

Coping with a Changing Integration Policy Context: American State Policies and their Effects on Immigrant Political Engagement

Over the past two decades, US states differentially increased their involvement in immigration policy-making, producing both welcoming and restrictive legislation. This uptick allows for a systematic comparative analysis on how **state-level policies** affect immigrants' political attitudes and behavior. We scrutinize this question drawing on the policy feedback literature, and using a new immigration policy database and individual-level CCES survey data. Our quantitative models reveal heterogeneous effects of state-level integration policies on **voter turnout** and governor approval among different ethnic and nativity groups. The study comprehensively documents regional integration policy outcomes, and contributes to emerging theories on spillover effects.

Keywords: US state integration policy, policy feedback, spillover effects, immigrant, voter turnout, governor approval

Introduction

In the new millennium, American states have introduced thousands of bills, both substantive and symbolic, targeting non-citizens, and their cultural communities. A growing literature in social science has sought to determine the social, political, and economic drivers of this policy-making activity (e.g., Filindra, 2018, Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz 2013). Scholars have also sought to explore how these policies affect individual behavior in different immigrant target groups (e.g., Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016, Pantoja and Segura 2003) but less is known about this dimension.

Immigrants and their offspring are becoming a growing part of the American electorate (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012, Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia-Coll 2011). Along with their size, the electoral power of predominantly immigrant minority communities is also growing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 9.2% of voters in the 2016 election were Hispanic, 5.4% Asians. Although not all of these voters were foreign-born, a substantial number were naturalized citizens and their children. Formal and informal, direct and indirect barriers to immigrant political participation, pose challenges to democratic

practices and norms threatening to create generations of second class citizens (Dancygier et al. 2015, Bloemraad 2013, Ruedin 2017). Yet, we know little about the macro-level antecedents of immigrant political engagement, such as the role of the immigration policy context.

What is the relationship between state-level immigrant integration policy and the political engagement of immigrants, their children, and their co-ethnic groups? Does the ‘context of reception’ (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) at the state-level influence these groups’ engagement with the political system, such as their approval of elected officials, or whether they **turn out to** vote? Theories of ‘policy feedback’ suggest that policies can create ‘clients’ who mobilize politically to protect and expand benefits or avoid burdens (Mettler 2002, Campbell 2003). This is shown to be the case even in the immigration policy space internationally: recent work suggests that the immigration policy context influences natives’ attitudes about government, social and political trust, and political engagement (Rocha, Knoll, and Wrinkle 2015, Gundelach and Manatschal 2017, Kesler and Bloemraad 2010). Policies can also create citizens by setting the terms of inclusion into the political community (Bloemraad 2006) and encouraging political mobilization among immigrants (Phan, Tafoya, and Leal 2019).

The reverse may also be true: policies may discourage political engagement and thus “unmake” citizens both directly (e.g., voter ID laws), and indirectly (e.g., lack of linguistic accommodation). Policy feedback effects have been classified as either material or psychological. Thus in addition to influencing the availability of material resources to groups, the policy context can act as a signal of inclusion or exclusion (Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia-Coll 2011) which can have consequences for people’s sense of belonging and identity (Maltby et al. 2019). Scholars have also shown that policy feedback effects are not limited to direct beneficiaries of a policy, but they can spillover across generations and social networks (Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016, Gelatt et al. 2017). This suggests that a variety of behaviors, including political behaviors, of immigrants and their co-ethnics can be affected by the policy context.

We apply this extended policy feedback framework to explain how US state-level immigrant integration policies can influence the political engagement of the foreign-born and their American-born children. Our contribution to existing research is twofold. First, **by**

highlighting the relevance of regional integration policies in creating responsive “citizens of the region” (Henderson et al. 2013), our study addresses the core question of this Special Issue and adds to our understanding of the individual-level effects of regional policymaking spurred by recent devolutionary pressures across the West (see introductory article to this Special Issue). Our work taps into the conversation of whether and how immigrant integration policies—rather than national citizenship policies which directly deal with political rights—have the potential to contribute to the political integration of the foreign born, by indirectly encouraging (or discouraging) their participation in the American electorate. Second, by testing and refining emerging theories about the spillover of policy effects, we add evidence to this strand of research (Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016). Given the complexity of the migrant population, which intersects with categories of ethnicity, race, nationality, and citizenship, and comprises such heterogeneous groups as undocumented, asylum seekers, high skilled or labor market immigrants, closer attention to spillover effects is essential.

We test differential policy feedback effects on approval of government officials, and self-reported voting among naturalized citizens, immigrants and their children, when compared to the native (i.e. third generation and later) population using data from the CCES waves 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014, and from a new immigration policy database (Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz 2016). Based on our interest in both direct and spillover effects, our analyses focus on the naturalized and non-citizen foreign-born and their U.S.-born children (‘immigrants’) as compared to natives. We further test the spillover hypothesis on the co-ethnic group of Latinos as compared to white respondents. Our results provide evidence of both, direct as well as material and psychological spillover effects among the foreign-born and their U.S.-born children as well as Latino co-ethnics.

The Immigrant Integration Context in the States

The 21st century has witnessed heightened immigration policy activism in state legislatures. As Figure 1 shows, since 2005, states enacted 796 substantive pieces of legislation, many restrictive and some inclusive.

[FIGURE 1-HERE]

Federal legislation enacted in the 1990s devolved to the states decisions related to immigrant access to the social welfare net (Filindra 2013). At the same time, Washington established a multi-level, routinized, immigration enforcement system (Provine et al. 2016). Furthermore, states have enacted legislation across domains (e.g., education, licenses, healthcare, language facilitations) heavily regulating noncitizens. All these laws fall under the general category of immigrant integration policy since they mean to define the sociopolitical, and economic rights of noncitizens and assisting them in exercising such rights.

