact that immigrants have begun to comprise a larger portion of the United States population, the content and effect of immigrant political discussion networks have not yet been examined. In this paper we examine whether engaging in political discussion is a means by which to encourage immigrants to participate in political activities. Our evidence shows that while immigrants are as likely as native born citizens to engage in political discussions, immigrants are less likely to share politically-relevant information during such conversations. Further analysis shows that immigrants are less likely to exchange information because they have weaker political predispositions than native born citizens. As a consequence, the relationship between political talk and political participation is not statistically significant for immigrants, suggesting that political discussion is not a sufficient means by which to encourage foreign born citizens to participate in civil society.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past half-century, immigrants have begun to comprise a larger portion of the United States population (e.g., Affigne 2000; Camarota 2007; Immigration Policy Center 2008; Leal et al. 2005). This raises several important questions for scholars who are concerned with the strength of participatory democracy. For example, immigrants tend to have weaker political predispositions—the ability and desire to participate in political activities—than do native born citizens (e.g., Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; Cain et al. 1991; Tam Cho 1999; Wong 2000). As such, immigrants are less likely to be politically active than native born citizens and, as a consequence, are less likely to have their preferences represented in the halls of government (e.g., Griffin and Newman 2005; Verba et al. 1995). This leads us to ask: what can be done to pull the growing constituency into the processes of democratic governance in the United States?

Political scientists have traditionally answered questions like this by focusing on individual-level antecedents of political participation, such as the strength of political preferences and psychological engagement with politics (e.g., Zuckerman 2004). Against this dominant paradigm, however, some political scientists have begun to recognize the important effect that sociological factors have on one's patterns of political participation. More specifically, research shows that individuals who engage in informal discussions about politics and current events with their friends and family (i.e., their "social network") are more politically active than individuals who do not engage in this type of dialogue (see

Zuckerman 2004 for a comprehensive review of this literature). Such conversations encourage participation by supplying individuals with information that is necessary for engaging in civic activities (Klofstad 2007; McClurg 2003).

Despite that fact that research on political discussion has become more common in our field, and despite the fact that immigrants have begun to comprise a larger portion of the United States population, the content and effect of immigrant political discussion networks have not yet been examined. To address this topic we designed and administered a 2008 presidential election exit poll in Miami-Dade County, Florida, one of the largest immigrant communities in the United States. These data show that while immigrants are as likely as native born citizens to engage in political discussion, immigrants are less likely to exchange politically-relevant information during these conversations. Further analysis shows that immigrants are less likely to exchange information because they have weaker political predispositions than native born citizens. As a consequence, the relationship between political talk and political participation is not significant among immigrants, suggesting that political discussion is not a sufficient means with which to encourage foreign born citizens to participate in civil society.

This paper proceeds as follows. We begin with a discussion of the relationship between political discussion and political participation. This discussion leads to an examination of a new line of research which suggests that political predispositions mediate the effect of discussion on participation. We then examine scholarship on immigrants which shows that immigrants tend to have

weaker political predispositions than native born citizens. After discussing the relevant literatures, we describe the Miami-Dade County exit poll data, and examine the content and effect of immigrant and native born political discussion networks. The paper concludes with a discussion of our findings, and suggestions for future research.

THE DISCUSSION-PARTICIPATION NEXUS

The growing political science literature on social networks shows that talking about politics with the individuals in our immediate social environment leads us to participate in civic activities (e.g., Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991,1995; Huckfeldt et al. 1995; Kenny 1992,1994; Klofstad 2007, 2009; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; McClurg 2003, 2004; Mutz 2002). Using a national social survey, for example, Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) show that the amount of political discussion occurring in an individual's social network correlates with his or her level of political participation. Similar findings have been made with local-level survey data. For example, data from the seminal South Bend, Indiana Study suggests that talking about politics influences how individuals evaluate candidates and participate in elections (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991,1995).

More recent political science research on social networks identifies the mechanisms by which individuals translate discussion into action (Klofstad 2007; McClurg 2003). For example, in an analysis of Huckfeldt and Sprague's South Bend, Indiana data set (1985), McClurg (2003) shows that one's social network is

an important source of information on politics and current events. Information motivates participation because it increases civic competence (the ability to participate) and civic engagement (having an interest in participating in the first place). In a more recent study, Klofstad (2007) comes to a similar conclusion on the role of information in an analysis of panel data collected from undergraduate college students.

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF POLITICAL PREDISPOSITIONS

While there is a growing political science literature on social-level antecedents of political participation, the effect of one's social environment on one's patterns of behavior is not independent of individual-level characteristics, including the strength of political precedence (e.g., partisanship), socioeconomic status, and education, among others. These predispositions affect the likelihood of political participation because they affect how an individual perceives and experiences the costs and benefits associated with engaging in such activities. More specifically, if a person feels that the costs of political participation are too high, or that the benefits are too low—that is, if he or she has weak political predispositions—that individual will be less likely to participate in political activities (e.g., Downs 1957; Olson 1965; Verba et al. 1995). For example, a person with weak partisan preferences is less likely to perceive the benefits of campaigning for or donating money to a candidate, and as such will be less likely to engage in such behaviors compared to a person with strong partisan preferences.

Given that individuals with weak political predispositions are less likely to participate in political activities, it is logical to hypothesize that individuals with weak political predispositions will experience a smaller (or possibly even insignificant) increase in political participation as a consequence of engaging in political discussion. Otherwise stated, if a person is not interested in becoming politically active, no amount cajoling by his or her peers will increase the odds of he or she choosing to participate in politics.

The literature on civic participation offers evidence in favor of this expectation. For example, Verba et al. (1995) show that unless an individual is equipped with the resources and motivations (in their terms, “engagement”) that are requisite for participation in civic activities, he or she will not respond to requests from others to participate (in their terms, “recruitment”). McClurg (2003) presents a more direct assessment of how political predispositions influence the relationship between political discussion and civic participation through an examination of the Huckfeldt and Sprague South Bend, Indiana social network data set. This analysis shows that less well-educated individuals participated in fewer civic activities as a consequence of engaging in political discussion than their more well-educated counterparts. Klofstad (2009) comes to the same conclusion through an analysis of panel survey data collected from college students. These data show that political discussion has no effect on the amount of participation in voluntary civic organizations engaged in by individuals with below average political predispositions, including prior experience participating in voluntary civic organizations, prior experience engaging in political discussion,

political interest, and strength of political preferences (i.e., ideology and partisanship).

THE CASE OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Over the past 40 or so years, immigrants have become a larger and more politically powerful constituency in the United States (e.g., Affigne 2000; Camarota 2007; Immigration Policy Center 2008; Leal et al. 2005). In terms of raw population numbers, data from the United States Census Current Population Survey shows that in 2007, one out of every eight United States residents emigrated legally from a foreign country, compared to only one in twenty-one in 1970 (Camarota 2007). Moreover, between the years 2000 and 2007, 10.3 million people legally immigrated to the United States, the largest seven-year period of immigration in the history of the United States (Camarota 2007).¹ With regard to political power, data from the Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) show that in 2006, 5.1 million naturalized Americans voted, which accounts for over five percent of all registered voters that year (Immigration Policy Center 2008). Moreover, CPS data show that the number of naturalized citizens registering to vote in the United States increased by 55 percent between 1996 and 2004 (Immigration Policy Center 2008). Given the competitive nature of national elections of late in the United States,

¹ These trends are likely a consequence of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which eliminated many of the immigration restrictions established in the Immigration Act of 1924.

immigrants are becoming a large and potentially decisive voting bloc (and especially so in large and electorally competitive states such as Florida).

