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Going beyond the traditional socioeconomic status model of political participation, this study examines pathways that lead to the sociopolitical incorporation of immigrants in the USA, with a focus on the role of communication socialization agents. Using a Current Population Survey sample of 7,626 first-generation immigrants in the USA, results show that communication socialization agents significantly contribute to immigrants' political socialization, and an important mediating path translates political learning into greater political engagement. Results also identify ethnic differences in how socialization variables affect immigrants' socialization.

Keywords: Immigrant Political Socialization; News Media Use; Communication Networks; Community; Political Knowledge; Political Participation

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Democratic theory and empirical political communication research have long recognized the importance of civic engagement (Dahl, 1998; Mutz, 2006; Xenos & Moy, 2007). As Verba and Nie (1972) wrote in *Participation in America*, "Much of the quality of American political life revolves around the question of participation … The question of who participates in political decisions becomes the question of the nature of democracy in a society" (p. 1). Whether in the form of voting, activism, political conversation, or simply involvement in local community affairs, citizen participation yields better government decisions and public

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policies, because an active citizenry makes it more likely that the public interest is represented in collective decisions (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Even for the sake of personal well-being, social and political participation can be self-gratifying and contribute to individual's happiness and mental health (Putnam, 2000).

Beyond aggregate levels of participation, however, "*who* participates" remains a critical question (Jacobs, Cook, & Delli Carpini, 2009; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). This brings the participatory attitudes and behaviors of minority groups to the fore. The civic engagement of immigrant populations, in particular, directly relates to a society's capacity to effectively incorporate new residents into its system of representative government (Dahl, 1998). As the second wave of immigration substantially changes the demographics of the USA,[1] it diversifies the electorate and American political culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Wong, 2006). Immigrants' political engagement is important not only for voicing particular group interests in their host society (Portes, Escobar, & Arana, 2008) but also for bolstering their political competence as future citizens (Ramakrishnan, 2005).

With these issues in mind, this study focuses on communication processes that shape political learning and political participation among immigrants to the USA. Going beyond individually based socioeconomic status (SES) differences, we advance an integrated theoretical model that combines demographics, immigration-related variables, and communication forces in host country as predictors of immigrant political learning and participation. By conceptualizing immigrants' political outlook as the outcome of a socialization process, we expand the scope of political socialization research to include more directly the experience of immigrant communities.

To provide an initial test of this model, we take advantage of a unique opportunity, though one that comes with own liabilities. We will draw on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which makes it possible for us to test our propositions on a sample of over seven thousand first-generation immigrants living in the USA. That massive data-set permits disaggregation of immigrant communities, but one must work with the variables it already contains, which limits our ability to measure with precision communication variables, in particular. As an initial exploration of the theoretical model for different immigrant groups, however, we believe these data will provide considerable insight, the implications of which we will discuss in our concluding section.

Traditional Models of Political Knowledge and Participation

Before developing our theoretical model, we begin with a brief overview of conventional theories of political participation. These emanate principally from political science and focus on SES and political socialization.

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The SES Model of Political Participation

Much of the past research on political participation focuses on socioeconomic factors, such as income, occupation, and education (Conway, 1985; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). The classic SES theory (a.k.a., the "SES model") posits that people from higher social strata are more likely to engage in civic activities, because they are more politically knowledgeable (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), have more democratic civic orientations (Verba & Nie, 1972), and have greater resources—such as time, money, and civic skills—to facilitate their effective political involvement (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995).

Though predictive to an extent, the SES model has faced several criticisms, particularly with regard to its applicability to the immigrant population. This model fails to specify a clear mechanism linking SES to activity (Brady et al., 1995). By conceptualizing participation as a static variable rather than a dynamic and complex process, a socioeconomic explanation of political participation leaves out the ongoing process of social interaction, which influences people's civic behaviors through mechanisms like friendship development (Huckfeldt, 1986), political discussion (Eveland & Thomson, 2006), and the classic "two-step flow" of communication through opinion leaders (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

In addition, the SES model does not yield consistent predictions across different ethnic groups, particularly for Asians. For example, Lien (1994) and Stoll and Wong's (2007) research both suggests that after controlling for SES variables, Asian Americans remain less likely than Whites and Hispanics to vote, engage in activism, or take part in other campaign activities. Due to Asians' historical experience of alienation from the political system in the USA, scholars have consistently noted that wealth and education, although significant in predicting other ethnic groups' political participation, are less able to explain and predict Asians' political outlook (Uhlander, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989). If one wishes to understand political participation across different immigrant groups, this presents a major liability for the SES model.

Political Socialization Models

An alternative approach views the question as one of political socialization, which Langton (1969, p. 5) defines as "the process, mediated through various agencies of society, by which an individual learns politically relevant attitudinal dispositions and behaviors patterns." Socialization models emphasize the influence of social interaction and the individual's ability to learn social and political norms, particularly during childhood and adolescence. Socialization to political engagement is conceived as a developmental process, and essential agents include family, school, and peer groups (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Ekström & Östman, 2013; Hess & Torney, 1967; Hyman, 1959; McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002; Moeller & de Vreese, 2013). Political learning, however, does not end at adulthood. As Converse (1969, p. 142) notes, "Significant increments of political learning are visible over almost the whole course of adult participation in the electorate." This general approach

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has proven fruitful for contemporary political communication research (McLeod & Shah, 2009).

An immigrant political socialization framework shares the developmental assumption that immigrants gradually pick up civic norms and adapt to their new political environment through communicative interaction (White, Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil, & Fournier, 2008). In addition, immigrant political socialization can be viewed as a parallel process along the continuum of cross-cultural adaptation, or acculturation (Berry, 1980, 1997). Scholars define acculturation as a "fluid process in which individuals simultaneously move along at least two cultural continua (or dimensions) and whereby individuals learn and/or modify certain aspects of the new culture and of their culture or origin" (Berry, 1980; Marín & Gamba, 1996, p. 297). From this standpoint, immigrant political socialization is a specific form of acculturation in the civic and political arena.

