Immigrant Civic Engagement

Social Citizenship, Integration and Collective Action: Immigrant Civic Engagement in the United States

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Collective action has been examined in studies of worker insurgency, homeless protest, the Civil Rights movement and white backlash against racial minorities. Relatively few studies, however, focus on noncontentious forms of immigrant collective action. Utilizing a new data set comprising over 1,000 immigrant *civic* events, we examine whether the civic and political environment within metropolitan areas affect civic engagement. Our results indicate that political opportunities and resources did not have uniform effects, but that institutional threats to immigrants deterred civic activity. Furthermore, we find that local restrictive efforts instigated solidarity events, while outreach efforts directed at immigrants facilitated community improvement projects. These findings suggest that conditions intensifying group boundaries between immigrants and natives *and* encouraging collective efficacy are important predictors of immigrant civic engagement.

Formal citizenship imparts individuals with rights and responsibilities, and its acquisition is expected to increase one's participation in civic and political life. But when minority and immigrant communities are not fully included in social and political processes, citizenship may not be akin to civic engagement. The civic participation of immigrants is important precisely because of its broader implications for building social capital within local communities, encouraging positive intergroup relations and ensuring civil rights (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). Because it involves the voluntary actions of people working together to solve problems, civic engagement also fosters democratic orientations and skills, including social trust and norms of reciprocity and cooperation (Schlozman, Verba and Brady 1999:428). To what extent are contemporary immigrants in the United States participating in the civic life of their communities? What social and political conditions encourage immigrant civic engagement?

The growing literature on immigrant incorporation has investigated the civic and political participation of immigrants in the United States (Bloemraad 2006; Martinez 2005; Mollenkopf and Hochschild 2009; Ramakrishnan 2005). This research helps us to understand the extent to which immigrant groups are becoming part of the American political process and a part of their local communities, but it is limited in two important ways. First, it has primarily focused on indicators of formal political incorporation such as citizenship, voting and other forms of participation related to electoral politics, which overlooks the fact that immigrants without formal citizenship are also civic-minded members of society. Recent studies have addressed other aspects of civic and political life such as attending public meetings and volunteering for community organizations; however, these measures often do not capture the full range of activities in which immigrants are involved. Organizing a workshop on health care, participating in a fundraiser and honoring a cultural icon in the public arena are overlooked forms of civic action, and yet these vital activities help to bring group members together to improve local conditions and celebrate community. We broaden the definition and measurement of civic engagement to provide further insights about the civic life of immigrants.

Second, many studies conceptualize civic engagement as an individual pursuit even if it is enacted with others in a group setting or has larger group implications. Our study builds upon Sampson and colleagues (2005), who characterized civic activity as collective in nature. While the concept of civic collective action captures the civic capacity of local communities, it takes on a slightly different meaning when applied to immigrants. We argue that civic participation constitutes part of the immigrant incorporation process, where newcomers become part of American society through their participation in the civic life of communities, often by building up their own communities while broadening their social networks and engaging in local improvement efforts.

Given the focus on individual participation, past research often neglects collective measures of immigrant political incorporation and the importance of social contexts in shaping collective outcomes. We contribute to the literature by investigating how local conditions facilitate *immigrant civic action*, which we define as publicly enacted, group-based efforts in pursuit of a common goal by ethnic and immigrant groups to improve and/or celebrate their communities by participating in fundraisers to improve local schools, workshops to share knowledge and information and cultural celebrations that build community within and across local immigrant and ethnic populations. Theoretically, we draw from the social movements and collective efficacy literatures and examine the influence of political opportunities and resources that are available in local contexts, as well as the conditions that encourage new immigrants to develop shared interests, build trust and form a collective minority status. In particular, we argue that social conditions encouraging collective efficacy and heightening group boundaries between immigrants and natives should play important roles in generating civic collective action. We test these theoretical ideas using a new data set comprised of over 1,000 immigrant civic events occurring in 52 metropolitan areas across the United States in 2000.

Immigrant Incorporation

Scholars generally agree that civic participation is a key part of any democratic society because it fosters individual capacities and skills and contributes to a more equal protection of interests, but they define the concept in different ways. For some, civic engagement involves activities that address the goals and needs of the larger community such as helping to raise money for charity and being an active member of a voluntary organization (Paxton 2002; Verba, Brady and Schlozman 1995). For other scholars, civic engagement includes political activities such as writing letters to government officials, signing political petitions, attending political rallies and voting (Lopez and Marcelo 2008; Mollenkopf, Olson and Ross 2001). Yet still others conceptualize all of these activities as civic engagement because they represent active participation in public life (Putnam 2000).

Research on immigrant civic and political engagement often uses survey data to understand patterns of individual civic participation and thus focuses on indicators such as organizational membership, participation in electoral campaigns and voting (DeSipio and Urlaner 2007). Many studies combine these forms of activity into one measure of civic and political activity (Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2004), making it difficult to separate formal political participation from other types of civic participation. These studies also tend to focus on explanatory variables measured at the individual level such as income, age, race and education to understand immigrant incorporation patterns. For example, analyses of nationally representative surveys of Asian Americans and Latinos revealed that higher levels of education and years in the United States were consistently associated with participation in civic and political activities such as demonstrations and petition drives (Wong 2006). Past studies have also shown that income, recent immigrant status and English-language ability influence newcomers' participation in civic associations (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes 2006).

Social networks and activism have also been found to encourage civic and political participation. For example, studies demonstrate that being contacted by a family member, friend or person in the community to participate is associated with writing to a government official, donating money to a political campaign and signing a petition for a political cause (Wong 2006; Bloemraad and Trost 2008). Group members who are active in the civic realm are likely to draw others in as participants, and they themselves are likely to be active in multiple contexts. In a study of civic engagement among immigrants, DeSipio (2006) reported that respondents who were members of transnational political organizations were more likely to also be involved in U.S. civic organizations such as churches, labor unions and parent-teacher organizations.