Given what political scientists have learned about the relationship between political discussion and political participation, and the mediating role that political predispositions play in this relationship, will the growing population of immigrants in the United States become more active in civil society as a result of engaging in such conversations? We expect that they will not because, on average, immigrants have weaker political predispositions than native born citizens.

Immigrants have weaker political predispositions for a number of reasons. One is due to the fact that an individual's views about politics are formed early in life, largely due to socialization by the family and as a consequence of attending school (e.g., Beck and Jennings 1991; Cain et al. 1999; Campbell et al. 1960; Jennings and Niemi 1968). As the political context varies from country to country, however, immigrants will have been exposed to different socializing experiences during their younger years than those who were born and raised in the United States.² Consequently, immigrants tend to have less direct experience with politics in the United States, and as such have weaker political predispositions that are specifically germane to American politics. For example, a number of studies show that immigrants have weaker partisan preferences than native born citizens (e.g., Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; Cain et al. 1991; Tam Cho 1999; Wong

² This is especially the case if the immigrant emigrated from an undemocratic state (e.g., Tam Cho 1999).

2000).³ Each of these studies shows, however, that longer an immigrant has resided in the United States, the more opportunities that person has had to learn and form preferences about American politics.⁴

In addition to not having been socialized to politics in the United States, immigrants also tend to have lower incomes, fewer years of education, and less skill speaking English than native born citizens (e.g., Barreto 2005; Le 2009; Ramakrishnan 2005; Tam Cho et al. 2006a).⁵ Income, education and language acquisition are resources that are requisite for individuals to participate in political activities (e.g., Verba et al. 1995). For example, an individual cannot make a campaign contribution if they have no money to donate. Or, if the voter registration forms and/or ballots in a person's community are only printed in English, that person needs to be able to read and comprehend that language in order to vote.

³ Moreover, individuals with weak predispositions often struggle to acquire stronger attitudes over time, especially if they reside in enclave communities of individuals with similarly weak predispositions, as many immigrants do (e.g., Tam Cho 1999).

⁴ Perhaps as a consequence of this, immigrants are more likely to vote the longer they have lived in the United States (e.g., Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001).

⁵ This said, there is variance in socioeconomic status among immigrants. A classic example is Cuban Americans who immigrated to the United States before 1980, a group that tends to have higher incomes and greater levels of education compared to other Latino/Hispanic immigrants (e.g., Eckstein 2006).

Because of the fact that immigrants have weaker political preferences and lower socioeconomic status, political parties and other political action organizations are aware that immigrants are less likely than native-born citizens to participate in political activities. Consequently, immigrants are also less likely than native born citizens to be mobilized to participate in politics (e.g., Barreto 2005).⁶ Political organizations tend to ignore immigrants because they are “rational prospectors” (Brady et al. 1999). These agents of political mobilization want their efforts to result in political activity, and as such they overwhelmingly target individuals who are already predisposed to participate in civil society. Otherwise stated, immigrants are not recruited to participate because they are not predisposed to do so. Consequently, they are less likely to participate because they are less likely to be asked to do so (e.g., Verba et al. 1995).

DATA AND METHOD

The 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Based on the state of the literatures on political discussion and immigrant political participation, we seek to address two questions that have not yet been examined. First, what is the frequency and content of political discussions

⁶ This said, studies suggest that immigrants are more likely to be mobilized during times of external threat, for example, Arab Americans in response to anti-Arab sentiment in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Tam Cho et al. 2006b), and Latinos in California in response to anti-immigrant sentiment (Pantoja et al. 2001,2008).

engaged in by immigrants? Second, does engaging in political discussion cause immigrants to participate more actively in civil society, and if so (or if not) why?

To answer these questions we conducted a 2008 presidential election poll in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Miami-Dade is a uniquely useful laboratory for examining immigrant political discussion networks for a number of reasons. First, the county has a large population of immigrants. Recent estimates show that 24% of Miami-Dade residents are naturalized citizens (2007 American Community Survey). Second, the immigrant population in Miami-Dade is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and political preferences. For example, the data in Table 1 show that the immigrants who participated in the exit poll represent a number of different races, and emigrated from a number of different countries. The bottom two rows of the table also show that while a majority of immigrants in our study supported Democratic candidates in 2008, over 30% did not.⁷ Third, Miami-Dade is a politically-relevant area of the country to study, especially within the context of presidential elections. Florida is a populous and politically competitive state, and as such receives a great deal of attention from the presidential campaigns. Miami-Dade County draws an even more intense focus. In 2004, for example, the greater Miami area received more attention via advertising than any other area in the nation as the campaign heated up in October (Wisconsin Advertising Project 2004).

⁷ This is due to the large Cuban-American population in the country, a community that tends to vote Republican (e.g., Eckstein 2006).

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In addition to Miami-Dade County being a large, diverse and politically-relevant immigrant community, it is also important to underscore that this study adds a new and important case to the study of immigrant political participation. In total, 78% of peer-reviewed journal articles published on immigrant political participation in the United States between the years 2000 and 2008 focused on Latinos/Hispanics.⁸ Moreover, 44% of all articles published on immigrant political participation used data exclusively from the State of California (and typically a single city within the state, such as Los Angeles).⁹ Of the studies based on data from California, 75% focused on Latinos/Hispanics. Otherwise stated, based on the demographic makeup of the State of California (e.g., Gage 2003), a great deal of what we know about immigrant political participation in the United States

⁸ We acknowledge the debate over which term is most appropriate: “Latino” or “Hispanic” (Hero 1992). However, following the lead of de la Garza (2004) we use these terms interchangeably.

⁹ This analysis was conducted by using the term “immigrant political participation” to search for articles listed in the ISI Web of Science database. After eliminating articles about countries other than the United States, as well as articles that were not from the social sciences, the search yielded 27 articles.

is based on what we know about Mexican immigrants.¹⁰ Consequently, the data presented in this paper expand upon our understanding of immigrant political participation by focusing on a more diverse population of immigrants living in the State of Florida.

While Miami-Dade County is an extremely useful case with which to study immigrant political discussion networks, two features of our research design need further explanation. First, our exit poll data are only representative of immigrant voters (e.g., Barreto and Muñoz 2003). By studying voters we are able to gain a better understanding of how political discussion affects the behavior of immigrants who are actually able to participate in political activities (i.e., by law, voters are citizens, and as such are eligible to participate in other political activities). This feature of our data, however, increases the likelihood that we will find a positive relationship between political discussion and political participation among immigrants, because individuals who have the means and wherewithal to vote are more likely to engage in political discussion and participate in political activities (e.g., McClurg 2003; Klofstad 2007, 2009; Verba et al. 1995).¹¹

¹⁰ This said, the Latino National Political Survey (de la Garza et al. 1989-1990) and the Latino National Survey (Fraga et al. 2006) have produced significantly more representative data on Latino/Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

¹¹ The same could be said for the fact that we conducted our study during an election, a time when individuals are more likely to engage in political discussion and participate in political activities.

Second, like most studies of immigrant political participation our sample is not representative of all immigrants across the United States. Miami-Dade is a large and diverse immigrant community, and represents a new case in the study of immigrant political participation. Miami-Dade is unique, however, because the vast majority of immigrants living in the county are of Hispanic origin (64.4 percent in our poll)¹², and a plurality emigrated from Cuba (39.5 percent in our poll). Moreover, the average date of immigration in our sample of immigrants was before 1970, earlier than more recent arrivals in other communities such as Southern California. As with our focus on voters, both of these sample demographics could increase the likelihood of finding a positive relationship between political discussion and political participation among immigrants. The Cuban American community in Miami-Dade County is more politically active compared to other immigrant groups (e.g., Eckstein 2006). Also, while the sociopolitical imprint of one's country of birth lasts for generations (Rice and Feldman 1997), immigrants who have lived in the United States for a longer period of time are more likely to have been socialized to politics in this country, making them more predisposed to participate in the process (e.g., Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001).