Integration policies can be further subdivided into categorical and cultural policies (Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia-Coll 2011, Manatschal 2011). Categorical policies determine whether and to what degree noncitizens belonging to specific legal categories are afforded social, economic, and/or political rights. Cultural policies, by contrast, target heritage communities that have large noncitizen populations but can also have a large citizen population. Multiculturalism policies (e.g., language services, language recognition) can facilitate noncitizens in their exercise of rights. Culturally monist policies, such as ‘English only’ laws, define, in turn, the demand for linguistic assimilation.

Both types of integration policy may have material and symbolic effects that spillover to the broader community. However, categorical policies that target the economic resources of individuals are likely to have stronger material effects than multicultural policies that target the cultural resources of a community. Both types of policies can have strong symbolic effects as both can act as signals of inclusion/exclusion (Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia-Coll 2011) and both can motivate emotions that are implicated in political engagement (e.g., Maltby et al. 2019).

States differ both in the level and the type of inclusivity that they promote. Furthermore, the level of inclusivity/exclusivity has changed over time. Some states score high on both social citizenship inclusion and in cultural citizenship inclusion, while others enact many restrictive policies in both domains. Figure 2 shows the number of state-level social benefits and language facilitation policies enacted in the two years up to the election years 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014 (details on the data are included in the method

section). As the graphs show, many states added both inclusive and restrictive legislation on the two policy dimensions during this period.

[FIGURE 2-HERE]

Policy Feedback Theory

The policy feedback theory suggests that (re-)distributive policies create clients among beneficiary groups. In a positive feedback process, these clients are more likely to exercise the rights of political citizenship to protect and expand gains (e.g., Pierson 1993). However, policies can also directly or indirectly discourage political participation among targeted groups (negative feedback) leading to social alienation (Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016).

Among others, negative feedback effects can develop from citizenship and voting policies that target groups ascriptively. For example, until 1952, immigrants from many Asian countries were barred from naturalization in the US and thus from voting (Tichenor 2002). Naturalization policies can also provide incentives and disincentives for people to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006) as is the case of the Trump Administration's plan to bar noncitizen users of welfare programs from naturalization.

Among American citizens, voter ID policies are thought to discourage voting among minority groups (e.g., Barreto, Nuño, and Sanchez 2009). Also, exclusive integration policies depress educational attainment among the children of immigrants (Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016, Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen 2013), a strong indicator of future political engagement (Verba, Lehman Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Over time, such policies lead to structural inequalities as privileged groups have greater access to the political system than do marginalized groups (Uggen and Manza 2002).

Recent literature shows that immigration policies can have important political consequences for natives, producing both positive and negative feedback effects. For example, there is international evidence that the immigration policy context influences the level of political/social trust among natives (e.g., Rocha, Knoll, and Wrinkle 2015, Gundelach and Manatschal 2017). Taken together, these studies suggest that these policy

effects on natives are generally psychological rather than material. Furthermore, this literature indicates that – on average – natives are likely to reward policymakers who enact restrictive immigration and integration policies.

Spillover of Policy Feedback Effects

The policy feedback literature has focused on the effects of policy on targeted groups. However, the effects of policy are not limited to their material well-being. First, the material effects of policy can spillover across broader communities. Second, policies can act symbolically as signals of inclusion or exclusion and thus have psychological effects on both direct targets and broader communities (Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia-Coll 2011, Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016). Studies in a variety of fields have shown that the policy context can influence attitudes and behaviors in unintended ways (e.g., Gelatt et al. 2017, Maltby et al. 2019).

All policies have target groups whose behavior they seek to modify. At the same time, policy effects can spillover, and influence broader groups that share material and cultural resources. In the case of immigrants, policy can affect families, peer groups, and even the entire co-ethnic group. For example, the exclusion of legal residents from welfare programs affects not only the immediate beneficiary but also her family. Or increased immigration enforcement may make it harder for undocumented immigrants to find work forcing them to rely more on family. In terms of political involvement, these policy effects can make it more costly for the foreign-born and their U.S. born children to learn about candidates and engage in politics. These effects can further spillover through co-ethnic communities as the collective resources of immigrant networks are reduced.

According to Condon et al. (2016), material or symbolic policy effects are the two key mechanisms that create the policy feedback process. By material effects, the authors mean burdens or benefits that a policy ascribes to a population. For example, the exclusion of legal residents from social welfare impacts the group's aggregate economic resources. Symbolic effects refer to policy influences on people's social identities, feelings, community membership, political efficacy, belonging or threat. For example, immigration enforcement can make targeted immigrants, their families, and their communities more fearful of authority, less trusting, and less politically efficacious (Abrego 2011, Rocha, Knoll, and

Wrinkle 2015) or they can affect their identities (Maltby et al. 2019). At the same time, exclusionary immigration policies can anger people (Valentino et al. 2011). These psychological effects of policy can in turn influence political engagement. The literature on policy threat has documented that restrictive immigration policies at the national or state level can mobilize immigrants and their co-ethnics in defense of the group (Pantoja and Segura 2003, Phan, Tafoya, and Leal 2019, Zepeda-Millán 2017).