Moving beyond human capital and social network explanations toward a contextual understanding of immigrant civic and political activity, a handful of studies have suggested that political environments matter for the political incorporation of immigrants (Koopmans et al. 2005; Mollenkopf and Hochschild 2009). These studies have compared the ways in which immigrants engage in

the political process across city and national contexts, and are mostly based on case studies that provide details of the political activities, contexts and even perceptions and motivations of newcomers as they make their way through the political system. In her comparative study of the United States and Canada, Bloemraad (2006) found that the successful political incorporation of immigrants was because of in large part the political opportunity structure, which includes the host country's political institutions, integration policies and administrative bureaucracies.

In sum, scholars studying political and civic participation often use individual characteristics to understand political action, but this approach fails to address the broader context where collective action unfolds. Studies that address the broader context tend to emphasize the importance of the political environment without attesting to factors beyond the political sphere that might encourage immigrant civic action. In addition, past work based within the United States tends to focus on gateways, and it is not clear to what extent these findings apply to areas where immigrants have not historically settled in large numbers.

We move beyond standard explanations of civic and political participation and develop a contextual understanding of the civic incorporation of immigrants. While past research indicates that social networks and organizational membership increase individual civic participation, we suspect that civic action operates differently at the collective level. We use data on observed immigrant civic events instead of relying on self-reports, and contribute to the literature by drawing upon theoretical frameworks from social movements and collective efficacy to gain insights regarding the local conditions that influence collective efforts by immigrant groups to improve their communities in new destinations and gateways.

Theoretical Framework

Because our outcome of interest is civic collective action, we utilize social movement frameworks to understand the conditions that will encourage mobilization. Even though civic events are distinct from protest activity that explicitly challenges the status quo, it is plausible that political opportunities and resources will influence whether and the extent to which immigrants as a group are able to successfully organize and engage in civic action. While we acknowledge the possible importance of political opportunities and resources, we argue that immigrants are unlikely to engage in collective action to improve and celebrate local communities unless they are able to build trust, develop shared interests and build a collective identity.

Social Movements

Political opportunities are broadly understood as elements and conditions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action (Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1994). Typically defined as the relative openness of the political system to challenging groups, political opportunities can convey to group

members that collective organizing will be a successful strategy in reaching their goals, facilitating mobilization (Klandermans 2001; Kriesi 2004). Recent studies have found that access to naturalization and state-sponsored antidiscrimination agencies encouraged immigrant mobilization in the European political arena (Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans et al. 2005). Clearly, structures of opportunity within formal political systems, such as voting rights and public access to the polls at local and regional levels, can ease the incorporation of disenfranchised groups into the political process (Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004). In fact, certain configurations of power, such as supportive elites at different levels of the political system, can enable protest among minority groups such as women, racial minorities and the homeless (Jenkins, Jacobs and Agnone 2003; Snow, Soule and Cress 2005; Soule et al. 1999).

Resource mobilization scholars focus on the importance of access to resources in facilitating collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978). Numerous studies have found that collective action is more likely to emerge in areas where resources—whether human or social-organizational—are readily available (Cress and Snow 1996). That said, available pools of resources alone do not translate into collective action; individuals and groups require coordination and strategic efforts (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Communities with higher levels of education and other forms of human capital have been able to draw upon elite networks, leadership skills and finances, which increase the chances for successful collective action (McCarthy et al. 1988). High levels of educational attainment in immigrant communities, for instance, have served as a key resource that is associated with the development of civic and political organizations (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008).

Additionally, local organizations and community organizations themselves provide access to information, funding and leadership, and can serve as a base for the emergence of group action. For example, Ramírez (2011) discovered that Spanish-language radio stations facilitated Latino participation in naturalization and voter registration drives, and in the 2006 immigrant rights protests. Although Spanish-language radio stations were not created with the intention to facilitate collective action, activists can appropriate them to disseminate information to the Spanish-speaking community about mobilizing efforts (Edwards and McCarthy 2004:127; Roscigno and Danaher 2001).

Access to resources and supportive political environments may be important for collective organizing, but they may not be enough to spur civic action among immigrants, especially if newcomers are unable to build shared meanings and identities upon which to organize (McAdam 2002; Okamoto and Ebert 2010). We argue that a more complete understanding of collective action must address the factors that encourage immigrants to develop shared interests, build trust and form a collective minority status. Even when newcomers are faced with political opportunities and resources, collective action may not result unless other conditions are in place that help group members form a larger group upon which to organize. In particular, conditions intensifying group boundaries between newcomers and natives, and encouraging collective efficacy should play significant roles in cultivating civic action.

Threats

Past research has revealed that threats and other forms of repression can serve to suppress collective action among ethnic minorities, especially when groups are "weak" in terms of organizational strength and political influence (Andrews 1997; Olzak and West 1991). However, previous studies have also found that threats[1] can instigate collective action (Almeida 2003; McVeigh 1999; Myers 1997; Okamoto 2010; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). We argue that threats to the group from individuals or institutions can heighten group boundaries and encourage ethnic groups to become solidary. Under such conditions, ethnic groups may engage in collective action to protect group interests (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Olzak 1992; Van Dyke and Soule 2002).

For immigrants, threats are constraints on achieving full social citizenship and integration, as they are meant to keep minority group members from the opportunities and privileges that dominant group members enjoy. Whether they manifest as xenophobic attacks or restrictive legislation, threats reinforce social boundaries between immigrants and natives, and could encourage immigrants to organize as a collective group. Past research has pointed to the importance of restrictive governmental policies in triggering the reactive mobilization of immigrants in the political arena through citizenship or voting (Ramakrishnan 2005). In a study of the immigrant marches in 2006, Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio and Montoya (2008) found that the national threat of HR 4437 heightened group boundaries between immigrants and natives, and this led to unprecedented levels of protests across the United States.

Thus, threats against immigrants reinforce and legitimate the distinction between immigrants and natives in terms of differential access to education, the right to work and other civil liberties, and, in turn, instigate protest when immigrant groups are faced with exclusion and discrimination on the basis of a shared status related to citizenship, language or nativity (Okamoto and Ebert 2010). Threats to group members should also facilitate *civic* collective action, as immigrant communities will want to display their good works in a public setting, distancing themselves from restrictive rhetoric and ideology that often accompanies anti-immigrant activity. Arguably, resolving conflict is an important part of civic engagement (Sampson et al. 2005). Therefore, we expect that threats will heighten group boundaries and help to foster a collective identity, while also motivating efforts to resolve conflict in noncontentious ways through town hall meetings, fundraisers and community festivals.