Measures

Political Participation

¹² In comparison, 54.6 percent of all legal immigrants to the United States emigrated from countries in Latin America (Camarota 2007).

The central question of interest in this study is whether political discussion causes immigrants to engage in political activities. To measure political participation respondents were asked, “During the 2008 election year did you: work/volunteer for a political party or candidate, attend meetings or rallies for a candidate or political party, post a yard sign/bumper sticker/wear a campaign button, or donate money to a political party or candidate?” The measure of political participation used in this analysis is a zero-to-four ordinal scale of how many of these types of activities the respondent reported engaging in during the 2008 election.

Political Discussion

The independent variable in this analysis is the amount of political discussion that each respondent engaged in during the 2008 campaign. Specifically, each respondent was asked, “Over the past few months, how often have you talked with other people about the election: often, sometimes, rarely, or never?”¹³ While use of self reports is standard practice in studies of political discussion networks (e.g., Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt et al. 1995; Kenny 1992, 1994; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; McClurg 2003, 2004; Mutz 2002), our approach differs

¹³ Given that this question was asked within the context of participating in an election poll, respondents may have felt motivated to over report how much they discussed politics. Nonetheless, there is still a great deal of variance on this measure that can be used to help explain political participation.

from the multi-question “name generator” procedure that is typically used in social network studies (see Klofstad et al. 2009 for a review of this procedure). Due to the fact that we utilized an election exit poll, an environment where respondents are highly motivated to complete the questionnaire quickly and move on with their day, we were forced to use only a single survey question to collect information on the amount of political discussion each respondent engaged in during the 2008 election.

Information Exchanges

Asking respondents how much they discussed the 2008 election is likely to capture a wide variety of dialogue, covering anything from talking about the most recent joke made about the campaign by Jon Stewart on the *Daily Show*, to a detailed discussion of the candidates’ plans to fix the economy, and everything in between. As such, respondents were asked to answer follow-up questions to gather more specific data on what types of dialogue occurred when they discussed the 2008 election. As discussed earlier, information exchange is a mechanism by which individuals translate political discussion into political activity (Klofstad 2007; McClurg 2003). Therefore, in order to measure whether voters shared information when they engaged in political discussion, exit poll respondents were asked, “When you talked with other people about the election, what happened?: ‘we shared our opinions about the candidates and issues,’ ‘we shared information about the candidates and issues’.” Information exchange is operationalized in two ways: as the individual indicators of whether information

and opinions were shared, and as the sum of these two indicators (i.e., a zero-to-two point ordinal scale).

Immigration Status

Immigration status was determined by asking, “Which of your relatives first immigrated to the US: ‘I did,’ ‘Mother/Father,’ ‘Grandparent(s),’ or ‘Other?’”

Respondents who answered “I did” are treated as immigrants (N = 363), while all other respondents are treated as native-born citizens (N = 2035).

Political Predispositions

Four sets of measures of an individual’s wiliness and ability to participate in political activities in the United States are used in this analysis. First, because strength of political preferences is an indicator of a person’s propensity to participate in civil society (e.g. Verba et al. 1995), one measure captures the strength of partisan preferences. The exit poll questionnaire asked respondents, “No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as a(n): Strong Democrat, Democrat, Independent, Republican, or Strong Republican?” The partisan strength measure “folds” the partisanship scale into a one-to-three point ordinal scale that runs from Independent to strong partisan.

The second set of predisposition measures captures respondents’ personal resources. Based on the strong relationship between education and political participation (e.g., Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Verba et al. 1995), education is included in the analysis by employing a question that asked, “What

was the last year of school that you completed: less than high school, high school graduate, some college, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, or postgraduate study/degree?" In this same vein, a measure of the respondent's 2007 household income is also included in the analysis.

Third, the analysis also accounts for how assimilated each respondent is into the United States political system. Given the fact that individuals who are asked to become politically active are more likely to do so than individual who are not (e.g., Brady et al. 1999; Klofstad 2007; Verba et al. 1995), one measure of political assimilation is based on whether respondents were contacted by a political party or other political organization during the course of the 2008 election. Also, considering that individuals who participate in voluntary organizations are more likely to be politically active (e.g., Putnam 2000, Verba et al. 1995), a second measure of political assimilation is based on how active respondents were in such groups. More specifically, respondents were asked, "How many social, cultural, civic or political organizations do you participate in: none, one or more than one?"

Finally, two measures of cultural assimilation are also included in the analysis: date of immigration and English language acquisition. Immigrants who have lived in the United States for a longer period of time are more likely to have been socialized to politics in this country, making them more likely to be predisposed to participate in the process. As such, the analysis includes a measure of each immigrant's date of immigration into the United States. To

capture language acquisition, the analysis also includes a measure of whether the respondent completed the questionnaire in English or Spanish.¹⁴

Method: Data Preprocessing

While there is a positive relationship between political discussion and political participation, the validity of this relationship has been challenged because it is difficult to determine if our social network influences us or if our own patterns of behavior influence how we select and interact with our peers (e.g., Klofstad 2007,2009; Laver 2005; Nickerson 2008). For example, while one might suggest that talking about politics causes people to become more politically active, an equally plausible argument is that engaging in political activity causes individuals to talk about politics in their social networks (reciprocal causation). Individuals who are more active in politics may also explicitly choose to associate with peers who are more interested in talking about politics (selection bias). Finally, some factor that has not been accounted for could be causing people to both have political discussions in their social network and to participate in civic activities (endogeneity or omitted variable bias).

Traditionally, non-recursive regression models are used to overcome these analytical biases. In such specifications, the independent variable of interest (in this case, engaging in political discussion) is modeled with instrumental variables that do not correlate with the outcome variable being

¹⁴ A measure of whether the respondent speaks a language other than English at home produces comparable results.

predicted (in this case, political participation). This form of analysis is inappropriate for assessing the relationship between political discussion and political participation, however, because it is difficult to identify variables that reliably predict one's level of political discussion that are not correlated with one's level of political behavior.¹⁵

The effect of political discussion on political participation can be measured with greater precision, however, by preprocessing the Miami-Dade Exit Poll data with a matching procedure (e.g., Dunning 2008; Ho et al. 2007a,b). Under this procedure the effect of engaging in political discussion is measured by comparing the civic participation habits of survey respondents who are similar to one another, save the fact that one engaged in political discussion and the other did not. By comparing the participatory habits of similar individuals who did and did not engage in political discussion, we can be confident that any observed difference in political participation between them is unrelated to the factors that the respondents were matched on, and as such is a consequence of political discussion.¹⁶ More detail on how this procedure was conducted is included in the appendix.

¹⁵ Non-recursive models, however, have been employed when the independent variable of interest is behavior (e.g., vote choice) instead of discussion (e.g., Kenny 1992).