To summarize, the extant literature on immigrant integration policy and behavior suggests that not only absolute policy levels but also change in the policy climate over time, for example changes in welfare inclusivity that took place between 1996 and 2000 (Condon et al. 2016), or changes in deportation policy over time (Maltby et al. 2019), can lead to downstream political mobilization by influencing expectations of gains or losses (Hunt et al. 2010). Furthermore, not only the political behavior and resources of target groups but also those of extended networks and even natives can be affected by the immigration and immigrant integration policy context (Condon, Filindra, and Wichowsky 2016, Manatschal and Stadelmann-Steffen 2013, Gundelach and Manatschal 2017, Rocha, Knoll, and Wrinkle 2015, Maltby et al. 2019). In order to test differential effects of integration policy, e.g. its capacity to integrate immigrant voters into the U.S. electorate, it will thus be important to scrutinize *relative* policy effects on different nativity and racial groups.

Definitions

In this paper, we are interested in comparing the first and second generation of immigrants to later generations, applying established US and international group categorizations (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012). The first generation includes foreign born individuals who are either non-citizens or naturalized. The second generation includes individuals whose parents are foreign-born. Unless otherwise specified, subsequent references to ‘immigrants’ refer to these two groups. Our category of ‘natives’ includes U.S.-born individuals whose parents were born in the United States. This group includes individuals whose families have been in the U.S. for several generations.

Depending on the analytic model, the ‘immigrant’ category is slightly modified: since noncitizens are not eligible to vote, they are omitted from the analyses on voter turnout. In

these models, the ‘immigrant’ category includes naturalized citizens and U.S.-born individuals of foreign-born parents.¹

Hypotheses

We are interested in how **inclusive and restrictive** regional integration policies affect political engagement among immigrants and, via spillover, their descendants, when compared to natives, who are neither directly nor indirectly addressed, but may also be affected, by such **policies**. Based on the theory outlined above, we test the following hypotheses:

H1 (positive feedback). Approval of elected officials among immigrants increases relative to natives when categorical and/or cultural integration policies become more inclusive.

H2 (negative feedback). Approval of elected officials among immigrants decreases relative to natives when categorical and/or cultural integration policies become more exclusionary.

*H3a (material effects). **Propensity** to vote among naturalized citizens and their U.S.-born children (spillover) decreases relative to natives when categorical and/or cultural integration policies become more exclusionary.*

*H3b (symbolic effects, **mobilization via threat**). **Propensity** to vote among naturalized citizens and their U.S.-born children (spillover) increases relative to natives when categorical and/or cultural integration policies become more exclusionary.*

Data & Methods

We investigate two aspects of political engagement: attitudes toward officeholders (state governor), and voting. We test our hypotheses using data from the *Cooperative Congressional Election Study* (CCES) from 2006-2014, and a new state-level immigration policy dataset (Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz 2016).

CCES is a repeated nationally stratified sample survey on electoral behavior and attitudes based on 50,000 or more respondents per wave. It is conducted **biannually in every**

¹ As discussed later, we also perform analyses comparing Latinos to white Americans. We recognize that Latinos are not a homogeneous group and that has political implications (Garza et al. 1992). However, our data do not allow for such refined subgroup analyses.

congressional election year.² We specify two models using different dependent variables, both of them binaries: approval of the state governor, and voting.³ We include several individual-level control variables to reduce residual variance and increase the precision of our statistical tests. In accordance with the literature on political behavior, we control for age, gender, education, marital status, labor force participation, income and home ownership (Cho 1999, Verba, Lehman Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Race was included to account for the high mobilization of black voters in 2008 and 2012 (Kasinitz et al. 2008). The models further control for the political ideology and party identification of the respondents, which are key predictors of approval of elected officials but also political participation (for detailed information on all variables see Appendix A2).

Integration Policy Indices

We drew state-level integration policy data from a database of all immigration-related legislation enacted in the 50 states from 1990 to 2015. The dataset allows us to extract nuanced policy information across U.S. states over time. Our key independent variables are four policy indices measuring state integration policy legislation. Existing research on integration policy highlights the multidimensional nature of integration policy by distinguishing policies regulating integration into the political-legal, socio-economic, or cultural domain (Entzinger 2000, Manatschal 2011, Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012). In line with this differentiated scholarly approach, the policy change measures capture two central dimensions of immigrant integration policy: how states deal with cultural difference in terms of language policies, and how they regulate immigrant access to social benefits. For each of the two policy fields, language policy and access to social benefits, we distinguish two contrasting policy indices, representing inclusive and restrictive policies respectively. Inclusive policy implies an increase in rights, whereas restrictive policy implies

² See <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/> [last accessed: September 24, 2018]. As such, the CCES focuses on congressional elections that is House and Senate elections. CCES surveys are also conducted in non-election years. Given our interest in voter turnout, this study focuses on the biannual waves covering congressional election years. Numbers of respondents per state, nativity and citizenship status are listed in Appendix A1.

³ Since we are dealing with self-reported voter turnout here, over-reporting may be an issue. Existing research suggests that real differences in voting participation between nativity groups could be even larger than the ones reported in surveys, since over-reporting may be higher among minorities than among whites (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Our estimates on group differences may thus underestimate real differences in voter turnout.

a restriction of rights for designated target groups in the respective policy fields. Existing studies often combine restrictive and inclusive policy information on one variable (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012, Manatschal 2011). Recent research shows however that coding this information on separate indices facilitates more nuanced theoretical reasoning and empirical insights (Filindra 2018, see also contribution of Christina Zuber to this Special Issue). Given our differentiated hypotheses for inclusive and exclusive policies, and to disentangle policy effects in the empirical analysis, we use separate measures for inclusive and restrictive policies.⁴

To capture integration policies enacted in the two years up to each election year 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014, we extracted policy information for language and social benefits policy from this database, and created additive count indices, expressing the number of restrictive or inclusive policy enactments per two years (see Figure 2, Appendix A3 lists the policies included in the indices).⁵ In the period under study, policymaking activities have been more intense in some policy fields than in others. As Figure 2 shows, most policy provisions enacted restrict access to social benefits. The respective index also exhibits the highest score per state with 10 policy items being enacted in Alabama in the period 2011-2012. Overall, the four policy indices are not significantly correlated. The only exception is the significant positive correlation emerging between the two indices measuring inclusive and exclusive change for access to social benefits (Pearson's $R = 0.42$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$).