Just as acculturation is never a simple "unidimensional assimilation" (Lee, Sobal, & Frongillo, 2003, p. 282), immigrant socialization is better viewed as a dual process of acculturation and retention. The acculturation perspective posits that immigrants' exposure to the host country political system can gradually translate into higher level political assimilation. The length of one's stay significantly contributes to immigrants' political socialization, but only incrementally and partially, depending on how one processes the civic and political information obtained (Cain, Keiwiet, & Uhlaner, 1991). The retention perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the persistence of one's prior civic identity, which usually takes shape in immigrants "formative years" back in their home countries (Bilodeau, McAllister, & Kanji, 2010; Jennings, 1987; Jone-Correa & Andalon, 2008).

Past studies have examined the role of immigrants' prior political socialization, such as how Mexican immigrants' home country participation influenced their current political activity (Jone-Correa & Andalon, 2008). In this essay, we focus on the sources of political socialization in the host society, because immigrants' participatory attitudes and behaviors are equally likely to be influenced by the communication environment they enter (or co-construct) in their host country. This includes how politics are covered in the mass media they use, the nature of their interpersonal and associational networks (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Hritzuk & Park, 2000), and the institutional and mobilizing infrastructures in their neighborhoods (Wong, 2006). Those factors have received intermittent attention in prior immigrant socialization research, and we make them the focus of the hypotheses we develop in the following section. To the extent that our CPS data-set permits it, we will then test those hypotheses across different ethnic subgroups of immigrant populations in the USA.

Theorizing Communication's Role in Immigrant Political Socialization

One's communication environment comprises a vast array of contexts and processes, but herein, we focus on three: the news media that provide national and

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local political information, immigrants' interpersonal and associational networks through which flow political information and direct mobilization opportunities, and individuals' surrounding neighborhood, in which the most immediate social interaction happens. In developing a communicative theory of immigrant political socialization, we consider each of these factors in turn.

News Media

Being a ubiquitous source of information, news media including newspapers, radio, television programs and the Internet, provide individuals with the knowledge of political world, awareness of participation opportunities and perceptions of recent public events. As Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 185) put it, "Much of one's observed knowledge about politics must come, at least initially, from mass media". Studies have consistently found that news media in various formats, particular those with public and political content, contribute to citizens' civic learning and their acquisition of political knowledge (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Moeller & de Vreese, 2013; Moy, McCluskey, McCoy, & Spratt, 2004; Stamm, Johnson, & Martin, 1997). Past research has also confirmed a behavioral effect that translates media use into civic actions: Exposure to the public affairs-related media content is correlated with increased political engagement, such as contributing money to political candidates, attending rallies, as well as voting (Drew & Weaver, 1998; McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Pan & Kosicki, 1997).

For immigrant populations, news media use in the host country serve as an important source of political acculturation (Kim, 1995). Research on the use of host country mass media and immigrant political assimilation traces back to Park's (1922) seminal work, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*. By surveying communities with an influx of immigrants, he finds that the establishment of ethnic-identified media helps newcomers in the corresponding ethnic groups better adjust and assimilate into the life of the American cities. More generally, Chaffee, Nass, and Yang (1990) find that US television news and newspapers have significant effects on the political socialization of Korean immigrants. More notably, their finding highlights the greater importance of news media as compared with traditional socioeconomic predictors, such as years of education, on immigrants' political learning. Viewing news media as one important communicative socialization agent, we hypothesize the following:

> H_{1a}: The level of news media use will positively influence immigrants' level of political knowledge.
>
> H_{1b}: The level of news media use will positively influence immigrants' level of political participation.

Social Connection: Networks and Affiliations

The second communicative source of political socialization we examine is the social environment in which immigrants are embedded. Hritzuk and Park (2000, p. 155)

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define social environment as "the social milieu, mobilization networks, and organizations" into which immigrants integrate. Because immigrant political socialization is "a context-contingent social process" (Landolt & Goldring, 2009, p. 1226), the acquisition and/or modification of immigrants' civic orientation would largely depend on the social and relational environment of which they are a part.

In our analysis, social connections describe the extent to which immigrants connect to other individuals and groups in the host society, through personal networks and group affiliations. Here, we first discuss how interpersonal networks serve to deliver political information that facilitates immigrants' political learning.

Personal network size

The political communication literature has widely recognized the role of interpersonal influence on political participation (Eveland & Thomson, 2006; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Such influence, by its very definition, largely derives from individuals' social networks. A politically active network can gradually orient individuals in the realm of public affairs, and it also acquaints them with social norms associated with various political behaviors (Leighley, 1990). Since migration itself is a networked process, relational ties play a crucial role in various forms of immigrant decision-makings. For example, a large number of migration decisions are based on already established kinship or acquaintance ties (Tilly, 1990). And the social ties within immigrant community are usually dense, as indicated by the special employment pattern of enclave economies and more frequent social contact within migrant communities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

To understand how immigrants' interpersonal network affects their political behaviors, we examine the relationship between the size of immigrants' interpersonal network and their knowledge acquisition, among other important dimensions of one's personal network. We recognize that our focus limits us to examining only network *size*, rather than considering more complex network properties, such as the density of connections or the manifest content of the relationships the network encompasses. Yet, size itself is a well-established structural feature of individuals' interpersonal networks. In studying how individuals' political discussion networks relate to various civic engagement outcomes, scholars have commonly used "discussant generator" (e.g. Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995) or a direct self-report of discussion network size (e.g. Kwak, Williams, Wang, & Lee, 2005; Moy & Gastil, 2006) to capture this important feature.

Specifically, we hypothesize an informational effect from immigrants' personal networks on their acquisition of host country-related political knowledge. Personal networks' role in transferring knowledge can be traced back to Granovetter's (1983) weak ties theory, where he observed individuals' interpersonal network served as an important source of work-related information. In the realm of political learning, studies have similarly suggested that personal networks are important

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in sharing political information and participation opportunities (Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Eveland, 2004). In particular, scholars have found that individuals with more personal contacts or larger-size discussion network are more likely to gain exposure to political information and enjoy its information benefits (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Kwak et al., 2005; Moy & Gastil, 2006). For immigrants, their personal networks often become the source that provides information about current political events, as well as "the rules of governing" about the host country (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 65). Based on the above, we advance the following hypothesis:

> H_2: The size of immigrants' personal networks will positively influence their level of political knowledge.