¹⁶ Matching is less precise than a controlled experiment because the procedure does not account for unobserved differences between individuals who did and did not engage in political discussion (e.g., Arceneaux et al. 2006). However,

FINDINGS

Frequency and Content of Political Discussions

Before examining whether political discussion leads immigrants and native born citizens to participate in political activities, it is first important to examine the frequency and content of these conversations. The exit poll data show that immigrants and native born citizens engaged in the same amount of political discussion during the 2008 campaign. On the zero-to-four point political discussion scale, immigrants scored a mean of 3.5 while native born citizens scored a mean of 3.6 ($t = .47$, $p = .46$). Substantively, this means that both immigrants and native born citizens engaged in political discussion somewhere between “sometimes” and “often” over the course of the 2008 elections. Given that political discussion networks increase in size during elections (Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Klobstad et al. 2009), because we collected our data from voters, and because of the competitive nature of the 2008 presidential primaries and general

given the extensive set of covariates that were used in the matching procedure, it is difficult to think of any meaningful unobserved factors that are not accounted for in the analysis. Moreover, unobserved differences between individuals who did and did not engage in political discussion are likely to correlate with observed differences, and as such are accounted for by proxy in the matching procedure (Stuart and Green 2008). Also, given the fact that a true experiment is an extremely difficult (if not impossible) research design to execute for this research question, matching is a next best alternative.

election (especially so in the swing State of Florida), this relatively high level of political discourse is not surprising.

While immigrants and native born citizens engaged in the same level of political discussion during the 2008 election, the data in Table 2 show that immigrants were less likely to exchange information while engaging in political dialogue. The top row of the table shows that immigrants were 11.0 percentage points less likely than native born citizens to share information about the candidates and issues surrounding the 2008 presidential campaign. The middle row of Table 2 shows that immigrants were 3.4 percentage points less likely to share their own opinions about the candidates and issues. This difference, however, is not statistically significant. Finally, the last row of Table 2 presents the summary score of whether respondents engaged in none, one, or both forms of information sharing. The data show that, overall, immigrants were less likely than native born citizens to share information when engaging in political discussions.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The data in Table 3 suggest a reason for why immigrants are less likely to exchange information when engaging in political dialogue: immigrants have weaker political predispositions than native born citizens. The first row of the table shows that immigrants have significantly weaker partisan preferences than native born citizens. Moving down the table, the next two rows show that

immigrants are less well educated and have less income than native-born citizens. The difference in education, however, falls just outside the 90% confidence interval of statistical significance. With regard to political assimilation, the data in Table 3 show that immigrants were less likely than native born citizens to have been contacted by a political party or other organization during the 2008 campaign. The data suggest that immigrants also tend to be less active in voluntary organizations. However, this difference falls just outside the 90% confidence interval of statistical significance. The remaining two rows in Table 3 show that immigrants are also less integrated into the social fabric of the United States. Obviously, data on date of immigration indicate that immigrants have been in this country for a shorter period of time than native-born citizens (the variable is scaled so larger values indicate a more recent arrival to the United States). The data also show that immigrants were more likely than native born citizens to have completed the exit poll questionnaire in Spanish instead of English.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Table 4 extends upon the data evidence presented in Table 3 through a multivariate analysis of information exchanges. The negative and significant coefficient for *Immigrant* in column 1 of Table 4 confirms that immigrants exchanged less information than native born citizens during the 2008 election. The remainder of the table adds measures of political predispositions to the

analysis. The goal of adding these variables to the model is to “explain away” the information exchange gap between immigrants and native born citizens. If political predispositions explain this gap, the *Immigrant* coefficient should drop in both value and statistical significance once predisposition variables are added to the analysis. This will only occur if political predispositions account for the variance in information exchanges that was once accounted for by immigration status.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Columns 2 through 6 in Table 4 shows that predispositions help explain the information exchange gap between immigrants and native born citizens. The results in columns 2 through 4 show that indicators of political preferences, personal resources, and political integration are added to the analysis, the value of the *Immigrant* coefficient decreases in value, albeit marginally. The model in column 5 provides more definitive evidence; when indicators of cultural assimilation are added to the model the *Immigrant* coefficient is extremely small in value and is no longer statistically significant. Otherwise stated, the gap in information exchanges between immigrants and native born citizens can be completely accounted for by cultural assimilation. The final column in Table 4 shows that when all of the political predispositions are added to the model, the *Immigrant* coefficient continues to be small and statistically insignificant. The date of immigration variable is no longer significant in this model, however, because it

is significantly correlated with many of the other predisposition measures included in the analysis. Otherwise stated, the variance in information sharing that was explained by date of immigration in column 5 is being explained by these other variables in column 6 (e.g., the longer an immigrant resides in the United States the stronger their partisanship becomes, which in turn increases the likelihood of political participation).

The Effect of Political Discussion on Political Participation

The effect that engaging in political discussion has on one's level of participation in campaign activities during the 2008 election is presented in Table 5. To increase the precision of the analysis, each of the regression models controls for the political predisposition variables examined in the previous section, all of which are covariates of political participation (e.g., Fowler 2006; Gerber et al. 2003; Plutzer 2002; Verba et al. 1995). The analysis also accounts for additional demographic variables, including gender and race. Unlike most analyses of political behavior, race is broken into three indicator variables for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in order to account for possible interethnic differences in political behavior (see Bishin and Klorstad n.d. for a review of this literature).

The results in the first column of Table 5 show a positive and statistically significant relationship between engaging in political discussion and participating in political activities during the 2008 election among all respondents to the exit poll. The other variables in the model also perform as we might expect. Strength

of political preferences, personal resources (at least income), and political assimilation all predict higher levels of political participation. Indicative of the fact that immigrants are less politically active, more recent immigrants to the United States are predicted to be less politically active. Finally, whether one took the language in Spanish or English is not significantly related to political participation, most likely because this variable is correlated with the other variables in the model. The second column of Table 5 shows that the same can be said when the analysis is restricted to only native born citizens. Additionally, date of immigration is insignificant in this model because there is very little variance in this variable among the native born (i.e., all of these respondents have lived in the United States their entire lives).

Given that our data show that immigrants were less politically active than native born citizens during the 2008 campaign (.97 versus .70 on the zero-to-four participation scale; $t = 4.83$, $p < .01$), is political discussion a means by which to narrow this gap? The results in Column 3 of Table 5 show that it is not. The relatively small and insignificant *Political Discussion* coefficient indicates that there is no systematic relationship between engaging in political discussion and participating in political activities among immigrants. As with the native born, strength of political preferences, income, and political assimilation predict higher levels of political participation. As previously discussed, the cultural assimilation variables are insignificant in the immigrant model because they are correlated with the other variables included in the analysis.

The story changes, however, when we shift our focus to the descendants of immigrants. The final two columns of Table 5 show that the children and grandchildren of immigrants engaged in more political activities during the 2008 election as a consequence of engaging in political discussion. Consistent with the results presented in the rest of Table 5, these results show that strength of political preferences and political assimilation are correlated with higher levels of political participation. Again, the cultural assimilation variables in the last two columns of the table are insignificant because they are correlated with the other variables included in the analysis.

Table 6 examines whether information exchanges help explain why immigrants do not experience an increase in political participation as a consequence of engaging in political discussions. To do so, the regression analysis presented in Table 5 is conducted separately on immigrants who engaged in political discussions that were below and above average in the amount of information exchanged. A comparison of the results for these two subsets of the exit poll sample suggests that information exchanges help explain the insignificant relationship between political discussion and political participation among immigrants. The *Political Discussion* coefficient in the below average discourse immigrant cohort is relatively small and statistically insignificant. In contrast, the *Political Discussion* coefficient for the above average immigrant cohort is nearly the same magnitude as the overall sample estimate in the first column of Table 5. The coefficient is not statistically significant ($p = .43$). This estimate, however, was derived from five separate

imputed data sets. In one of these data sets, the *Political Discussion* coefficient was significant at $p = .06$, and was nearly significant in two of the other data sets at $p \leq .12$. Moreover, the large error about the coefficient is likely a product of the relatively small sample size of immigrants who exchanged an above average amount of information while engaging in political discourse ($N = 107$).