Civic Reception

Given that we are interested in civic activity, the elements and conditions of the civic environment should also play a role in encouraging civic collective action. Drawing and building upon the ideas of Sampson and colleagues (2005), we advance the concept of *civic reception*, which comprises elements in the local environment that foster collective efficacy. Collective efficacy—defined as mutual trust and willingness to intervene for the common good—is an important mechanism that has helped to explain positive neighborhood-level outcomes related

to health, well-being and sociability (Morenoff, Sampson and Raudenbush 2001; Sampson, Morenoff and Earls 1999). Here, we examine if conditions that foster collective efficacy extend beyond neighborhoods to larger local areas, and if conditions beyond the density of organizations encourage immigrants to develop shared interests and build trust.

An inclusive and participatory civic environment could generate collective efficacy among immigrants and facilitate civic action. Some communities may be more inclined to participate in civic life, providing a network of people with an established infrastructure for voluntary activities and offering a model of civic participation for immigrants to use as a strategy for achieving their goals (Jones-Correa 2011). In such a case, support in the broader community for civic action promotes an atmosphere where people help each other, and can also provide tools for newcomers to help themselves. Established communities might also participate in inclusionary efforts and directly help immigrants to improve their conditions (Bada et al. 2010). When local residents and organizations provide social support, information and training and access to community networks, this contributes to an open civic environment. Immigrants may also draw upon the collective minority identities associated with local immigrant organizations, and the interactions that occur within organizational spaces may generate additional opportunities for civic activity[2] (McAdam 2002; Sampson et al. 2005).

In general, immigrants may be more apt to engage in civic life when surrounded by a receiving context that supports immigrant integration and public expression. Accordingly, we argue that civic reception generated by local institutions and a local culture that encourage public works and helping others will foster collective efficacy among newcomers, and in some cases will serve as a model for collectively organizing around a minority identity, thus facilitating civic engagement.

Data

To test these theoretical ideas, we created an original data set of immigrant collective civic events occurring in 52 metropolitan areas in 2000 (see Table 1). We followed in the tradition of protest event research and drew upon newspapers as our main source of data (Koopmans et al. 2005; McAdam and Su 2002; Olzak 1992; Shanahan et al. 2008; Soule et al. 1999). Newspapers are one of the only sources that provide a historical record of a given time and place. They cover a range of activities and report on details about the location, participants and duration of events across multiple geographic areas (Earl et al. 2004; Koopmans and Rucht 2002).

While newspapers are a useful source of data, two primary limitations exist: selection bias (not all events are covered) and reporting bias (when events are covered, the facts reported may not be accurate). Given the evidence that national newspapers tend to report on large events characterized by conflict more often than smaller, peaceful events (Barranco and Wisler 1999; Hocke 1999; Oliver and Myers 1999; Snow, Soule and Cress 2005), we gathered data on events from 71 local newspapers in three online sources (Access World News,

Table 1. Characteristics of 52 Metropolitan Areas

Metropolitan Area	Solidarity Events	Community Improvement Events	Population, 2000	% Foreign-born, 2000	% Change Foreign-born, 1990-2000
Asheville, NC	2	0	225,965	3.67	197.38
Atlanta, GA	4	10	4,112,198	10.29	262.80
Augusta–Aiken, GA—SC	2	0	477,441	3.10	57.72
Austin–San Marcos, TX	21	17	1,249,763	12.23	172.16
Bloomington–Normal, IL	2	1	150,433	3.31	100.73
Charlotte, NC—SC	13	5	1,499,293	6.65	315.06
Chattanooga, TN—GA	1	0	465,161	2.40	117.14
Chicago, IL	27	21	8,272,768	17.24	61.11
Clarksville, TN—KY	1	1	207,033	3.72	60.31
Colorado Springs, CO	3	1	516,929	6.44	81.17
Columbia, SC	3	0	536,691	3.53	79.66
Columbus, GA—AL	1	0	274,624	4.01	37.97
Denver, CO	13	14	2,109,282	11.05	186.60
Detroit, MI	18	8	4,441,551	7.54	42.91
Fayetteville, NC	6	3	302,963	5.26	50.72
Fort Collins–Loveland, CO	6	4	251,494	4.26	86.70
Fresno, CA	22	9	922,516	20.97	46.28
Greensboro, NC	4	5	1,251,509	5.72	367.13
Greenville, NC	1	0	133,798	3.65	269.06
Houston, TX	23	17	4,177,646	20.46	94.10
Knoxville, TN	4	2	687,249	2.11	71.81
Las Vegas, NV—AZ	4	3	1,563,282	16.54	247.90
Lexington, KY	0	5	479,198	4.00	139.05
Lincoln, NE	7	2	250,291	5.42	154.02
Little Rock, AR	2	0	583,845	2.42	93.96
Los Angeles, CA	53	28	9,519,338	36.24	18.95
Louisville, KY—IN	5	1	1,025,598	2.72	133.36
Macon, GA	1	1	322,549	2.44	93.94
Madison, WI	10	8	426,526	6.28	91.40