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Organizational affiliations

Immigrants' organizational affiliation is another socialization agent that may contribute to their political socialization outcome. Associational groups are often viewed as the backbone of American civil society (Putnam, 2000), and organizations of various types, ranging from community organizations, civic organizations, to religious organizations, have consistently been observed to orient individuals in the realm of civic life, transferring knowledge, skills that are conducive to citizens' civic learning (Verba et al., 1995). As such, we hypothesize a positive association between immigrants' organizational affiliation and their level of political knowledge.

> H_{3a}: The level of immigrants' organizational affiliations will positively influence their level of political knowledge.

It is equally reasonable to posit a parallel mobilizing effect for immigrants' organizational membership on their level of political participation. Group affiliations directly promote participation by helping remove participation barriers or reducing the "cost of participation" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). For example, Hritzuk and Park's (2000) work on Latino participation suggests that affiliations with ethnic community-based organizations lead to higher rates of electoral turnout. In addition to mitigating participation barriers, it is also argued that group affiliations can increase the benefit of "relational goods" associated with participation—that is, a set of incentives that only group members could enjoy, including both psychological benefits like the affirmation of group identity, as well as other group-based material benefits (Uhlaner, 1989). Thus, we add this hypothesis:

> H_{3b}: The level of immigrants' organizational affiliations will positively influence their level of political participation.

Community Interaction

An equally important facet of one's social environment is the level of interaction within one's local community—the locale where the day-to-day political socialization

happens. As Huckfeldt (1979, p. 590) points out, the neighborhood and local community is the "constant and most inescapable" environment wherein individual residents are exposed to political stimuli. The immediate neighborhood also provides ample opportunities to engage in public and quasi-political activities with others who have an immediate stake in the same local issues (Diers, 2004). Herein, community interaction refers to a series of social and communicative activities that occur at the local level, ranging from interacting with one's neighbors (e.g. chatting and favor exchange) to attending local events.

It is important to examine the impact of community engagement on immigrants' political socialization, as many political activities involve locally based interaction, and this is particularly the case for immigrant populations. Due to institutional barriers (e.g. limited languages provided on the ballot, full citizenship as the prerequisite for voting), voting may not be a feasible participation option for recent or unnaturalized immigrants. Instead, nonelectoral civic activities, such as attending a community group meeting or signing a local political petition, are more accessible yet important forms of participation.

Community interaction has been theorized to contribute to individuals' civic engagement in many ways. Neighborhood community is found to provide important political resources and social capital necessary for participation (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Individuals' community engagement also promotes civic participation through attitudinal mediating variables. For example, the sense of community is found to predict neighborhood conversations and the discussion of community issues (Bolland & McCallum, 2002), and the feeling of neighborliness positively predicts one's participation in local improvement projects (Lelieveldt, 2004).

For community interaction, we thus hypothesize a mobilizing effect that leads to a higher level of political participation for immigrants. Our datas lack attitudinal mediators, so we simply posit a direct relationship:

> H_4: The level of community interaction will positively influence immigrants' level of political participation.

The Mediating Path from Knowledge to Participation

To this point, we have treated both political knowledge and participation as dependent variables, but we now consider the causal relationship between them. As two distinct but related dimensions of immigrants' political socialization, knowledge, and participation are consistently correlated. In particular, studies on general population find that political knowledge is more often the antecedent to political participation than vice versa (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; McLeod et al., 1999).

Two mechanisms account for this directional relationship. First, as knowledge strongly predicts a series of civic attitudes, most notably political efficacy and political interest, it thus indirectly brings about behavioral change and motivates greater participation (Cho & McLeod, 2007; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Second,

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factual political knowledge is considered as instrumental resources for individual participation, and it enhances citizens' awareness of participation opportunities, such as where and when public events will be held, or how to contribute meaningfully to important civic causes. In this regard, political knowledge removes or decreases participation barriers (Lemert, Mitzman, Seither, Cook, & Hacket, 1977).

Thus, it is possible that political knowledge serves as a partial mediator. Some of the increases in immigrant political participation may come indirectly via their political learning. When immigrants use greater amount of host country news media, have larger personal and organizational networks and are more actively engaged in their neighborhood activities, the resulting increase in their political knowledge may indirectly enhance their political participation. Though we are using cross-sectional data, we theorize our last hypothesis thusly:

> H_5: The level of immigrants' political knowledge will positively influence immigrants' level of political participation

Political Socialization across Different Immigrant Ethnic Groups

For all of these hypotheses, we ask whether the predicted effect holds across different ethnic groups of immigrants. The immigrant population in the USA, as in most countries, is by no means homogeneous. Places of origin, personal trajectories of migration as well as the contexts of reception are all likely to structure the socialization process (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

One key factor that neatly characterizes some of this diversity is immigrants' ethnicity (Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2012). Serving as a powerful indicator of immigrants' subgroup culture, ethnicity interacts with various correlates of civic engagement. For instance, racial and ethnic background presents a key socio-demographic factor leading to the diverging outlook of civic engagement. Earlier studies such as Uhlander et al.'s work (1989) revealed that Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites participated in politics at roughly equal rates, whereas Latino and Asian Americans were substantially less active. A more recent survey of multiethnic residents from a local community also showed that Asian immigrants significantly lagged behind their White and Hispanic counterparts in civic engagement (Chen et al., 2013).

The diversity of the immigrant population along with the observed participation disparity both call for a closer examination of different immigrant subgroups. Thus, we investigate how ethnicity moderates the relationship between the proposed socialization agents and immigrants' political socialization outcomes. Given that immigrants from Pacific Asia and Latin America have become two fastest-growing population groups in the USA (Pew Hispanic Centre, 2013), and they generally demonstrate a different set of civic orientations and participation behaviors than immigrants of European ancestry (Stoll & Wong, 2007), it is particularly important to test the model within those fast growing ethnic groups. Although we would prefer to theorize different socialization processes across ethnic groups, the paucity of research to date leads us to make a more open-ended query.

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RQ: How do major socialization agents impact political knowledge and participation of immigrants of White, Hispanic and Asian ethnicity differently?