The least active area regards restrictive language policy changes, where only three states enacted one restrictive policy in the period studied.⁶ Since we expect that the intensity of policy change along the four indices matters, we prefer simple additive count indices instead of averaged or weighted indices, as count indices allow for a straightforward analysis of how policymaking intensity affects political behavior and attitudes among foreign-born and U.S.-born with foreign-born parents compared to natives.

⁴ We discuss additional analyses based on combined indices (inclusive minus restrictive policies) for language policy and social benefits in the robustness test section. These additional analyses further confirm our differentiated approach.

⁵ Using annually enacted policies and a one-year time lag with respect to the individual outcomes produces similar results. We prefer the biannual policy measures as they include all relevant policies enacted in the period under study.

⁶ Restrictive language policy legislation was more frequent during the so called 'Official English Movement' in the 80's, 90's and early 2000's (Citrin et al. 1990, Liu et al. 2014).

Method

To test our hypotheses empirically, we apply logistic regression analyses including interaction effects between our immigrant category and the four policy indices.⁷ This allows us to scrutinize how the difference in voting behavior and governor approval between immigrants and natives in a state changes when states enact inclusive or exclusive policies in terms of language policies or access to social benefits in the two years preceding a given election year. We account for unobserved heterogeneity across states and over the five election years 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014 by the use of state fixed effects and a control for presidential election years.⁸ To account for the nested data structure of individuals within states, standard errors are clustered by states.

Results

The empirical analysis proceeds in three steps. It starts with the postulated direct and spillover effects of integration policy on the immigrant-native gap regarding political attitudes (governor approval) and behavior (voting). To test for potential spillover effects on specific ethnic groups, step two checks whether integration policy influences attitudes and behaviors of Latinos (high immigrant community) as compared to Whites (low immigrant community). Additional robustness checks, which support the main findings reported in the analysis presented below, are discussed in step three.

Main analyses

As the immigrant indicator coefficients in Models 1 and 2 in Table 1 show, governor approval among this group is significantly higher compared to natives. However, immigrants have a lower propensity to vote than natives. These findings are independent of the policy context and consistent with extant literature on immigrant political attitudes and voting behavior (e.g, Ruedin 2017, Maxwell 2010).

⁷ The reported log-odd coefficients may underestimate effects due to unobserved heterogeneity and thus reflect conservative estimates (Mood 2010). Since logistic regression coefficients are difficult to interpret, we provide an additional model specification using linear probability modelling in Appendix A4 (Mood 2010, Angrist and Pischke 2009, 105ff), which corroborates the findings for the product terms in the logit models shown in Table 1.

⁸ Using year fixed effects instead of a control for presidential election years does not alter the results reported here.

The parameters of interest are the interaction terms between status (‘immigrant’ v. ‘native’) and integration policy, as we are interested in how the immigrant-native gaps in a state change as the integration policy context in a state changed between congressional election years. In line with our theoretical expectations, governor approval increased more compared to natives in those states that enacted inclusive integration policies (Model 1 in Table 1). We observe positive and significant interactions between the immigrant category and inclusive integration policy for both language and, although less significant, social benefits policy. Conversely, restrictive integration policy change decreases governor approval significantly among immigrants when compared to natives. This effect was statistically significant only in the case of restrictive change in social benefits policy. Restrictive language policy has no significant moderating effect on the immigrant-native gap regarding governor approval, which is in line with our expectation, given the almost absent variance of this index (see Figure 2).

[TABLE 1-HERE]

A contrasting pattern emerges for voting (Model 2 in Table 1). As a reminder, for this model the “immigrant” category consists of naturalized citizens and U.S.-born individuals with foreign-born parents. Noncitizens are not eligible to vote in the U.S. Here, we hypothesized either a negative effect of restrictive policy change as a result of material effects in line with Condon et al. (2016) or a positive effect of restrictive policy change as a result of symbolic and especially threat effects in line with Pantoja and Segura (2003). We find that restrictive policy change significantly increases immigrants’ propensity for political participation when compared to natives, thus reducing the negative participation gap between the two groups. Again, only the restrictive social benefits change moderates the gap between immigrants and natives significantly, whereas the interaction term remains insignificant for restrictive language policy change.⁹

Since logistic regression coefficients including interaction terms are difficult to interpret, Figures 3 and 4 present the predicted probability plots based on the analyses from

⁹ Additional analyses using voter registration as an outcome instead of turnout reveal no differential effects of integration policy on registration (see Appendix A5).

Table 1 for a substantive interpretation of the significant policy interaction effects, and to visualize how the immigrant-native gaps are moderated by integration policy changes (Berry, DeMeritt, and Esarey 2010). The Figures confirm that political attitudes and behavior changed in both groups over time, justifying our focus on relative (immigrant native-gaps) instead of absolute attitudinal and behavioral changes. As Figure 3 shows, the positive governor approval gap between immigrants and natives increases in inclusive policy contexts. This increase amounts to plus 5ppts for inclusive language policy, and plus 3ppts for inclusive social benefits change. Conversely, the positive approval gap is reduced and turns even negative and significant when there has been a restrictive change in access to social benefits (minus 12ppts). Figure 4 shows, in turn, that the negative participation gap observed for voting is significantly reduced if a state enacted many restrictive social benefits policies. The reduction of the negative immigrant-native voting gap amounts to minus 3ppts, yet it is no longer significantly moderated by the policy context once immigrants reach native voting levels.