Continued

Table 1. *continued*

Metropolitan Area	Solidarity Events	Community Improvement Events	Population, 2000	% Foreign-born, 2000	% Change Foreign-born, 1990-2000
Memphis, TN—AR—MS	3	1	1,135,614	3.32	170.91
Miami, FL	50	21	2,253,362	50.94	31.24
Minneapolis–St. Paul,	24	11	2,968,806	7.09	138.78
Modesto, CA	19	13	446,997	18.26	54.45
Nashville, TN	2	2	1,231,311	4.68	219.86
New York, NY	44	28	9,314,235	33.71	36.51
Oklahoma City, OK	12	5	1,083,346	5.71	103.74
Omaha, NE—IA	13	7	716,998	4.78	130.59
Orlando, FL	32	21	1,644,561	11.99	140.28
Phoenix—Mesa, AZ	7	7	3,251,876	14.07	182.69
Portland—Vancouver, OR	18	14	1,918,009	10.85	136.26
Raleigh–Durham, NC	8	19	1,187,941	9.16	270.43
Reno, NV	10	9	339,486	14.14	105.43
Sacramento, CA	22	14	1,628,197	13.88	88.07
Salt Lake City— Ogden, UT	15	10	1,333,914	8.58	174.11
Savannah, GA	2	0	293,000	3.52	119.82
St. Louis, MO—IL	13	5	2,603,607	3.11	65.41
Tampa–St. Petersburg, FL	29	6	2,395,997	9.76	60.21
Tucson, AZ	15	7	843,746	11.86	66.90
Tulsa, OK	11	9	803,235	4.12	131.46
West Palm Beach, FL	8	5	1,131,184	17.40	86.94
Wichita, KS	6	3	545,220	5.88	115.49
Wilmington, NC	2	2	233,450	3.13	212.37

LexisNexis and ProQuest). By using newspapers that serve a particular city or region, we were able to capture a larger number of smaller, noncontentious events and gain a better picture of each area than if we had used one newspaper such as the *New York Times* to cover events across multiple locales.

To minimize the possibility of reporting bias, we searched more than one newspaper per metropolitan area when available to increase our chances of gathering accurate data about specific events. However, increasing the quantity of data sources sacrifices some reliability because of selection bias in reporting

across different newspapers. To address this possibility, we controlled for the number of newspapers searched and available articles per capita in the online source(s) in each metropolitan area. The inclusion of both variables did not affect our results nor were they significant in the models, providing us with confidence that the count of events for larger metropolitan areas does not reflect our use of larger and/or additional newspapers.[3]

To find candidate events, we used the generic descriptor strategy and searched for articles within online sources with relevant keywords (Oliver and Maney 1999). Events that met the selection criteria were public and collective, where immigrants worked together to solve problems, developed organizing skills and participated in the democratic process of civic action. In short, these civic events were characterized by a purposeful community orientation, where immigrants were the main organizers and participants. We recognize that challenges to the status quo—the defining characteristic of a protest event—can be incorporated into typical civic forms such as parades, film festivals and community meetings (Oliver and Myers 1999), and we included events in our sample if their primary purpose was civic.

In addition, our sample includes events such as voter registration drives that serve to encourage immigrant populations to voice their concerns in the political arena. These events relate to the formal political process, but they are not indicators of formal political participation nor are they protest events characterized by claims making and challenges to the status quo. Rather, we conceptualize these events as civic because immigrants are working to improve their communities by encouraging their friends, family and neighbors to participate in the political process.

The events in our sample represent the collective efforts of immigrant *and* ethnic groups. Instead of limiting our sample to events where the foreign-born population was reported as being involved, we also included the collective efforts of Asians and Latinos since they are members of new immigrant groups that arrived in large numbers to the United States post-1965 (Bean and Stevens 2003). In addition, the vast majority of events involving ethnic-specific groups such as Mexican or Chinese were directed at helping or celebrating *immigrant* communities. Therefore, we consider collective action events organized by these groups as "immigrant events." We provide additional details about data collection and coding in Okamoto and Ebert (2010).[4]

Description of Events

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics of 1,009 immigrant civic events. These events represent collective efforts by immigrant groups to improve and/or celebrate their communities by participating in fundraisers to improve local schools or workshops to share knowledge and information, as well as cultural celebrations that build community within and across local immigrant and ethnic populations. Two main categories emerged from the data in terms of the purpose of the events: *solidarity* and *community improvement*. The main purpose of 624 events was to celebrate or promote solidarity among an immigrant group, and

Table 2. Characteristics of Immigrant Civic Events

Event Characteristic	Solidarity		Community Improvement	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Form[a]				
Arts exhibit, film festival, performance	89	14.3%	8	2.1%
Campaign, drive, fair	6	1.0%	74	19.2%
Ceremony	119	19.1%	35	9.1%
Fundraiser	45	7.2%	59	15.3%
Commemoration, vigil	43	6.9%	18	4.7%
Ethnic festival	446	71.5%	12	3.1%
Formation of organization, program	5	.8%	74	19.2%
Meeting, conference, lecture, workshop	24	3.8%	159	41.3%
Parade	7	1.1%	2	.5%
Press conference	0	.0%	11	2.9%
Volunteer effort	3	.5%	8	2.1%
Other	4	.6%	4	1.0%
Ethnicity of Participants				
African or Caribbean	16	2.6%	16	4.2%
Asian American	163	26.1%	63	16.4%
Latino	382	61.2%	274	71.2%
Middle Eastern	52	8.3%	18	4.7%
Other	11	1.8%	14	3.6%
Number of Participants				
Less than 10	2	.3%	6	1.6%
10 to 100	29	4.6%	46	11.9%
100 to 1,000	90	14.4%	53	13.8%
More than 1,000	114	18.3%	25	6.5%
Unable to code	389	62.3%	255	66.2%
Location of Event				
New Destinations (N = 47)	427	68.4%	270	70.1%
Gateways (N = 5)	197	31.6%	115	29.9%
Total	**624**	**100.0%**	**385**	**100.0%**

Note: [a]Percentages do not sum to 100 because some single events comprise multiple forms.

the main purpose of the remaining 385 events was to improve conditions for an immigrant group.

Most of the events in our sample were organized by pan-ethnic groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, though others were organized by ethnic-specific

groups such as Mexicans, Vietnamese and Nigerians. Latino groups were the most highly represented in our sample in terms of the total number and share of civic events, which is related to their larger share of the immigrant population across the 52 metropolitan areas. Asian American groups were involved in one fourth of the solidarity events and 16 percent of the community improvement events. Civic engagement among groups from Africa, Caribbean and the Middle East represented approximately 10 percent of the events. Only a few were organized by a pan-immigrant group—a group composed of two or more national-origin groups that crossed ethnoracial boundaries in solidarity or for community improvement.