Methods

Sample

Data for this paper were drawn from the CPS: Civic Engagement Supplement 2008. There are several advantages of using this data-set, particularly, its incorporation of a large and nationally representative immigrant sample. Studies that examine the participation behaviors of the general public often rely on American National Election Studies data, but that and similar surveys rarely contain an adequate immigrant subsample. Past research on participation behaviors of ethnic population has drawn data-sets such as the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a survey on the generational status of respondents from California, Florida and Texas, Latino National Political Survey (de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992), or the 2000–2001 Pilot Asian American Political Survey (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004). However, these surveys are either limited to a particular ethnic group, or conducted only in certain geographic areas.

The data for this study were collected during the period of November 16–22, 2008, and the overall sample size was approximately 54,000 households, with a response rate of 54%. For the purpose of this study, only the subsample of first-generation adult immigrants was selected. Specifically, first generation immigrants in this study refer to those whose country-of-birth and both of their parents' country-of-birth is outside the USA. Based on these selecting criteria, the final sample totaled 7,626.

Dependent Variables: Political Participation

Earlier, we referred to Verba and Nie's typology of political participation (1972, pp. 51–53), which incorporated both electoral and non-electoral activities into a single index. According to Verba and Nie (1972), there were four behaviors that constitute political engagement: voting, campaign activities, citizen-initiated act, and voluntary/cooperative participation. In the current study, we recoded five survey items "contacting public officials," "attending political meetings," "boycotting products or services based on their political values," "participating in political actions," and "supporting candidates and campaigns" into dummies, (1 = yes, 0 = no), and then constructed a six-point (0 to 5) scale by adding the score of these five items ($M = .22$, $SD = .65$, $\alpha = .63$).

Endogenous Variables

Political knowledge

Political knowledge in this study referred only to factual knowledge about the structure of government. Researchers still debate on whether fact-based knowledge

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is a one-dimensional or multidimensional construct (Thomson, 2007), but Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) provide evidence that citizens tend to be "generalists" in their political knowledge. That is, people are not just informed about certain domains of political facts. Instead, they find citizens possess relatively well-rounded knowledge structures, and it makes it possible for a one-dimension measure to reliably gauge one's overall political sophistication (p. 294). With that in mind, political knowledge in this study was measured by two questions that tested respondents' understanding of US Constitution and law-passing procedures. For each item, a correct answer was coded as "1" and a wrong answer or "don't know" were coded as "0". A three-item (0–2) scale was developed to measure respondents' knowledge level, with respondents who correctly answered two questions getting "2", and those who did not answer either one right getting "0" ($M = .27$, $SD = .58$, $\alpha = .63$).

Exogenous Variables

News media use

On a five-point scale, news media use was assessed by pooling responses to items asking how often respondents used newspapers, news magazines, television, radio, and other Internet sources to gain news information, from "basically every day = 1" to "not at all = 5." This resembles measurements used in Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) and Coe et al. (2008). After reverse-coding the five items, the final scale was constructed by averaging the score of each item ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .95$, $\alpha = .62$).

Personal network size

This variable was measured by asking respondents how many close friends they had if not counting family members. To further clarify, the survey defined "close friends" as those "you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help" (United States Census Bureau, 2008). The average level of network size was 3.72 ($SD = 2.39$).

Organizational affiliations

Five survey items asked whether the respondents participated in the following organizations for the past year: (1) A school group, neighborhood, or community association; (2) a service or civic organization; (3) a sports or recreation organization; (4) a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious institutions or organizations; (5) any other types of organizations not mentioned. Each indication of "yes" was recoded as "1", and each "no" was recoded as "0". Although previous studies often aggregated items to form a composite index (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978; Verba et al., 1995), a confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the current five items did not reliably fall under one single dimension. As a result, organizational affiliations were measured by five separate dummy variables.

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Community interaction

Involvement with neighbors and community members was measured by averaging the self-reported frequency of two types of activities: "talking to neighbors" and "favor exchanges among neighbors". The original items were reverse coded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5, with "1" indicating "not at all" and "5" indicating "basically everyday"($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.17$, $\alpha = .76$).

Control Variables

Income

Respondents were asked to choose among several categories to indicate their household income for the last year, ranging from "less than $5,000" to "$150,000 and more". On a 16-point scale, the average income of respondents was "$35,000 to $39,999" ($M = 10.11$, $SD = 4.03$).

Education

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education from 16 categories, from "less than 1st grade" to "doctorate degree". The educational level on average was "high school grad-diploma or equivalent" ($M = 9.24$, $SD = 3.78$).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity was recoded based on two questions that asked respondents' race and Hispanic origins. Respondents who self-identified as "White only" and "non-Hispanic" were coded as "White/Caucasian" ($N = 1{,}890$, 25.7%). Those who reported as "Hispanic" and "White only" were recoded as "Hispanic/Latino" ($N = 3{,}135$, 41.1%). "Black only" were recoded as "Black" ($N = 495$, 6.5%), and "Asian only" and "Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Only" were combined and coded as "Asian/Pacific Islander" ($N = 1{,}847$, 24.2%). Finally, mixed race and others were coded as "Others" ($N = 259$, 3.4%).

Length of residence

Respondents were asked to identify the time period when they entered the States from 20 categories. To convert the original categories into numerical values, years of residence was calculated as followed: each value was first recoded by their average ("2006–2008" is recoded as 2007), and then used 2009 to minus the average to get the approximate length after migration ($M = 20.72$, $SD = 14.69$).

Citizenship status

Citizenship was recoded as a dummy variable (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). Out of the total sample 3,416 (44.8%), first-generation immigrants obtained US citizenship by naturalization, and 4,210 (43.3%) were non-citizen immigrants.

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Method of Analysis

Structural equation modeling using LISREL 8.7 was employed to estimate the direct and indirect effects of communication variables on immigrants' political knowledge and participation, with control variables like individuals' SES, length of residence, and citizenship status residualized (See Table 1 for partial correlations among major variables). To examine how the hypothesized political socialization model may diverge across ethnic groups, separate models were run and compared for three subgroups of White, Hispanic, and Asian immigrants.[2] The significance level for all parameter estimates was set at $p < .05$, and Maximum Likelihood was used to produce those estimates.[3]

Results

Hypothesis Tests

To test all the hypotheses regarding the entire immigrant sample, a single structural model was first run. Table 1 presented partial coefficients between major communication variables and immigrants' political outlook. Figure 1 illustrated the hypothesized model with significant pathways, and Table 2 listed parameter estimate, standard error, and significance level for each latent variable. In order to simplify the presentation of results, control variables including SES, length of residence, and citizenship status, were not included in the figures. But the structural coefficients of these variables can be found in the tables. Overall, the structural model demonstrated a good level of fit ($\chi^2 = .71$, $df = 68$, $p = 1.00$ RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00).