To sum up, the main results reported in Table 1 and Figures 3 and 4 suggest that immigrants are very attentive to the political context they are exposed to, as they even react to short-term policy changes affecting their life conditions. Our attitudinal results suggest that change in the policy context influences immigrants' evaluations of political officials. Further analyses (see below and Appendix A8) provide in addition evidence of direct policy effects on noncitizens who are targeted by welfare policies. The most consequential finding so far is the mobilizational effect of restrictive social benefits policy change on voter turnout. Since all respondents in Model 2 in Table 1 are citizens and thus not directly affected by these policies, our results are consistent with a symbolic spillover effect of the policy context on political behavior.

[FIGURES 3 AND 4-HERE]

Spillover effects on Latinos

As a second step, we tested whether the symbolic spillover effects observed so far are present in the context of the entire co-ethnic community. As Condon et al. (2016) suggest, attention to spillover effects is particularly important when immigrant groups are the target population because of deep ties with broader minority communities and mixed status families. To test potential symbolic spillover effects at the co-ethnic level, we switch the focus of the analysis to Latinos, a high-immigrant ethnic group, and compare them with whites. Once again, we test whether the attitudinal and behavioral gaps between the two groups are moderated by integration policy.

The results from Model 1 in Appendix A6 show that Latino governor approval is slightly higher compared to Whites in states with no integration policy change. Corresponding to the pattern observed for immigrants v. natives, we find that inclusive integration policy change significantly increases governor approval among Latinos when compared to Whites. This holds however only for inclusive language policy. Restrictive change in access to social benefits decreases Latinos' governor approval when compared to Whites. Overall, our evidence suggests that policy feedback effects on attitudes do not only spillover to naturalized and U.S.-born of foreign-born parents, but also to Latino co-ethnics.

Model 2 in Appendix A6 shows further that symbolic spillover effects extend also to Latinos' political behavior. To start with, Latinos have a lower probability of voting than Whites, net of integration policy change. Similar to our findings for immigrants v. natives, propensity for voting is significantly altered among Latinos v. Whites if a state enacted many restrictive social benefits policies in the two years preceding an election. Overall, these findings confirm our spillover expectations. They suggest that Latinos do not only react to changing integration policy contexts in a solidary manner with immigrants by expressing increased or decreased governor approval due to their close links with the immigrant community, but that restrictive social benefits policies may even yield symbolic spillover effects on Latino political behavior.¹⁰

¹⁰ The same analyses for Asians – another high-immigrant group – compared to Whites reveal very similar results (analyses not reported here).

Robustness checks

As a final step, we conducted a series of analyses to test the robustness of the main results. To start with, we replace state fixed effects with a series of state control variables, to address the risk of possible over-fitting by the use of fixed effects (see Appendix A7). State controls include civic engagement levels (organizational density), economic performance (unemployment, GDP), demographic composition (urbanization, share of foreign, Latino, Black population), political ideology of the state executive and legislative branches, as well as various state spending measures (for details see Appendix A2). As the results in Appendix A7 show, using state control variables instead of state fixed effects produces very similar results to the ones reported in Table 1. To test direct policy feedback effects, we further run the analyses for governor approval from Table 1 for noncitizens v. citizens. Using a noncitizen (rather than immigrant) dummy produces substantively similar and significant results for exclusive social benefits, in line with our expectations. As the analyses in Appendix A8 show, noncitizens, who are directly affected by regulations restricting access to social benefits, decrease governor approval compared to citizens if a state enacts exclusive social benefits policies.¹¹

Finally, we test an alternative specification of our policy measures, combining inclusive and restrictive policy information in one variable. To this end, we subtract restrictive from inclusive social benefit policies, and restrictive from inclusive language policies, resulting in one index for each policy field, running from exclusive to inclusive. The respective analyses confirm the robustness of our main results presented in Table 1. As Model 1 in Appendix A9 shows, more inclusive language and social benefits policies coincide with a higher governor approval propensity among immigrants compared to natives. The almost insignificant and negative coefficient for the combined social benefits index in the voting Model however - although in line with our expectation - cannot tell us whether immigrants are demobilized via more inclusive policies, or mobilized via the threat emanating from restrictive policies (Model 2 in Appendix A9). Only the results based on separate indices shown in Model 2 in Table 1 allow us to corroborate the mobilization through threat hypothesis via restrictive social benefits policies.¹²

¹¹ Analogous tests for voting are not possible, since noncitizens are not eligible to vote.

¹² Given the high support of the Democratic Party by immigrant voters (Bowler, Nicholson, and Segura 2006), and taking into account Democrats' preference for inclusive immigration policies, we further run

Discussion

Our analysis suggests that the policy context has a substantial effect on attitudes and political behavior. Inclusive measures in language facilitation policies, and, to a lesser extent, social welfare policies, significantly increase approval of the state's governor among immigrants relative to natives. Conversely, negative shifts in social welfare inclusivity lead to a decline in governor approval among immigrants relative to natives. We observe no moderating effect of restrictive language policies, which is not surprising, given the low incidence of these measures in the period under study.

Given our focus on foreign-born and their U.S.-born immediate descendants, our findings as they pertain to political attitudes indicate the existence of important direct and spillover effects of the policy context. Evidence for direct effects emerges from our analysis of non-citizens only. The existence of spillover effects is further validated by our comparison of governor approval between Latinos and Whites, which is largely consistent with the immigrant-native analysis. Taken together, our findings suggest that political attitudes of both direct targets and those who belong to their families, peer groups and co-ethnic communities are influenced by the state policy context.