A majority of *solidarity* events took the form of ethnic celebrations such as the Arab Heritage Festival in New York, an event sponsored by the Arab-American Council that promoted cultural traditions and community ties among Arab Americans in the region. Roughly 19 percent of the solidarity events took the form of ceremonies and commemorations, which celebrated a particular event or person and usually involved a ritual such as the opening of an establishment. An example includes a May 2000 gathering of 400 people in Charlotte to dedicate the first church built by the Montagnard community outside of Vietnam. Approximately 14 percent of solidarity events took the form of arts exhibits, performances and film festivals. Florida's Asian Cultural Association co-organized the South Asian Film Festival held in Maitland, which featured films set in India based on complex and controversial events in India's past and encouraged South Asian residents to reconnect with the history of their country of origin.

In sum, solidarity events were primarily directed at ethnic immigrant communities and represented public, coordinated efforts to celebrate cultural traditions and reinforce ethnic ties. These events were also an opportunity to interact with the larger local community by showcasing the traditions of a particular immigrant group and educating the larger public about a group's history and traditions. Many of these solidarity events depended upon the participation of the larger public for their success and, at times, symbolized the recognition and acceptance of newcomers in local communities (Shutika 2011).

Over 40 percent of the *community improvement* events took the form of meetings such as conferences, lectures and workshops where groups gathered to discuss a pressing issue, share information or solve a problem in a public venue. An example includes a debate in Raleigh where 200 people gathered to listen to labor and business representatives discuss a local boycott that sought to improve the working conditions of seasonal workers. Over 19 percent of the community improvement events involved the formation of an organization or a program. An example includes the opening of Centro Hispano, a Spanish-speaking interpreting service, in Clarksville, TN, which was formed to ensure that Latino newcomers had access to accurate information about employment, housing and public schools. Still another 19 percent of these events took the form of a campaign, drive or fair. A voter registration campaign organized by the Asian American Coalition to encourage Atlanta's Asian American population to voice their concerns in the political arena provides a useful example of how groups were actively engaged in improving their communities.

Overall, community improvement events represent collective efforts to provide services, aid and information to improve the state of local immigrant and ethnic communities. These events are associated with building social and cultural capital among participants, and represent active efforts to increase the availability of public goods and other resources, and for group members to become active participants in the organization of local communities.

Independent Variables

We matched the event data with independent variables measuring resources, political opportunity, civic reception and threat. We measured variables at the metropolitan level unless stated otherwise. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of variables and respective data sources.

Political Opportunities

To test whether political contexts shape noncontentious collective action among immigrants in the United States, we constructed a dichotomous variable capturing the *availability of non-English ballots* in at least one county in the metropolitan area, which is an indicator of the receptivity of local political elites to the political incorporation of immigrant populations (Ramakrishnan 2005). Even though the 1965 Voting Rights Act requires that jurisdictions with a significant population of language minority voters provide bilingual voting assistance, not all do so. We also include an indicator of *Democratic strength* with the percent votes cast for the 2000 Democratic presidential candidate. The logic here is that areas with greater Democratic strength will be more likely to provide political opportunities for minority groups such as immigrants (Jenkins, Jacobs and Agnone 2003; Soule et al. 1999).

Finally, we include an indicator of the *presence of elite allies* using the number of Asian American and Latino elected officials per 1,000 foreign-born residents. The prospects for successful mobilization efforts are higher in contexts with elite allies (Klandermans 2001; Kriesi 2004), and therefore areas with a greater concentration of Asian and Latino political representation should experience greater odds of a civic event.

Resources

To capture the level of resources available within the immigrant group, we included the *percent foreign-born who were U.S. citizens*. Participation in civic action often requires contact and interaction with mainstream institutions, and immigrants who lack formal citizenship may not be willing participants or leaders for fear of harassment, arrest or deportation. Immigrants who are citizens might serve as a form of human capital—a resource that could enable collective action (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). We also created a variable of the *percent foreign-born who were college educated*. Those with higher levels of education have access to broader networks and leadership skills that could facilitate collective action (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Data Sources

Variable	Mean	SD	Measure	Data Source
Solidarity event (=1)	.48	–	Dependent	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Community improvement event (=1)	.37	–	Dependent	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Percent foreign-born	9.68	9.31	Control	U.S. Census via Neighborhood Change Database
Percent change in foreign born, 1990-2000	126.43	76.96	Control	U.S. Census via Neighborhood Change Database
Population (logged)	13.74	1.05	Control	U.S. Census via Neighborhood Change Database
Per capita income in thousands	21.54	2.67	Control	U.S. Census
Number of solidarity events (t-1)	.98	1.53	Control	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Number of community improvement events (t-1)	.63	1.01	Control	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Percent citizens among foreign-born	37.25	7.80	Resource	U.S. Census via Neighborhood Change Database
Percent college-educated among foreign-born	35.17	9.55	Resource	U.S. Census via IPUMS
Asian/Spanish language radio station (=1)	.81	–	Resource	Radio-Locator. Retrieved September 25, 2009 (http://www.radio-locator.com/cgi-bin/page?page = about).
Percent votes cast for presidential Democratic candidate	46.32	8.04	Political opportunity	USA. Counties
Availability of bilingual ballots (=1)	.25	–	Political opportunity	U.S. General Accounting Office
Concentration of Latino and Asian American elected officials	.04	.07	Political opportunity	NALEO via U.S. Statistical Abstract; *National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac*
Concentration of immigrant organizations	.53	.27	Civic reception	GuideStar. Retrieved January – April 2007 (http://www.guidestar.com).

Variable		SD		Source
Volunteer rate, city-level	28.33	6.30	Civic reception	CPS Volunteer Supplement. Retrieved January 10, 2010 (http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/cities.cfm)
Number of civic extension events (t-1)	.52	.90	Civic reception	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Number of anti-immigrant events (t-1)	.10	.36	Political threats	Newspapers via Access World News, LexisNexis, and ProQuest
Restrictive legislation, state-level (t-1)	-.13	.68	Political threats	State.net via Lexis/Nexis

Note: SD = standard deviation. All variables are measured at the metropolitan level, unless stated otherwise; N = 572 metro-months.