In the structural model, both SES and migration background variables had significant influence on immigrant political socialization (see Table 2 for detailed coefficients). Consistent with the acculturation logic, years after migration was positively associated with both political knowledge ($b = .10$), and participation ($b = .06$). Citizenship status also positively affected the socialization outcome, but its effect on political participation was relatively weak ($b = .03$).

Hypothesis 1_a and 1_b posited that the level of news media use positively predicted immigrants' level of political knowledge and participation, and both hypotheses were supported ($b = .10$ and .11, respectively). Due to the low factor loading, organizational membership was broken down into five separate variables before entered into the model. Specifically, immigrants' political socialization was bolstered positively by sports and recreation organizations ($b = .04$ for knowledge, .08 for participation) as well as "other organizations" ($b = .03$ for knowledge, .15 for participation. Meanwhile, political participation was positively associated with community organizations ($b = .08$), civic organizations ($b = .06$), and religious organizations ($b = .06$), but these associations were not found with knowledge level. The positive association between immigrants' interpersonal network size and their political knowledge was only weakly supported ($b = .03$). The results also supported the positive role of community interaction in promoting immigrant political participation ($b = .05$).

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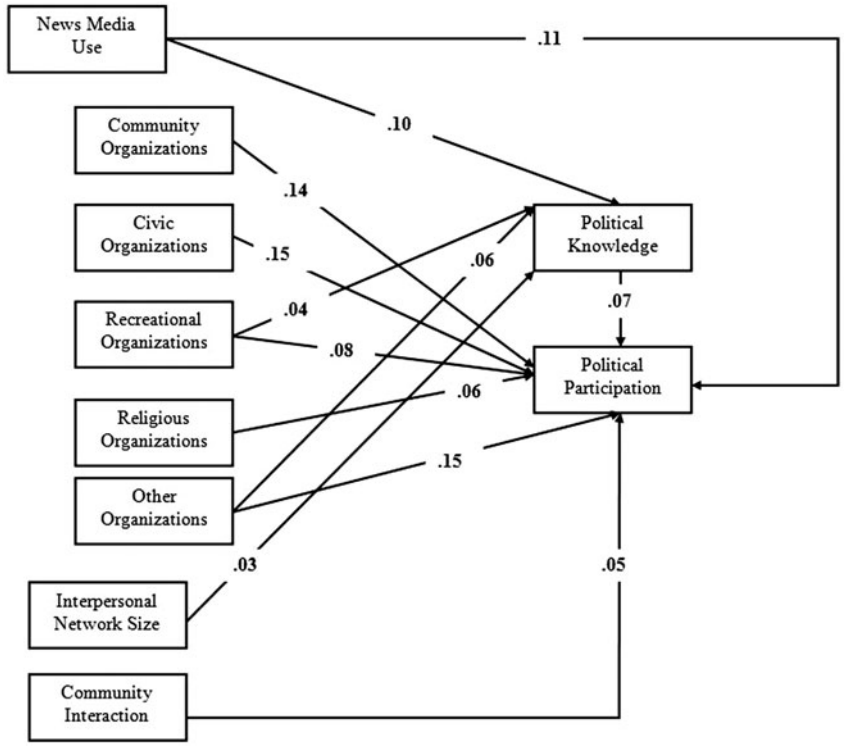

Figure 1 Significant Paths in the Model for the Entire Immigrant Sample ($N = 7{,}626$). *Notes*. $\chi^2 = .71$, $df = 68$, $p = 1.00$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.

We also hypothesized an indirect pathway where immigrants' political learning would bring in greater political participation, and this hypothesis was supported by the analysis ($b = .07$). Table 3 presented the breakdown of direct and indirect effects of news media use, organizational affiliations, interpersonal network size, and community interaction on immigrants' political participation. In sum, it appeared that political learning did play a role as a modest mediating path from communication socialization agents to political engagement of immigrants.

Taken together, the path model results confirmed significant associations between immigrants' SES, immigration background variables, and their political participation. Similar to the general public, wealthy and well-educated immigrants were more likely to stay informed and engaged, so were older and naturalized immigrants. More importantly, most communication socialization agents were quite significant in predicting immigrants' political outlook, although their effects turned to be greater on participation than on knowledge acquisition.

Research Question

To further examine how the hypothesized political socialization model fares in different ethnic groups, the same structural model was subsequently run in the group

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of White immigrants ($N = 1{,}890$), Hispanic immigrants ($N = 3{,}135$), and Asian immigrants ($N = 1{,}847$). All three structural models demonstrated a good level of fit ($\chi^2_{\text{White}} = .02$, $df_{\text{White}} = 68$; $\chi^2_{\text{Hispanic}} = .02$, $df_{\text{Hispanic}} = 68$; $\chi^2_{\text{Asian}} = .02$, $df_{\text{Asian}} = 68$), with indicators like RMSEA, CFI, and NFI all reaching satisfactory levels (see Figures 2–4 and Table 4).

The research question asked whether major socialization agents impacted political knowledge and participation of immigrants of White, Hispanic, and Asian ethnicity differently. With communication-related variables proving to be robust predictors, the results showed greater divergence regarding the effects of SES and immigration backgrounds. For example, whereas income significantly predicted White immigrants' political knowledge and participation (both $b = .05$), for Hispanic immigrants it was only associated with political participation ($b = .05$). It produced no significant effect on Asian immigrants' political learning or participation. The effect of citizenship status also fluctuated. The acquisition of citizenship significantly enhanced White and Hispanic immigrants' political knowledge, but it did not produce the same effect among Asian immigrants. Finally, years of migration, a significant predictor of White immigrants' political outlook, only impacted