Our findings on political behavior support further the hypothesis of symbolic spillover effects. Our data show that a negative change in social welfare policies drives up voting among immigrants relative to natives. This is again not the case for restrictive language policy where we find null results. Our results suggest that naturalized citizens and their U.S.-born descendants are, although not directly materially impacted by the policy changes, psychologically affected by the perceived threat to family members. Consistent with theories of emotion, anger associated with the policy change produces a positive feedback loop in this group. It is also important to note that we do not detect any demobilization effects resulting from negative change in the material resources of immigrants (restrictive social

additional analyses for party identification. Instead of controlling for party identification in the governor approval analysis (Model 1 in Table 1), we interact party identification with the policy indices. The additional analysis shows that even in this extended model, the immigrant*policy interactions remain significant for inclusive language policy (log-odd: 0.02*, SE: 0.01), and restrictive social benefits (log-odd: -0.04***, SE: 0.01). These results suggest that the integration policy contexts matters for immigrant political attitudes irrespective of this groups' inclination for the Democratic Party. We thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to our attention.

policy change). The fact that we also detect spillover political participation effects into the broader Latino community further corroborates our spillover hypothesis.

On a more general level, the empirical results of this study confirm our argument that policymaking intensity in terms of numbers of enacted policies matters for policy effects. Extant findings discuss mobilization effects via threat often in a qualitative manner, focusing on specific restrictive integration bills, for instance in the context of substantial public and media attention around Prop. 187 in the 1990s in California (Pantoja and Segura 2003, Zepeda-Millán 2017). Our findings on the mobilizing effect of restrictive social benefit policies contribute to this research by showing that not only the quality, but also the quantity of integration policy legislation affects immigrant political engagement.

With regard to our conceptualization and measurement of integration policy, our study aligns with recent scholarly debates recommending a disaggregated use of policy information for more subtle theoretical hypotheses and empirical insights (Filindra 2018, Wallace Goodman 2015). As the contribution of Christina Zuber to this Special Issue showed for regional policy outputs, our analyses reveal also for the case of policy outcome analyses that separate indices for inclusive and exclusive policies are necessary for precise hypothesis testing. Only the analysis using separate indices for inclusive and exclusive policies in Model 2, Table 1 was able to corroborate the threat hypothesis, revealing that immigrants' propensity to vote increases significantly relative to natives in states enacting many exclusive social benefit policies.

Conclusion

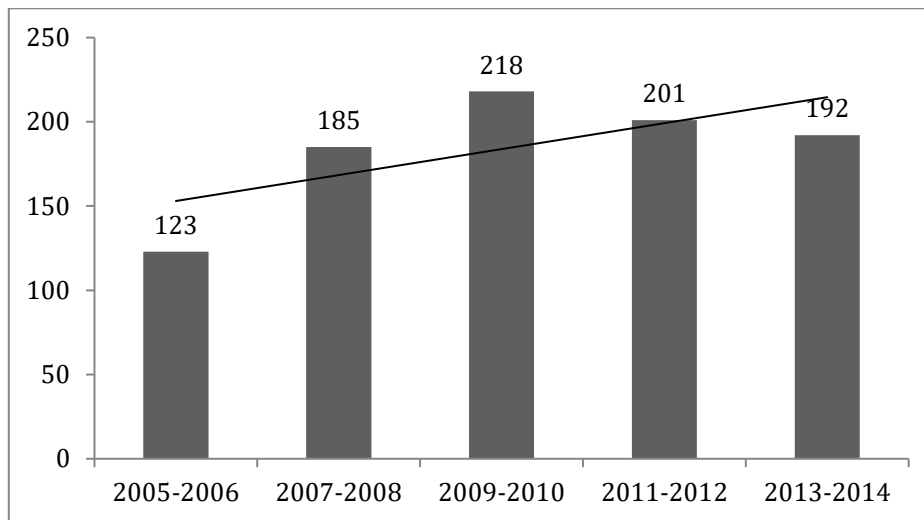
In his ecological model of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that human behavior is shaped by the interaction of the individual with her sociopolitical environment. People receive cues that influence their behavior and attitudes not only from proximal sources such as the family and friends, but also from the macro-social context that is the political/policy environment within which they live. Formal rules that target groups on the basis of their immigration status or their culture can have important effects on political behavior and attitudes. They can modify the material base of individuals, families, and entire communities increasing the cost of political engagement. The context of reception can also

emit signals of welcome or exclusion that may have profound effects on social identities and how people understand their place in the community.

The policy feedback literature has generally focused on the direct material effects of policies on clients. The political implications are tied to a rational calculus that explains political participation as a response to impending material losses or desired gains. Our work shows that policy feedback effects, whether positive or negative, can spillover to kinship communities such as families and co-ethnic groups. The material effects of policy seem to be the most impactful in terms of political participation effects. However, the symbolic pathways are equally important though more challenging to pin down, not least since not all policy changes may have the same quality when it comes to symbolic effects. Based on the rich over time policy data allowing us to measure policy change in a nuanced manner, our analyses reveal important correlations, but no causal pathways. New data both qualitative and quantitative and experimental research designs are needed to help us understand the complex causal relationship between policy and behavior as mediated by psychological factors such as emotions, attitudes, and affect.