We also include a measure of *media resources* in the local community. The media might operate as a resource for the immigrant population by providing access to information about civic events and thereby facilitating participation (Ramírez 2011; Wong et al. 2011). We constructed a dichotomous variable of the presence of an Asian- (e.g., Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi) or Spanish-language radio station. Taken together, our three measures capture context-bound resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004) available to the immigrant group within a metropolitan area.

Civic Reception

We constructed three variables of civic reception. The *volunteer rate* measures the percent of residents participating in volunteer activities during the last 12 months in the primary city located in the metropolitan area, and captures whether local contexts represent participatory civic environments, which can help to generate collective efficacy among immigrants. We also constructed a measure of the *concentration of immigrant organizations*. We calculated the number of immigrant organizations per 1,000 foreign-born residents. Included in this variable are organizations such as the Immigrant Workers Citizenship Project (Las Vegas) and Rocky Mountain Immigrant Network (Denver) because they provide support and services for immigrants. The concentration of immigrant organizations captures more than the aggregation of social ties and memberships in organizations, but represents the social processes that occur within these settings to create a sense of mutual trust and willingness to participate in collective action for the larger social good (Sampson et al. 2005).

Finally, we created a count of public community efforts initiated by established residents and organizations that demonstrate an inclusionary orientation toward immigrants, such as a forum to learn about the needs of new immigrants or the creation of a new program to serve the immigrant population. These *civic*

extension events represented attempts to include immigrants in the larger community and/or to improve the lives of immigrants, which could operate to increase collective efficacy among the immigrant population, and lead to collective civic action (Jones-Correa 2011).

Threat to Immigrants

To measure threat to immigrants, which could heighten group boundaries and encourage collective action, we created a count of monthly *anti-immigrant activity*. Examples include an English-Only campaign in Salt Lake City and an anti-immigration rally in Durham in 2000. The criteria for these events were that they were public and participants clearly stated an anti-immigrant claim.

We also included a variable capturing threats emanating from the institutional political system. *Restrictive legislation* was calculated by subtracting the number of proimmigrant bills from the number of restrictive bills introduced in state legislatures in each month in the year 2000.[5] We matched these state-level data with the primary state of the metropolitan area. These data were coded using a guide provided by the Migration Policy Institute (Laglagaron et al. 2008). An example of a restrictive bill is California Assembly Bill 60, which proposed to restrict issuing driver's licenses or identification cards to persons with legal status. An example of a supportive bill includes Florida Senate Bill 1350, which proposed to provide state-funded medical assistance and food stamps to immigrants ineligible for comparable federal assistance.

Controls

We also include control variables for size of metropolitan area, per capita income, size of the foreign-born population and percent change in foreign-born population from 1990 to 2000. In each of our models, we include the dependent variables in the previous month to control for autocorrelation (Barron 1992).

Estimation Technique

Our dependent variables capture the presence of immigrant civic collective action across 52 metropolitan areas. Because we identified two types of civic events—*solidarity events* that celebrate the immigrant community and *community improvement events* that focus on efforts to improve the immigrant community—we created two dichotomous dependent variables. We use logistic regression to estimate the coverage of these events in each month in the metropolitan areas under study for a total of 572 observations (11 months * 52 metropolitan areas). We use metropolitan area-month as our unit of analysis because this data structure allows us to test whether civic extension, anti-immigrant activity and restrictive legislation in the prior month had any effect on the occurrence of civic events.

The individual and mean variance inflation factors for the models predicting solidarity and civic improvement events were below 4.0 and 2.4, respectively, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a problem. To adjust for intragroup

correlation due to repeated observations in metropolitan areas, we used the cluster command in Stata, which produced robust standard errors (Wooldridge 2002).

Results

Table 4 shows the results from the models estimating the odds of an immigrant civic event in each month in 2000 across 52 metropolitan areas in the United States. Here, we separately estimate solidarity and community improvement events, which represent the two different types of civic events in our sample.

Solidarity Events

The results in Model 1 indicate that solidarity events are more likely to occur in metropolitan areas with larger foreign-born and total populations, and where solidarity events occurred in the previous month. As expected, these basic structural factors are important preconditions for collective action. However, increasing immigrant growth rates, political opportunities and resources did not affect the likelihood of events where the immigrant community promotes solidarity. The inclusion of the variables capturing threat to our baseline model, on top of the basic structural factors, resources and political opportunities (Model 2), improves the fit of the model. We also find that local and institutional threats have differing effects. The positive, significant coefficient for anti-immigrant activity is relatively large in magnitude, such that each additional anti-immigrant event is associated with a 118 percent ([e $^{.799}$–1]*100 = 117.93) increase in the odds of a solidarity event. In contrast, restrictive legislation deters public displays of immigrant communities in the form of celebrations, festivals and commemorations. Each additional piece of restrictive legislation (relative to supportive legislation) introduced is associated with a 30 percent decrease in the odds of a solidarity event.

The addition of civic reception measures in Model 3 improves the fit of the model. We find that the effects of political threats remain significant, and the availability of bilingual ballots and media resources to the immigrant community both increase the odds of collective action where the immigrant community celebrates, creates or promotes solidarity. For example, metropolitan areas with a Spanish- and/or Asian-language radio station are associated with a 93 percent increase in the odds of a solidarity event. In terms of the civic reception measures, a one percent increase in residents' participation in volunteer activities leads to a 10 percent increase in the odds of a solidarity event, suggesting that metropolitan areas with established infrastructures for voluntary activities encourage civic action among all of its citizens. Finally, we find no significant effects for the concentration of immigrant organizations or civic extension. In sum, political opportunities, civic reception and resources have some effect, but threats seem to be important predictors of solidarity events.