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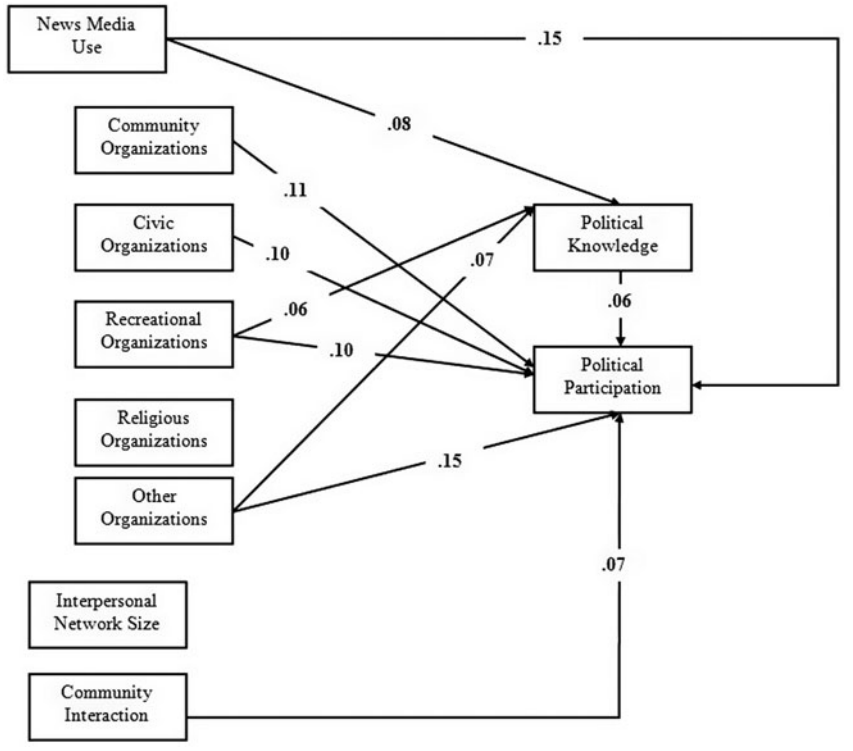

Figure 2 Significant Paths in the Model for the Subsample of White Immigrants ($N = 1{,}890$).
Notes. $\chi^2 = .02$, $df = 68$, $p = 1.00$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.

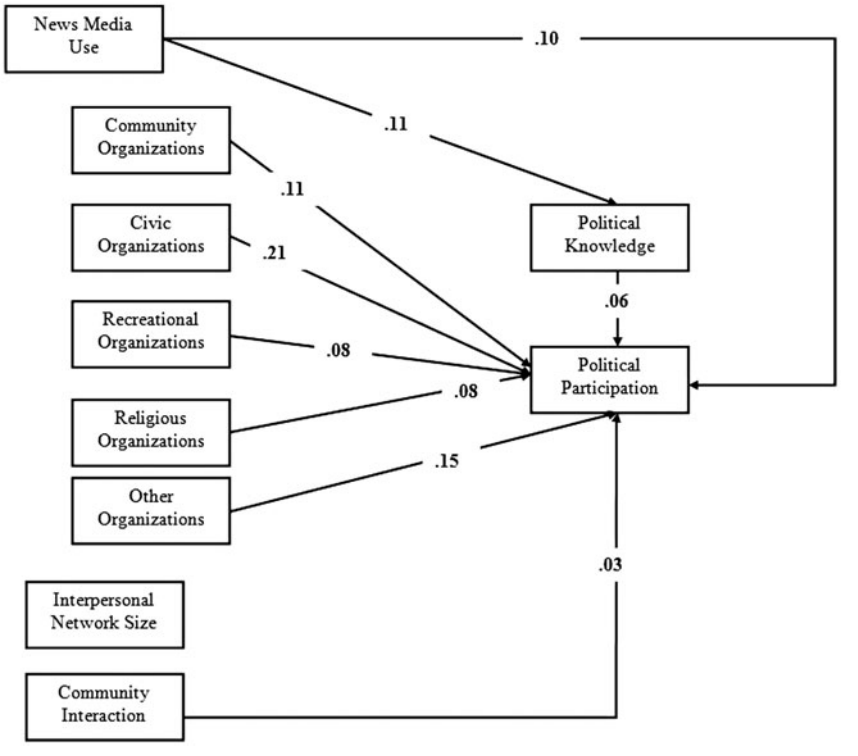

Figure 3 Significant Paths in the Model for the Subsample of Hispanic Immigrants ($N = 3{,}135$).
Notes. $\chi^2 = 1.41$, $df = 68$, $p = 1.00$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.

Asian and Hispanic immigrants' political knowledge, but not their participation level.

By contrast, the results indicated communication variables had relatively consistent effects. News media use remained a strong predictor for both political knowledge and participation. Organizational affiliations also demonstrated a rather consistent mobilization effect, which was particularly strong for Hispanic immigrants—as all five types of organizational affiliations were significant predictors of their participation level. For interpersonal network size, it turned out to be not significant within each subgroup. Only community interaction demonstrated some ethnicity-based variance, as it significantly contributed to political participation among Asian and White immigrants, but not for their Hispanic counterpart.

Discussion

This paper examined pathways to political socialization for immigrant communities in the USA, emphasizing the role of news media use, personal and organizational connections, and community interaction. Results from an analysis of a large

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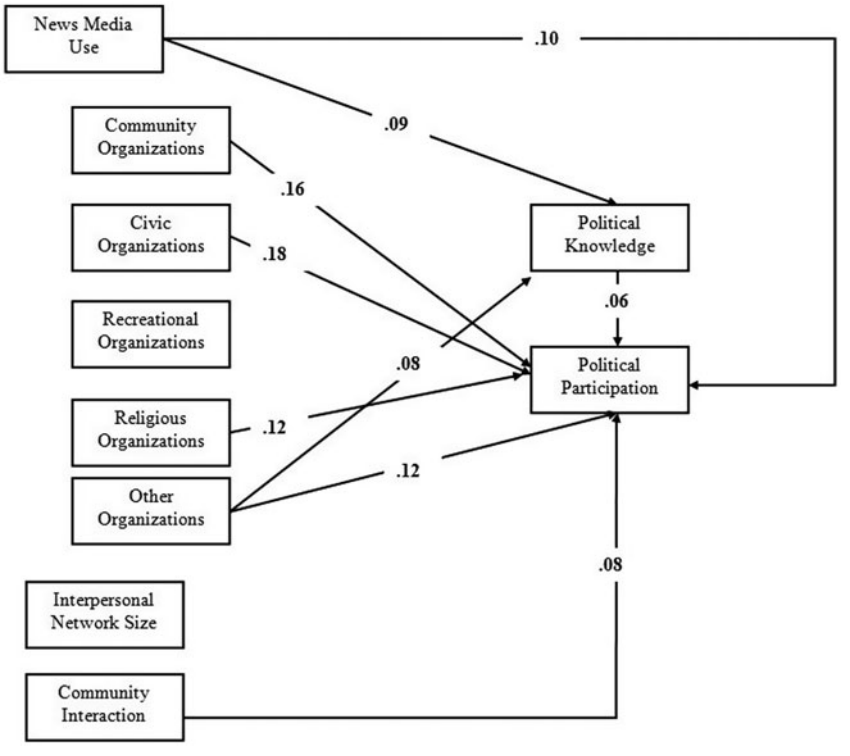