For purposes of comparison, the final two columns of Table 6 extend this analysis to native born citizens. As with immigrants, the relationship between political discussion and political participation appears to be stronger among those who exchange more information. However, the difference in the magnitude of the *Political Discussion* coefficient between above- and below-average cohorts is not very large, and both coefficients are statistically significant. A logical explanation for this difference between immigrants and native born citizens is that native born citizens have stronger political predispositions (see Table 2). Consequently, native born citizens are better-equipped to translate political talk into political participation (i.e., McClurg 2003; Klofstad 2009), regardless of how much information is being shared during such conversations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a consequence of being socialized to politics in a different country, immigrants are not as strongly predisposed as native born citizens to participate in political activities in the United States. This led us to ask how this growing population can have their political preferences represented more forcefully by being more active in civil society. To address this question we examined whether

political discussion is a means by which to increase immigrant political participation. Our data show that immigrants and native born voters were equally likely to engage in political discussion during the 2008 election. This is not surprising given the competitive and historic nature of the 2008 presidential race. In this context, even individuals with little interest in politics are likely to engage in political discussion (e.g., Valentino and Sears 1998). The remainder of the results, however, shows stark differences in the content and effect of immigrant and native born voters' political discussion networks. Our data show that because they have weaker political predispositions, immigrants are less likely than native born citizens to exchange politically-relevant information when engaging in political discussion. As a consequence of being less likely to share information, political discussion has an insignificant effect on the political participation habits of immigrants.

In addition to expanding our understanding of the discussion-participation nexus among immigrants, a topic that had not yet been examined in the literature, the results presented in this paper provide further evidence of the mechanisms that govern the relationship between political discussion and political participation. Echoing a new line of political science research on social networks (Klofstad 2009; McClurg 2003), our data show that political predispositions mediate the relationship between political discussion and political participation. Specifically, we find that individuals with weaker political predispositions are less likely to increase their level of political participation as a consequence of engaging in political discussion compared to individuals with

stronger predispositions. The results presented in this paper also show that information transfers are one of the means by which individuals translate discussion into action (also see Klofstad 2007; McClurg 2003). Specifically, our data suggest that individuals who are exposed to information exchanges while discussing politics are more likely to participate in political activities.

While the results presented in this paper add to our understanding of participatory democracy, two facets of our research design should be addressed through further research. First, our exit poll data are only representative of immigrant voters. As discussed in the data section, this should have increased the likelihood of finding a significant positive relationship between political discussion and political participation among immigrants. Despite the fact that immigrant voters should be more likely to experience the positive effects of political discussion than non-voting immigrants, however, we still find that political discussion had no effect on the participatory habits of immigrant voters. Second, while Miami-Dade County is a large and diverse immigrant community, and while this study expands the set of cases of United States immigrants to include immigrant communities outside the State of California, our data are not representative of all immigrant communities across the United States. Both of these aspects of the data used in this paper necessitate validation of our findings with a more representative sample of immigrants.

In conclusion, we note that despite recent spikes in presidential election voter turnout, over the past 50 years the American public has become less active in civic activities (e.g., Macedo et al. 2005; Putman 2000; Skocpol 2004; but also

see McDonald and Popkin 2001). Over this same time period, foreign born individuals have begun to comprise a larger portion of the population in the United States (e.g., Affigne 2000; Camarota 2007; Immigration Policy Center 2008; Leal et al. 2005). These trends pose a challenge to the strength participatory democracy in the United States. To be clear, we did not test nor do we claim that increased immigration has caused American civil society to weaken. Instead, we are concerned with how the growing immigrant constituency in the United States can gain greater representation in the halls of government at a time when more and more people are choosing to not participate in civil society. As foreign-born citizens continue to become a larger portion of the American public, the need for an answer to this question is becoming more acute.

APPENDIX

The 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Data were collected from voters in Miami-Dade County, Florida between October 22, 2008 and Election Day, November 4, 2008 (Early voting occurred at twenty sites at which any voter in the county could cast a ballot between October 20 and November 2). In line with best practices, interviewers attempted to recruit every third voter leaving the polling place to participate in the study (e.g., Levy 1983; Merkle and Edelman 2002; Mitofsky 1991). In total, 2399 voters completed the questionnaire and 1926 voters refused to participate in the study, yielding a cooperation rate of 55.5 percent (AAPOR Cooperation Rate 2). The questionnaire was self-administered, and consisted of 53 questions printed on both sides of a legal-sized (8.5 in. x 14 in.) sheet of paper. Respondents were allowed to choose whether to complete the questionnaire in either English or Spanish. Based on early voter turnout figures from the 2004 election (the sites were the same in 2004 and 2008), polling was conducted at nineteen sites during the 2008 early voting period; sites with higher turnout rates in 2004 were polled more frequently. On Election Day, 57 (of 766) polling places in the county were surveyed. In line with best practices, these polling locations were randomly selected after being assigned numbers (from a cumulative probability distribution) that corresponded to the proportion of the electorate that was currently registered to vote at each location (e.g., Levy 1983; Merkle and Edelman 2002; Mitofsky 1991).

Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics

[TABLE A1 ABOUT HERE]

Political Participation

“During the 2008 election year did you? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):
work/volunteer for a political party or candidate, attend meetings or rallies for a
candidate or political party, post a yard sign/bumper sticker/wear a campaign
button, donate money to a political party or candidate, none of the above.”

Political Discussion

“Over the past few months, how often have you talked with other people about
the election?: often, sometimes, rarely, never.”

Shared Information

“When you talked with other people about the election, what happened? (CHECK
ALL THAT APPLY): we shared our opinions about the candidates and issues, we
shared information about the candidates and issues.”

Immigrant

“Which of your relatives first immigrated to the US?: I did, Mother/Father,
Grandparent(s), other.”

Strength of Partisanship

“No matter how you voted today, do you usually think of yourself as a(n)?: Strong Democrat, Democrat, Independent, Republican, Strong Republican.”

Education

“What was the last year of school that you completed?: less than high school, high school graduate, some college, Associate degree, Bachelor’s degree, postgraduate study/degree.”

Income

In 2007, my total household income was: under \$15,000, \$15,000-\$29,999, \$30,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$199,000, \$200,000+.”

Contacted by Party or Other Organization

“Were you contacted by any political parties about the campaign this year?: Democrats, Republicans, both major parties, other party, no.”

“Did any other organizations contact you about the election this year? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY): religious, African-American, AARP, student/campus, Hispanic/Latino, Haitian, NRA, neighborhood, moveon.org, League of Women Voters, MTV’s Rock the Vote, Americans Coming Together, union, environmental (e.g., Sierra Club), American Legion, state/local government, other (specify), no.”

Participation in Civic Organizations

“How many social, cultural, civic or political organizations do you participate in?: none, one, more than one.”

Date of Immigration

“When did this person immigrate to the US?: before 1959, 1959-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, after 2000.”

Gender (Female)

“Are you?: male, female.”

Race

You are (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY): White, Black, Haitian, Hispanic/Latino, other.”

Description of Matching Procedure

For this analysis a “full matching” procedure was used (Gu and Rosenbaum, 1993; Hansen 2004; Ho et al. 2007a,b; Rosenbaum, 1991; Stuart and Green 2008). The procedure was conducted using the using the “MatchIt” package for R (Ho et al. 2007a,b), which makes use of the “optmatch” package (Hansen, 2004). In total, 24 pretreatment variables were used in the matching

procedure. This set of variables included demographics, political preferences, strength of political preferences, and political engagement.