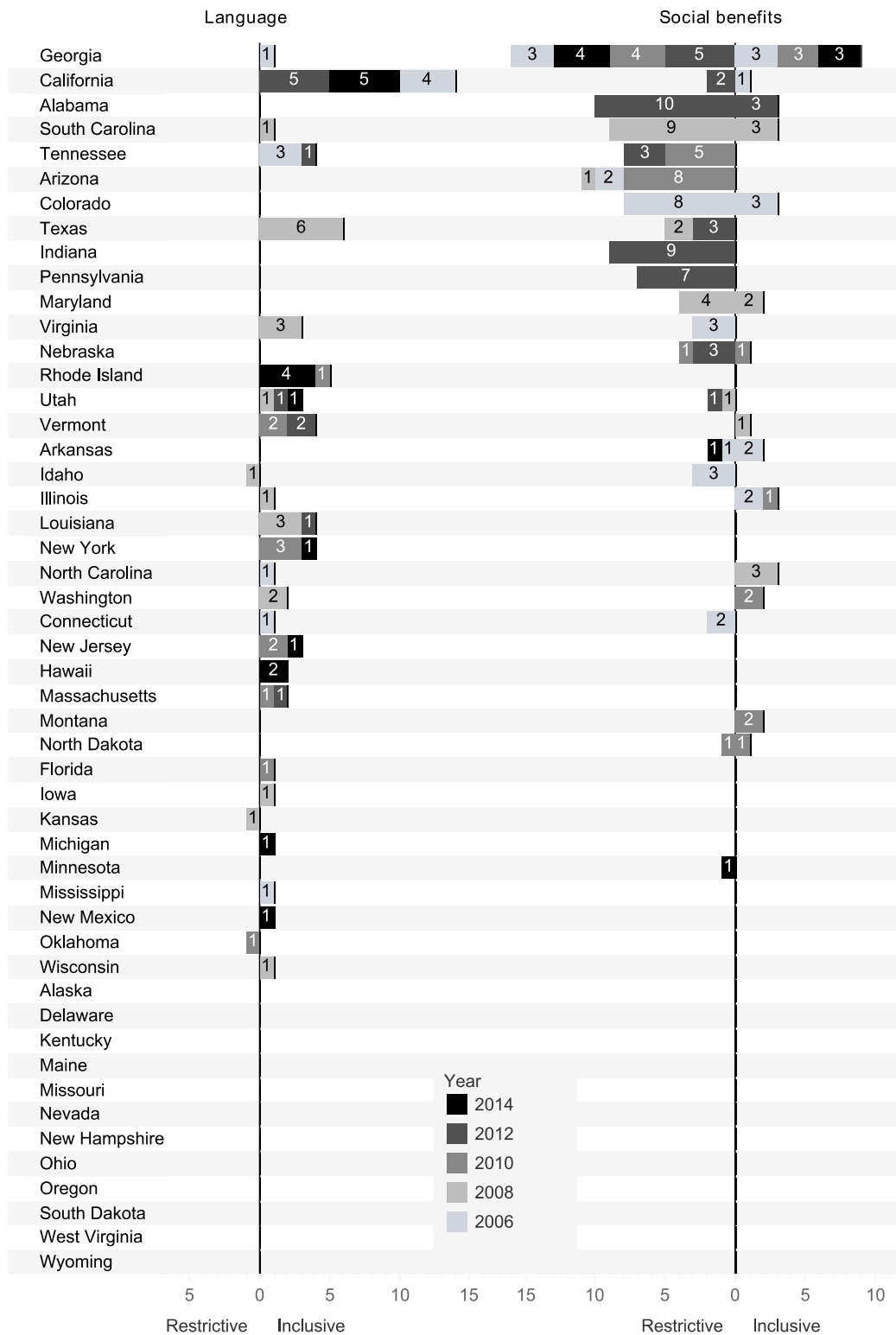
The limitations of the present study notwithstanding, the spillover effects revealed in this paper clearly challenge the notion of immigrants as passive or politically uninterested individuals, and highlight the relevance of the regional level of integration policy making for research on integration policy outcomes. Our findings show that even small regional policy changes over time significantly alter political attitudes and behavior of first and second generation immigrants and co-ethnic Latinos, when compared to native or white respondents respectively. Overall, and similar to the findings reported in the contribution by Salomon Bennour on Swiss cantons to this Special Issue, the results of this study confirm that regional integration policies do matter for immigrant integration. By shaping the way immigrants, their children and co-ethnics react to regional policies, and interact with the regional polity to which they are exposed, these policies have the potential to activate and thus integrate immigrant voters into the electorate, contributing thereby to the creation of new regional citizens.

Figure 1 - Enacted immigration legislation, 2005-2014



Note: Number of enacted pieces of immigration and integration legislation in US States between 2005 and 2014. Source: Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz (2016).

Figure 2 - Social and Cultural Policy Indices



Note : Count indices for inclusive and exclusive policies enacted in the two years up to 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014.