Community Improvement Events

Turning to our analysis of community improvement events in Model 4, we find that events are more likely to occur in metropolitan areas with larger

Table 4. Logit Models Estimating Monthly Immigrant Solidarity and Community Improvement Events in 52 Metropolitan Areas, 2000

	Solidarity Events			Community Improvement Events		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Controls						
Percent foreign-born	1.102**	1.096**	1.177**	1.060***	1.057***	1.072***
	(.032)	(.032)	(.050)	(.013)	(.013)	(.016)
Percent change in foreign-born	.996	.996	1.000	.994*	.994**	.996+
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Number of events (t-1)[a]	1.304**	1.275**	1.161	1.269+	1.250+	1.216
	(.089)	(.094)	(.097)	(.126)	(.123)	(.125)
Population (logged)	1.397+	1.343+	1.274	1.411**	1.473**	1.286+
	(.174)	(.164)	(.158)	(.130)	(.141)	(.135)
Per capita income, in thousands	1.038	1.037	.952	1.164**	1.164**	1.148**
	(.048)	(.047)	(.055)	(.052)	(.057)	(.047)
Political Opportunity						
Percent Democrat	.978	.983	.996	.960*	.957*	.963*
	(.017)	(.016)	(.018)	(.017)	(.019)	(.017)
Availability of bilingual ballots (=1)	1.400	1.419	2.035+	1.502	1.517	2.114*
	(.392)	(.377)	(.405)	(.369)	(.377)	(.377)
Concentration of Asian/Latino elected officials	.318	.383	.115	.117	.089	.094
	(2.699)	(2.597)	(2.535)	(2.114)	(2.227)	(1.975)
Resources						
Percent citizens among foreign-born	.985	.984	1.030	.916**	.909***	.936*
	(.027)	(.026)	(.028)	(.027)	(.027)	(.029)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Percent college educated among foreign-born	1.010	1.008	1.011	.997	.998	.995
	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)	(.017)	(.017)	(.016)
Asian/Spanish language radio station (=1)	1.497	1.481	1.931*	1.713	1.689	2.126*
	(.357)	(.348)	(.320)	(.362)	(.366)	(.339)
Political Threats						
Anti-immigrant events (t-1)		2.180**	2.127**		.742	.693
		(.250)	(.248)		(.418)	(.412)
Restrictive legislation, state-level (t-1)		.696*	.683*		.640*	.634*
		(.168)	(.178)		(.226)	(.232)
Civic Reception						
Concentration of immigrant organizations			1.555			.636
			(.435)			(.483)
Volunteer rate, city-level			1.097***			1.069**
			(.022)			(.025)
Civic extension (t-1)			.046			.257 +
			1.047			1.293 +
McFadden's R^2	.200	.212	.233	.200	.211	.228
Log pseudo-likelihood	-316.645	-312.165	-303.755	-300.333	-296.126	-289.853
Model 1 vs. Model 2 (2df)		8.960*				
Model 2 vs. Model 3 (3df)			16.821***			
Model 4 vs. Model 5 (2df)					8.414*	
Model 5 vs. Model 6 (3df)						12.545**

+ $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests)

Note: All variables are measured at the metropolitan level, unless stated otherwise. N = 572, exponentiated coefficients, robust standard errors in parentheses.

a In each model, we include a count variable measuring the number of solidarity or community improvement events in the metropolitan area in the previous month to control for autocorrelation.

foreign-born and total populations and where similar events took place in the previous month. In contrast to models predicting solidarity events, an increasing immigrant growth rate dampens while per capita income heightens collective civic activity, which is aimed at improving the state of immigrant communities, all else equal. Such community improvement events are also less likely to occur in areas with more Democratic voters and higher percentages of the foreign-born who are U.S. citizens, suggesting that political opportunities and resources discourage such immigrant civic engagement. None of the remaining political opportunity and resource variables were significant.

With the addition of the threat variables in Model 5 (which improves the fit of the model), we find no significant effect of anti-immigrant events, but restrictive legislation deters collective efforts to provide services, aid and information to improve conditions in local immigrant communities. As the number of restrictive bills increase (relative to proimmigrant bills), the odds of a community improvement event decrease by 36 percent.

The inclusion of variables capturing civic reception in Model 6 improves the fit of the model. Here, we see that the significant effects of percent citizens among the foreign-born, percent Democrat and restrictive legislation remain negative. We also find that the inclusion of immigrants in the formal political process through bilingual ballots and access to media resources for the immigrant community increase the odds of a civic improvement event. Specifically, metropolitan areas with a Spanish- and/or Asian-language radio station are associated with a 112 percent increase in the odds of a civic improvement event. Two measures capturing civic reception—volunteer rate and civic extension efforts—are significant predictors of a community improvement event, although the effects of civic extension are marginal. Specifically, a one percent increase in the volunteer rate raises the odds of a community improvement event by seven percent. Furthermore, each additional civic extension effort is associated with a 29 percent increase in the odds of an immigrant community improvement event. In sum, while some measures of political opportunity, threat and resources have a dampening effect on immigrants' collective efforts to improve their communities through fundraisers, meetings and conferences, civic reception facilitates such events.

Comparing Solidarity and Community Improvement Events

Comparing the results in terms of the magnitude of the coefficients, the variable percent foreign-born appears to have the strongest effect on the odds of both types of civic events. In Models 1 and 4, for instance, a standard deviation increase in percent foreign-born is associated with a 147 percent increase in the odds of a solidarity event and a 72 percent increase in the odds of a civic improvement event. Clearly, basic structural factors such as percent foreign-born are important preconditions for collective action as indicated in these baseline models. Even with the addition of our variables of interest in subsequent models, percent foreign-born continues to have the strongest effect on the outcomes. Further comparison of the results reveal that supportive contexts with

higher shares of foreign-born individuals, an active Asian- or Spanish-language radio station, and higher volunteer rates *increase*, while restrictive legislation *decreases,* the odds of both types of immigrant civic engagement; however, the similarities end there.

Interestingly, we find that metropolitan areas with higher shares of Democratic voters and higher citizenship rates among the foreign-born population are less likely to experience community improvement events, but these factors have no effect on celebratory activity organized by immigrants. What instigates immigrant solidarity events are political threats that take the form of local acts targeting the immigrant community. In contrast, metropolitan areas with a greater number of civic extension efforts are more likely to experience immigrant community improvement events. These findings suggest that local threats against immigrants and outreach efforts to immigrant populations by local residents encourage different types of collective civic action.