The full matching procedure involves three steps. First, respondents were classified as either having been “treated” or “untreated” with political discussion. Respondents who engaged in an above-average amount of political discussion during the 2008 election were classified as having been treated, while those who engaged in a below-average amount of political discussion were classified as untreated. This resulted in the classification of 1693 treated subjects and 706 untreated subjects. Second, the variables included in the matching procedure were used to estimate a score of one’s propensity to engage in political discussion (Hansen, 2004; Ho et al. 2007a,b). Third, at least one untreated subject was matched to at least one treated case based on how close the propensity scores were between treated and untreated cases (i.e., a process of creating “subclasses” where more than one treated subject could be matched to an untreated subject and vice-versa). Each untreated case was only matched to one treated case, and vice-versa (i.e., matching without replacement). In addition, after a case was matched it could have been moved and matched to a different case in order to improve the overall similarity between treated and untreated subjects in the data set (i.e., the process is “optimal” not “greedy”).

The results of the matching procedure were incorporated into the analysis by weighting the regression models. All treated cases were given a weight of 1, while untreated cases were assigned a weight equal to the number of treated cases in the subclass that they were assigned to, divided by the number of

untreated cases in the subclass that they were assigned to. For example, an untreated case that was assigned to a subclass with 10 treated cases and 1 untreated case was assigned a weight of 10, while an untreated case that was assigned to a subclass with 1 treated case and 10 untreated cases was assigned a weight of .10. Consequently, an untreated case that is similar to many treated cases is given more weight in the analysis than an untreated case that was similar to only a few treated cases. Otherwise stated, applying this weight caused the regression model to pay more attention to untreated cases that are similar to treated cases, and less attention to untreated cases that are dissimilar to treated cases, making the analysis a better comparison between the treated and untreated cases than if the data were not weighted.

[TABLE A2 ABOUT HERE]

The results presented in Table A2 illustrate how the matching procedure increased the similarity, or “balance” (Ho et al. 2007a,b), between subjects who did and did not engage in political discussion. The first row in the table shows the overall improvement in similarity between treated and untreated subjects, as measured by the subject’s estimated propensity to engage in political discussion (i.e., the propensity score created by the matching procedure). Overall, the similarity in the propensity to engage in political discussion between subjects who did and did not engage in political discussion increased by nearly 100 percent as a result of matching. The remaining rows of the table show the summary

statistics from “QQ plots.” QQ plots are two-dimensional graphs which plot the empirical distribution of a variable among treated subjects on one axis against the empirical distribution of that same variable among untreated subjects on the other axis. The closer the plotted line is to the 45-degree line on this graph, the closer treated and untreated subjects are to being perfectly balanced on that variable. The results in Table A3 show that the median, mean and maximum distance of the propensity score QQ plot from the 45-degree line were all improved by close to 100 percent due to the matching procedure.

REFERENCES

- Affigne, Tony. 2000. "Latino Politics in the United States: An Introduction". *PS: Political Science and Politics* September: 523-527.
- Alvarez, R. Michael, and Lisa García Bedolla. 2003. "The Foundations of Latino Voter Partisanship: Evidence from the 2000 Election." *The Journal of Politics* 65(1): 31-49.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, Alan S. Gerber, and Donald P. Green. 2006. "Comparing Experimental and Matching Methods Using a Large-Scale Voter Mobilization Experiment." *Political Analysis* 14(1): 37-62.
- Baretto, Matt A. 2005. "Latino Immigrants and the Polls: Foreign-Born Voter Turnout in the 2002 Election." *Political Research Quarterly* 58(1): 79-86.
- Barreto, Matt A., and José A. Muñoz. 2003. "Reexamining the 'Politics of In-Between': Political Participation Among Mexican Immigrants in the United States." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25(4): 427-447.
- Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations. *Journal of Politics* 53 (3):742-763.
- Bishin, Benjamin G. and Casey A. Klofstad. n.d. "Deceit, Diversity, or Mobilization?: Intra-ethnic Diversity and Changing Patterns in the Hispanic Vote." *The Social Science Journal*. Edition and page numbers forthcoming.
- Brady, Henry E., Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 1999. "Prospecting for Participants: Rational Expectations and the Recruitment of Political

- Activists." *American Political Science Review* 93: 153-168.
- Cain, Bruce E., D. Roderick Kiewiet, and Carole J. Uhlaner. 1991. "The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(2): 390-422.
- Camarota, Steve. A. 2007. "Immigrants in the United States, 2007: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population." Center for Immigration Studies Backgrounder Paper. Retrieved April 10, 2009 from <http://www.cis.org>
- Campbell, David E. and Christina Wolbrecht. 2006. "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents." *Journal of Politics* 68(2).
- Campbell, A., P.E. Converse, W.E. Miller, and D.E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Dunning, T. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly*, 61, 282-293.
- Eckstein, Susan. 2006. "Cuban Émigrés and the American Dream." *Perspectives on Politics* 4(2): 297-307.
- Fowler, James 2006. "Habitual Voting and Behavioral Turnout." *Journal of Politics* 68: 335-344.
- Fraga, Luis R., John A. Garcia, Rodney Hero, Michael Jones-Correa, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Gary M. Segura. LATINO NATIONAL SURVEY (LNS), 2006 [computer file]. ICPSR20862-v1. Miami, FL: Geoscape International [producer], 2006. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium

- for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2008-05-27.
doi:10.3886/ICPSR20862
- Gage, Linda. 2003. "Legal Immigration to California in 2002." State of California, Department of Finance. Available at <http://www.dof.ca.gov/research> (accessed on 05/19/2009).
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O. 2004. "Latino Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7:91-123.
- de la Garza, Rodolfo, Angelo Falcon, F. Chris Garcia, and John A. Garcia. Latino National Political Survey, 1989-1990 [computer file]. ICPSR06841-v3. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1998. doi:10.3886/ICPSR06841
- Gerber, A., Green, D., and Shachar, R. 2003. "Voting may be habit-forming: Evidence from a randomized field experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 540-550.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge.
- Griffin, John D. and Brian Newman. 2005. "Are Voters Better Represented?" *Journal of Politics*, 67(4): 1206-27.
- Gu, X., and Rosenbaum, P. 1993. "Comparison of multivariate matching methods: Structures, distances, and algorithms," *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics* 2: 405–420.
- Hansen, B. B. (2004). Full matching in an observational study of coaching for the SAT. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 99, 609-618.

- Hero, Rodney E. 1992. *Latinos and the US Political System*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ho, D., Imai, K, King, G., and Stuart, E. (2007a). Matching as nonparametric preprocessing for reducing model dependence in parametric causal inference. *Political Analysis*, 15, 199-236.
- Ho, D., Imai, K, King, G., and Stuart, E. (2007b). Matchit: Nonparametric preprocessing for parametric causal inference. Retrieved February, 11, 2009, from <http://gking.harvard.edu/matchit>
- Honaker, J., King, G., and Blackwell, M. 2007. Amelia II: A program for missing data. Retrieved February, 11, 2009, from <http://gking.harvard.edu/amelia>
- Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1991. "Discussant Effects on Vote Choice: Intimacy, Structure, and Interdependence." *The Journal of Politics* 53: 122-158.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, and Jeffrey Levine. 1995. "Political Environments, Cohesive Social Groups, and the Communication of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 1025-1054.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul E. Johnson, and John Sprague. 2004. *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions within Communication Networks*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Immigration Policy Center. 2008. "The New American Electorate: The Growing Power of Immigrants and Their Children." Retrieved April 4, 2009 at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/images/File/specialreport/NewCitizenVotersWEBversion.pdf>

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review* 62:169-184.