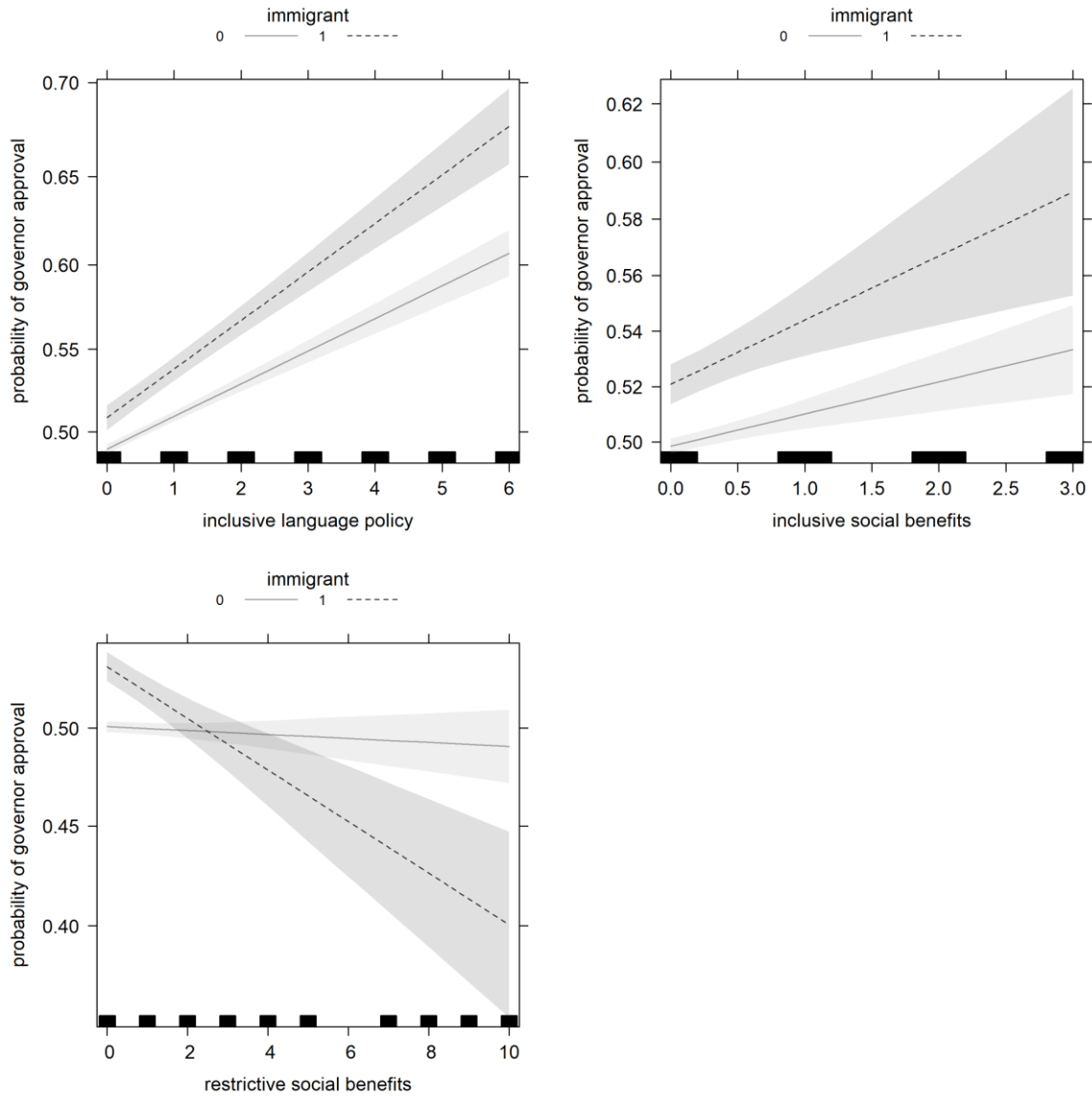
Table 1 – The moderating effect of *integration policy* on immigrant-native gaps in political attitudes and behavior

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
	Governor approval	Voting
Immigrant (ref.cat.: natives [third generation+])	0.09*** (0.02)	-0.19*** (0.03)
Inclusive language policy (ILP)	0.08*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.10)
Exclusionary language policy (ELP)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.10 (0.16)
Inclusive social benefits (ISBP)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.03)
Exclusionary social benefits (ESBP)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
<i>Individual controls</i>	✓	✓
<i>State FEs</i>	✓	✓
<i>Presidential election year</i>	✓	✓
Immigrant * ILP	0.04*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
Immigrant * ELP	0.22 (0.30)	-0.06 (0.57)
Immigrant * ISBP	0.05+ (0.03)	-0.04 (0.06)
Immigrant * ESBP	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)
Constant	0.18** (0.06)	-2.06*** (0.12)
Observations	176,878	131,294
AIC	239450	76946

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1. Logistic regression (log-odds, standard errors clustered by state in parentheses). State fixed effects and control for presidential years included.

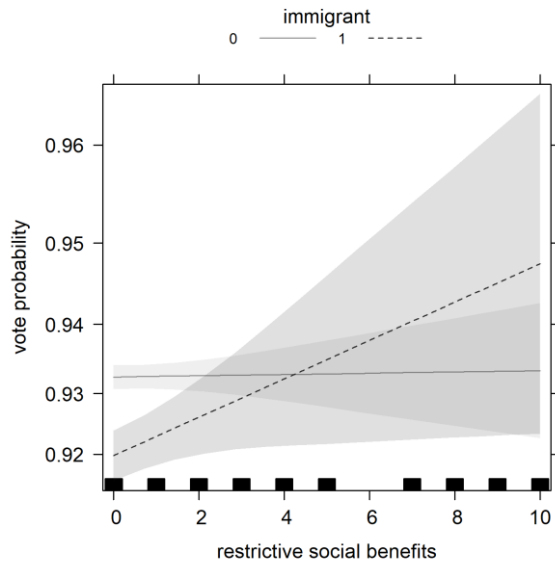
Individual controls omitted to save space include age, gender, race, education, employment, marital status, family income, homeownership, as well as political ideology and party identification. The immigrant dummy in model 1 comprises immigrant citizens and non-citizens, whereas in **voting model 2** it includes only immigrant citizens.

Figure 3 – Predicted probability plots for government approval



Notes: Predicted probability plots based on Model 1 in Table 1 (significant immigrant * policy change interactions only).

Figure 4 – Predicted probability plot for voting



Notes: Predicted probability plot based on **Model 2** in Table 1 (significant immigrant * policy change interaction only).

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