Figure 4 Significant Paths in the Model for the Subsample of Asian Immigrants ($N = 1{,}847$).
Notes. $\chi^2 = 1.42$, $df = 68$, $p = 1.00$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.

immigrant sample showed that immigrants' political participation was still largely influenced by their SES. However, the extent to which SES impacted immigrants' political learning and participation varied by ethnicity. More importantly, the

Table 1 Partial Correlations Between Communication Variables and Political Knowledge and Participation, after Controlling for SES, Ethnicity, Length of Residence, and Citizenship Status.

	Political knowledge	Political participation
News media use	.107***	.165***
Organizational affiliations		
Community organizations	.016	.212***
Civic organizations	.028*	.210***
Sports and recreational organizations	.050***	.157***
Churches and religious organizations	.010	.145***
Other organizations	.076***	.198***
Network size	.035**	.023
Community interaction	.035**	.126***

Note. Minimum $N = 5{,}715$.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

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Table 2 Standardized Structure Coefficients (and Standard Errors) Predicting Immigrant Political Knowledge and Participation, Entire Sample.

	Political knowledge	Political participation
Education	.15(.01)***	.04(.01)**
Income	.03(.01)*	.05(.01)***
Years after immigration	.11(.01)***	.06(.01)***
Citizenship status	.05(.01)***	.03(.01)*
News media use	.10(.01)***	.11(.01)***
Organizational membership		
Community organizations	.00(.01)	.14(.01)***
Civic organizations	.01(.01)	.15(.01)***
Sports and recreational organizations	.04(.01)**	.08(.01)***
Churches and religious organizations	.00(.01)	.06(.01)***
Other organizations	.06(.01)***	.15(.01)***
Network size	.03(.01)*	–
Community interaction	–	.05(.01)***
Political Knowledge	–	.07(.01)***

Notes. $N = 7{,}626$. Path entries are standardized beta coefficients at $p < .5$ or better. Goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = .71$, $p = 1.00$, $df = 68$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

findings showed that various communication variables played a critical role in shaping the socialization outcomes. Among them, news media use contributed to immigrants' political knowledge and participation the most, and this effect consistently held across three major immigrant ethnic groups. Organizational affiliation also strongly predicted immigrants' political engagement, but it had limited impact on Asian and Hispanic immigrants' knowledge acquisition. Finally, community engagement promoted immigrants' political engagement for White and Asian immigrants. Personal network size, a crude indicator of one's interpersonal network, was not observed to influence immigrants' political knowledge to a significant degree.

Table 3 Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of News Media Use, Social Connections and Community Interaction Variables.

	Political participation		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
News media use	.11***	.007***	.117
Organizational affiliations			
Community organizations	.14***	.000	.14***
Civic organizations	.15***	.001	.151***
Sports and recreational organizations	.08***	.003**	.083***
Churches and religious organizations	.06***	.000	.06***
Other organizations	.15***	.004***	.154***
Network size	–	.002	.002
Community interaction	.05***	–	.05***

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

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Table 4 Standardized Structure Coefficients (and Standard Errors) Predicting Immigrant Political Knowledge and Participation, Across Three Subgroups.

	Whites ($N = 1{,}890$)		Hispanics ($N = 3{,}135$)		Asians ($N = 1{,}847$)	
	Pol knowledge	Pol participation	Pol knowledge	Pol participation	Pol knowledge	Pol participation
Education	.12(.03)*	.06(.02)*	.12(.02)***	.05(.02)*	.15(.03)***	−.02(.02)
Income	.05(.02)*	.05(.02)*	.01(.02)	.05(.02)**	.01(.02)	.04(.02)
Years after immigration	.12(.03)*	.05(.03)*	.08(.02)***	.03(.02)	.09(.03)**	.04(.03)
Citizenship status	.05(.03)*	.01(.02)	.06(.02)**	.01(.02)	.05(.03)	.06(.03)*
News media use	.08(.02)**	.15(.02)***	.11(.02)***	.10(.02)***	.09(.02)***	.10(.02)***
Organizational membership						
Community organizations	.01(.02)	.11(.02)***	.01(.02)	.11(.02)***	−.01(.02)	.16(.02)***
Civic organizations	.01(.02)	.10(.02)***	−.02(.02)	.21(.02)***	.03(.02)	.18(.02)***
Sports and recreational organizations	.06(.02)*	.11(.02)***	.00(.02)	.08(.02)***	.01(.02)	−.02(.02)
Churches and religious organizations	.00(.02)	.03(.02)	.00(.02)	.08(.02)***	−.01(.02)	.12(.02)***
Other organizations	.07(.02)**	.15(.02)***	.00(.02)	.15(.02)***	.08(.02)***	.12(.02)***
Network size	.04(.02)	–	.00(.02)	–	.03(.02)	–
Community interaction	–	.07(.02)**	–	.03(.02)	–	.08(.02)***

Notes. Path entries are standardized beta coefficients at $p < .5$ or better. Goodness of fit statistics. White subsample: $\chi^2 = .02$, $p = 1.00$, $df = 68$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00. Hispanic subsample: $\chi^2 = 1.41$, $p = 1.00$, $df = 68$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00. Asian subsample: $\chi^2 = 1.42$, $p = 1.00$, $df = 68$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Taken together, these findings reaffirm that the SES model of political engagement does not sufficiently explain how immigrants, a particularly diverse population, can become politically engaged. In developing an integrated socialization model and testing it, we find communication patterns within the host society are vital for immigrants' development of civic competence. Through using news media, maintaining interpersonal and organizational connections, and engaging in neighborhood communication, newcomers engage in a dynamic process of political acculturation that has the potential to translate into greater political activity.