Kenny, Christopher. 1992. "Political Participation and Effects for the Social Environment." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 259-267.

Kenny, Christopher. 1994. "The Microenvironment of Attitude Change." *The Journal of Politics* 56 (3): 715-728.

King, G., Honaker, J., Joseph, A, and Scheve, K. (2001). Analyzing incomplete political science data: An alternative algorithm for multiple imputation, *American Political Science Review*, 95, 49-69.

Klofstad, Casey A. 2007. "Talk Leads to Recruitment: How Discussions About Politics and Current Events Increase Civic Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 60(2): 180-191.

Klofstad, Casey A. 2009. "Political discussion and Civic Participation: The Moderating Effect of Individual Predispositions." *American Politics Research*. Edition and page numbers forthcoming.

Klofstad, Casey A., Scott D. McClurg, and Meredith Rolfe. 2009. "Measurement

- of Political Discussion Networks: A Comparison of two 'Name Generator' Procedures." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Edition and page numbers forthcoming.
- Lake, R.L., and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation." *Political Psychology* 19: 567-583.
- Laver, M. (2005). Book review of *The Social Logic of Politics. Perspectives on Politics*, 3, 933-934.
- Le, C.N. 2009. "Demographic Characteristics of Immigrants" *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*. Retrieved May 21, 2009 at <http://www.asian-nation.org/immigrant-stats.shtml>
- Leal, David L., Matt A. Barreto, Jongho Lee, and Rodolfo O. de al Garza. 2005. "The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election". *PS: Political Science and Politics* January: 41-49.
- Levy, Mark R. 1983. "The Methodology and Performance of Election Day Polls." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47(1): 54-67.
- Macedo, Stephen, et al. 2005. *Democracy at Risk How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- McClurg, Scott D. 2003. "Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4): 449-64.
- McClurg, Scott D. 2004. "Indirect Mobilization: The Social Consequences of Party Contacts in an Election Campaign." *American Politics Research*

32(4): 406-43.

- McDonald, Michael, and Samuel Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95: 963-974.
- Merkle, Daniel M. and Murray Edelman. 2002. "Nonresponse in Exit Polls: A Comprehensive Analysis." In Robert M. Groves, Don A. Dillman, John L. Eltinge, and Roderick J.A. Little. *Survey Nonresponse*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Mitofsky, Warren J. 1991. "A Short History of Exit Polls." In Paul J. Lavrakas and Jack K. Holley (Eds.), *Polling and Presidential Election Coverage*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 46: 838-855.
- Nickerson, D. W. (2008). Is voting contagious?: evidence from two field experiments. *American Political Science Review*, 102, 49-57.
- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos." *Political Research Quarterly* 54: 729 - 750.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2008. "Commentary on 'Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos'". *Political Research Quarterly* 61: 50-52.

- Plutzer, E. (2002). Becoming a habitual voter: Inertia, resources, and growth in young adulthood. *American Political Science Review*, 96, 41-56.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Rice, Tom, and Jan Feldman. 1997. "Civic Culture and Democracy from Europe to America." *Journal of Politics* 59(4): 1143-1172.
- Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick. 2005. *Democracy in Immigrant America: Changing Demographics and Political Participation*. Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press.
- Ramakrishnan, S. Karthick, and Thomas J. Espenshade. 2001. "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States." *International Migration Review* 35(3): 870-909.
- Rosenbaum, P. (1991). A characterization of optimal designs for observational studies. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 53, 597–610.
- Skocpol, Theda. 2004. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Stuart, Elizabeth A. and Kerry M. Green. 2008. "Using Full Matching to Estimate Causal Effects in Nonexperimental Studies: Examining the Relationship Between Adolescent Marijuana Use and Adult Outcomes." *Developmental Psychology* 44(2): 395-406.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K., James G. Gimpel, and Joshua J. Dyck. 2006a. "Residential

- Concentration, Political Socialization, and Voter Turnout." *The Journal of Politics* 68: 156-167.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K., James G. Gimpel, and Tony Wu. 2006b. Clarifying the Role of SES in Political Participation: Policy Threat and Arab American Mobilization." *The Journal of Politics* 68: 977-991.
- Tam Cho, Wendy K. 1999. "Naturalization, Socialization, Participation: Immigrants and (Non-)Voting." *The Journal of Politics* 61(4): 1140-1155.
- United States Census. 2007. American Community Survey. Available online at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html> (accessed on 03/24/2009).
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Valentino, Nicholas, and David Sears. 1998. "Event-Driven Political Communication and the Preadult Socialization of Partisanship." *Political Behavior* 20(2): 127-154.
- Wisconsin Advertising Project. 2004. "The Great Ad Wars of 2004." Originally published in *The New York Times* (November 1, 2004). Available at <http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising> (accessed on 07/19/2007)
- Wong, JS. 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.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Zuckerman, Alan S. 2004. "Returning to the Social Logic of Politics." In *The*

Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior, ed. Alan S. Zuckerman. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

TABLES

Table 1: Immigrant Diversity in Miami-Dade County, Florida

Race	
Hispanic/Latino	64.4%
White	22.2%
Black	12.8%
Other	4.5%
Haitian	2.9%

Country of Origin	
Cuba	39.5%
Other	35.1%
Columbia	7.4%
Nicaragua	5.8%
Haiti	5.2%
Puerto Rico	4.9%

Presidential Vote Choice	
Barack Obama	63.1%
Democratic U.S. House Candidate	61.5%

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Note: The figures on race do not sum to 100% because respondents were allowed to check all that apply.

Table 2. Information Exchanges by Immigrants and Native Born Citizens

	Native Born	Immigrant	Difference
Shared Information	51.2%	40.2%	11.0% (t = 3.91, p < .01)
Shared Opinions	70.1%	66.7%	3.4% (t = 1.12, p = .21)
Total Information Exchange Score	1.22	1.07	.15 (t = 3.66; p < .01)

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Table 3. Politically-Relevant Predispositions

	Native Born	Immigrant	Difference
Political Preferences			
Strength of Partisanship	2.18	2.10	.08 (t = 1.76, p = .09)
Personal Resources			
Education	4.10	3.96	.14 (t = 1.64, p = .13)
Income	4.14	3.82	.32 (t = 3.12; p = .01)
Political Assimilation			
Contacted by Party or Other Organization During Campaign	1.21	1.11	.10 (t = 2.13; p = .05)
Participation in Civic Organizations	1.85	1.74	.11 (t = 2.37, p = .02)
Cultural Assimilation			
Date of Immigration	1.99	3.38	-1.39 (t = -18.55; p < .01)
Completed Questionnaire in Spanish	7.26%	28.66%	21.40% (t = -8.76; p < .01)

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Table 4. Explaining Information Exchanges

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Immigration Status						
Immigrant	-.39*** (.13)	-.38*** (.13)	-.35*** (.13)	-.34** (.13)	-.04 (.15)	-.11 (.15)
Political Preferences						
Strength of Partisanship	---	.19*** (.06)	---	---	---	.12** (.06)
Personal Resources						
Education	---	---	.22*** (.04)	---	---	.19*** (.04)
Income	---	---	.10*** (.03)	---	---	.07** (.03)
Political Assimilation						
Party/Other Contact	---	---	---	.22*** (.06)	---	.21*** (.06)
Participation in Civic Orgs.	---	---	---	.32*** (.05)	---	.16*** (.05)
Cultural Assimilation						
Date of Immigration	---	---	---	---	-.11*** (.04)	-.04 (.04)
Spanish Questionnaire	---	---	---	---	-1.00*** (.14)	-.75*** (.14)
Cut-Point 1	-1.58*** (.06)	-1.17*** (.13)	-.34*** (.14)	-.77*** (.11)	-1.91*** (.10)	.01 (.23)
Cut-Point 2	.45*** (.05)	.86*** (.13)	1.77*** (.15)	1.32*** (.12)	.17*** (.08)	2.19*** (.24)
Log-Likelihood	-2481.49	-2475.00	-2420.02	-2438.73	-2441.78	-2374.93
Pseudo R²	.003	.005	.03	.02	.02	.05
N	2399	2399	2399	2399	2399	2399

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Model Type: Ordered Logit

Notes: These results are weighted per the matching data preprocessing procedure. Ordered Probit, Poisson and Negative Binomial models produce comparable results.

*p ≤ .10, **p ≤ .05, ***p ≤ .01 (standard errors in parentheses)

Table 5. The Effect of Political Discussion on Political Participation

	All Respondents	Native Born	Immigrant	2nd Generation	3rd Generation
Political Discussion	.70*** (.17)	.76*** (.18)	.35 (.41)	.76** (.30)	.87*** (.25)
Political Preferences					
Strength of Partisanship	.47*** (.08)	.41*** (.09)	.90*** (.19)	.44*** (.13)	.34** (.17)
Personal Resources					
Education	.05 (.04)	.03 (.04)	.18 (.11)	-.001 (.06)	-.01 (.10)
Income	.09*** (.03)	.07*** (.03)	.26** (.12)	.05 (.06)	.10 (.07)
Political Assimilation					
Party/Other Contact	.44*** (.07)	.43*** (.08)	.57*** (.19)	.45*** (.12)	.46*** (.15)
Participation in Civic Orgs.	.57*** (.09)	.60*** (.08)	.46* (.25)	.58*** (.11)	.57*** (.14)
Cultural Assimilation					
Date of Immigration	-.10** (.05)	-.07 (.06)	-.16 (.14)	-.02 (.09)	-.13 (.15)
Spanish Questionnaire	-.12 (.20)	-.18 (.24)	.20 (.36)	-.16 (.32)	-.98 (.67)
Demographic Controls					
Gender (Female)	.11 (.11)	.09 (.12)	.21 (.27)	.08 (.21)	.08 (.21)
Race: White	-.32* (.17)	-.27 (.19)	-.48 (.57)	-.26 (.27)	-.03 (.36)
Race: Black	-.19 (.19)	-.21 (.20)	.10 (.69)	-.44 (.30)	.05 (.41)
Race: Hispanic	-.25 (.18)	-.28 (.18)	.08 (.56)	-.35 (.24)	.05 (.35)
Cut Point 1	2.97*** (.36)	2.80*** (.38)	4.95*** (.98)	2.65*** (.56)	2.75*** (.79)
Cut Point 2	4.69*** (.37)	4.49*** (.39)	7.04*** (.99)	4.40*** (.57)	4.53*** (.78)
Cut Point 3	5.76*** (.38)	5.53*** (.39)	8.41*** (1.05)	5.46*** (.57)	5.67*** (.85)
Cut Point 4	6.78*** (.41)	6.57*** (.43)	9.26*** (1.08)	6.52*** (.64)	6.73*** (.87)
Log-Likelihood	-2870.75	-2488.42	-364.53	-1043.48	-653.95
Pseudo R²	.08	.08	.14	.08	.08
N	2399	2035	363	885	533

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Model Type: Ordered Logit

Notes: These results are weighted per the matching data preprocessing procedure. Ordered Probit, Poisson and Negative Binomial models produce comparable results.

*p ≤ .10, **p ≤ .05, ***p ≤ .01 (standard errors in parentheses)

Table 6. The Effect of Political Discussion on Political Participation by Amount of Information Exchanges

	Immigrants		Native Born	
	Below Ave.	Above Ave.	Below Ave.	Above Ave.
Political Discussion	.21 (.50)	.68 (.84)	.58*** (.21)	.67* (.38)
Political Preferences				
Strength of Partisanship	1.02*** (.26)	.73** (.35)	.43*** (.14)	.40*** (.12)
Personal Resources				
Education	.21 (.15)	.04 (.19)	.01 (.06)	-.01 (.06)
Income	.21 (.16)	.36* (.20)	.10** (.05)	-.004 (.05)
Political Assimilation				
Party/Other Contact	.57** (.23)	.77** (.37)	.33*** (.10)	.51*** (.11)
Participation in Civic Orgs.	.48 (.30)	.45 (.32)	.56*** (.12)	.62*** (.11)
Cultural Assimilation				
Date of Immigration	-.15 (.17)	-.21 (.23)	-.08 (.08)	-.05 (.09)
Spanish Questionnaire	.15 (.46)	.40 (.95)	-.07 (.31)	-.21 (.43)
Demographic Controls				
Gender (Female)	.23 (.41)	.12 (.54)	-.03 (.16)	.05 (.16)
Race: White	-.41 (.69)	-.66 (.86)	-.53* (.28)	-.13 (.28)
Race: Black	.54 (.77)	-1.06 (.93)	-.13 (.28)	-.30 (.27)
Race: Hispanic	.49 (.66)	-1.06 (.88)	-.20 (.26)	-.38 (.26)
Cut Point 1	5.63*** (1.21)	3.21* (1.68)	2.64*** (.53)	2.17*** (.62)
Cut Point 2	7.57*** (1.23)	5.92*** (1.18)	4.65*** (.57)	3.58*** (.63)
Cut Point 3	9.26*** (1.33)	6.98*** (1.88)	5.76*** (.55)	4.69*** (.65)
Cut Point 4	10.00*** (1.31)	8.17*** (2.02)	6.73*** (.65)	5.80*** (.71)
Log-Likelihood	-237.19	-112.48	-1323.14	-1103.94
Pseudo R²	.15	.17	.07	.07
N	256	107	1239	795

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Model Type: Ordered Logit

Notes: These results are weighted per the matching data preprocessing procedure. Ordered Probit, Poisson and Negative Binomial models produce comparable results.

*p ≤ .10, **p ≤ .05, ***p ≤ .01 (standard errors in parentheses)

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Political Participation	2399	.00	4.00	.93	1.10
Political Discussion	2399	1.00	4.00	3.58	.76
Shared Information	2399	.00	1.00	.49	.50
Immigrant	2399	.00	1.00	.15	.36
Strength of Partisanship	2399	1.00	3.00	2.17	.73
Education	2399	1.00	6.00	4.08	1.49
Income	2399	1.00	7.00	4.09	1.79
Contacted by Party or Other Organization	2399	.00	2.00	1.20	.72
Participation in Civic Organizations	2399	1.00	3.00	1.83	.86
Date of Immigration	2399	1.00	6.00	2.20	1.32
Completed Questionnaire in Spanish	2399	.00	1.00	.11	.31
Gender (Female)	2399	.00	1.00	.55	.50
Race: White	2399	.00	1.00	.32	.47
Race: Black	2399	.00	1.00	.20	.40
Race: Hispanic	2399	.00	1.00	.46	.50

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Note: To account for missing data, the data used in this paper were preprocessed using the Amelia II multiple imputation package for R (Honaker et al. 2007; King et al. 2001). The data set was imputed 5 times. All dichotomous variables were imputed using the nominal transformation, and all other variables (other than age) were imputed using the ordinal transformation.

Table A2: Improvement in Balance Between Treated and Untreated Cases

Overall	99.88%
QQ Plot Summary Statistics	
Median	97.75%
Mean	96.97%
Max	92.50%

Source: 2008 Miami-Dade Exit Poll

Note: For the purposes of standardization, the overall balance measure is measured in standard deviations.

*** $p \leq .01$