These findings also imply that immigrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds may experience divergent political socialization processes. As we observe from the data, the type of political socialization White immigrants demonstrate is most similar to the general population, where factors like socioeconomic background, news media use, and organizational affiliations all well predict socialization outcome among this group. In contrast, SES has the weakest effect for Asian immigrants, which is

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consistent with prior findings that education and economic achievements do not significantly predict Asian immigrants' political activity as much as for other ethnic groups (Lien, 1994; Stoll & Wong, 2007). This finding thus points out the importance of considering other factors and forces in Asian immigrants' political incorporation. For instance, Lien (1994) has suggested that Asian immigrants' experience of discrimination and stereotyping, and their unique group history in America might suppress their current political activity. Others emphasize the unique importance of Asian immigrants' prior political socialization. As Asian immigrants are more likely to come from the political culture that values deference and respect to authority, they may retain these values even after migration (Bilodeau et al., 2010). Finally, Asian immigrants are observed to participate more in Asian-related civic affairs than general political participation (Seo, 2011), suggesting that future research could develop a broader spectrum of indicators to assess Asian immigrants' socialization outcome. Overall, our findings indicate that one cannot simply transfer the assimilation experience of European Whites to immigrants of diverse backgrounds.

Meanwhile, the finding that certain types of organizations have more pronounced effect in minority than majority ethnic group reveals the interesting interplay between ethnic identity and immigrant political participation. For example, we find churches and religious organizations serve as a powerful political mobilizer for Hispanic and Asian immigrants, an effect that has been similarly documented in Black and Hispanic participation (Harris, 1994; Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001). This effect, however, does not hold for the group of White immigrants. One possible explanation can be made from a group-identity or group consciousness perspective, which arguably applies more to minority than White political behaviors (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999). Asian and Hispanic immigrants' church attendance, therefore, not only provides them with resources like civic skills and participation opportunities, but it also motivates their political participation through reinforcing their ethnic or pan-ethnic identity (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007).

Among a series of paths we propose, the lack of a correlation between immigrants' personal network size and political knowledge merits explanation. Before deducing the absence of a population-level effect, it is useful to go back to the original items and examine how individuals' personal network and political knowledge were operationalized. In the survey, personal network size was indicated by the number of close friends each respondent had; it did not differentiate *where* one's personal networks were located. For immigrants, it is vital to distinguish between their transnational, home-bound connections vs. their local ties in the host country, as each has distinct influence on individuals' political outlooks. Home country ties are more likely to reinforce immigrants' home identity, which likely produces greater political resistance or disengagement in host society (Lien, 2010). Local ties, on the other hand, serve as an important broker connecting immigrants to host country politics.

Future studies should investigate how other structural features of immigrants' personal networks, such as relationship intensity and diversity, are related to immigrants' political socialization outcomes. Whereas weak personal ties like acquaintances are generally conducive to spreading political information, research

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has found that "strong ties" are better able to exert influence and change political behaviors (Straits, 1991). For immigrants embedded in a tightly-knit network, one would expect them to experience intense and long-lasting political exchange than otherwise. In addition, research has long pointed out the importance of network diversity in shaping individuals' knowledge acquisition and political activity (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Kwak et al., 2005). In the context of immigrant political socialization, it is important to assess network diversity along the dimension of "like-mindedness" (i.e. sharing the same political ideology), but one must also consider the extent to which such network is composed of same versus different ethnicities of connections (i.e. intra-ethnic vs. inter-ethnic).

Meanwhile, questions on political knowledge in the CPS survey were asked in a way that only institution-based knowledge was measured. This approach might not be entirely appropriate for the first-generation immigrants, for whom political learning does not take place against a backdrop of generalized knowledge of civics and the US Constitution. In other words, future research on immigrants would benefit from distinguishing different types of factual political knowledge (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), especially between institutional/procedure-based knowledge and understandings of current political events. After all, the type of political learning immigrants experience every day is qualitatively different than those that one acquires from civic education or formal schooling, and it could well be the case that social ties better inform them about current political events than about governing structures and constitutional principles.

Overall, the current study proposes an integrated model to understand how various sources serve as political socialization agents for immigrants in their host society. Based on this model, future research could more systematically compare the effects of socialization variables between the populations of immigrants and the general public. It would be instructive to see whether the pro-engagement effects of socialization agents are unique to the immigrant communities or the model actually applies equally well to the boarder public. In addition, as political socialization happens incrementally and over time, future research may further develop this model by employing a panel design and using longitudinal analysis.

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Notes

1. The second wave of immigration here refers to the major migration flow that happened after 1880s, which is characterized by greater diversity in terms of country of origin, ethnicities and religions, as opposed to the prior wave, in which the majority came from European countries. See Henry Bischoff's (2002) *Immigration Issues*.
2. The African/Black immigrants sample was significantly smaller than the other major groups, and it only made up a small portion (6.5%) of the overall sample. Thus, we did not include it as a comparison group.
3. To assess those models' goodness-of-fit, the χ^2 to degrees-of-freedom ratio, Bentler–Bonett normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used. Generally, a χ^2 to degrees-of-freedom ratio less than 5 indicates a satisfactory model fit. The NFI compares the hypothesized model with a

null model specifying no association between any of the variables, and NFI ≥ .90 suggests a satisfactory fit of the model to the data (Marsh, Balla & McDonald, 1988). Adjusting for the sample size, the CFI compares the hypothesized model with the null model. The CFI value ranges from 0 to 1, with values of .90 and greater suggesting satisfactory fit between the model and the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Finally, the RMSEA is a parsimony-adjusted index that assesses the amount by which the observed variances and covariances differ from the hypothesized ones. Therefore, RMSEA ≤ .05 indicates an excellent fit, RMSEA ≤ .08 a satisfactory fit, RMSEA between .08 and .10 a fair fit, and RMSEA ≥ .10 a poor fit (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993b).

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