Conclusion

This study moves beyond extant research that relies on formal political participation and membership in associations to capture immigrant civic participation. We examine collective forms of civic engagement that require coordinated efforts for the purposes of improving the community and displaying its good works. In doing so, this research conceptualizes immigrant adaptation as a group or collective process, and we use social movement and collective efficacy theories to understand this process. Here, we focus on collective civic action to understand immigrant incorporation in metropolitan areas, and find that civic reception and political threats—conditions cultivating collective efficacy and heightening group boundaries between immigrants and natives—are key in explaining immigrant civic engagement. Additionally, political opportunities and resources had some effect, but did not uniformly motivate immigrant civic engagement.

Our analysis revealed that political opportunity and resources did help us to understand immigrant civic collective action, but not always in the ways that the theoretical frameworks would have predicted. In fact, metropolitan areas with higher percentages of Democratic voters and higher citizenship rates among the foreign-born population were associated with decreased odds of immigrant community improvement events. Furthermore, the concentration of Asian and Latino elected officials did not motivate civic engagement among immigrants. We did find, however, that access to formal political participation and media resources increased the likelihood of civic improvement events. Taken together, these results suggest that there is a reduced need for community improvement events in areas with greater access to formal means of incorporation. And as suggested by other studies (Ramírez 2011), radio stations turned out to be valuable resources that help to create pathways to a vibrant civic life in local communities.

In regards to demographic shifts, immigrant civic action was more likely to occur in metropolitan areas with greater shares of the foreign-born–places with

a larger pool of individuals to be drawn upon for participation in collective civic engagement. We also found some support for the idea that areas with rapidly increasing foreign-born populations *reduced* immigrant civic engagement. This is consistent with research in the civic and political incorporation literatures, which has found that new immigrants are less likely to participate because of their lack of English-language fluency, as well as lack of information about programs and organizations in the local area (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes 2006; Wong 2006).

Furthermore, our results show that local threats targeting the immigrant population heightened group boundaries between immigrants and natives, fostering civic action that brings the immigrant community closer together to promote solidarity and insulate itself from future hostilities. Anti-immigrant activity such as a rally to eliminate bilingual education or block immigrants' access to health care seemed to galvanize the newcomer community rather than generate a climate of fear which could dampen collective efficacy. This result is likely due to the fact that anti-immigrant activity represents the efforts of only one segment of the local community whose actions may be counteracted by local officials, nonprofit organizations and private citizens who support immigrant rights. These dynamics played out in Omaha, NE and other local areas in the early 2000s when anti-immigrant activity was met by faith-based, labor and advocacy organizations that supported the needs of newcomers and worked to create a safe space for immigrants to engage in civil society (Bada et al. 2010; Gouveia and Benjamin-Alvarado 2010).

While local threats operated as a motivation for immigrant groups to organize and engage in civic activity, institutional threats at the state level decreased collective efficacy and both forms of civic collective action—solidarity and community improvement events organized by immigrants. The differing effects of local and state threats on solidarity events likely reflect the fact that anti-immigrant legislation signals the state's lack of trust in the immigrant community. When lawmakers introduce new bills that restrict the rights of immigrants, such actions originate from a larger political authority.

In turn, newcomers may be less likely to trust the government and other local authorities such as the police, hindering their ability to work with others to solve problems and improve local communities. Past research has documented how the passage of restrictive legislation such as Arizona S.B. 1070 serves as an "expression of nativism" that creates an unwelcoming environment for the state's immigrant population and prospective in-migrants, and can discourage immigrants from engaging in public life in new destinations and traditional gateways across the United States (Calavita 1996:297; see also Bada et al. 2010; Garcia and Keyes 2012). The finding that local and state threats differentially affect solidarity events also reflects past research that revealed that threats can suppress political participation (Andrews 1997).

In contrast to solidarity events, civic extension efforts initiated by established individuals and organizations prompted community improvement events organized by and for immigrant groups. Metropolitan areas with higher volunteer rates and a greater number of civic extension efforts were more likely to witness immigrant civic participation. Immigrant organizations, however, did

not influence civic activity. This is surprising especially because past researchers have found that organizations play an important role in collective action and civic engagement (Sampson et al. 2005; Wong 2006). It could be that our measure of organizations—the number of immigrant organizations per 1,000 foreign-born residents—is unable to capture the strength, influence or legitimacy of local institutions serving the immigrant community, which may be more important in generating immigrant civic action (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008). In general, these results warrant further study of civic extension efforts that are too often overlooked and may provide additional insights into the mechanisms through which organizations facilitate immigrant incorporation.

In sum, local hostilities toward immigrant groups heightened group boundaries and instigated solidarity events, whereas local inclusive efforts that targeted immigrant groups promoted collective efficacy and encouraged community improvement projects. In other words, metropolitan areas with a greater number of civic extension efforts, which in many ways represent the opposite of anti-immigrant events, were more likely to experience immigrant community improvement events. It appears then that the celebratory solidarity events in our sample are reactive (i.e., responding to local threats) and community improvement events are proactive and more likely to occur in supportive local environments with ample civic reception that fosters mutual trust and collective efficacy.

While our results provide an improved understanding of the conditions that encourage immigrants to engage in collective civic activity, one of the main limitations of the analysis is that it relies on one year of data. That said, longitudinal data would help us identify trends in immigrant collective action and further investigate how the changing demographics, economic conditions, political opportunities, civic reception and nonprofit infrastructure in different metropolitan areas influence collective civic action among immigrants. While this research treats immigrants as a broad group, without addressing potential distinctions within the immigrant community, future research should take note of the ways in which different immigration experiences and cultural models brought from the homeland may shape civic collective action. It would also be worthwhile to explore the processes occurring within local areas which consolidate or minimize differences between newcomer and established groups, and how intergroup interactions shape the emergence of civic and political action.

Notes

1. Threats can be conceptualized as demographic, economic and political (see Van Dyke and McCammon 2010; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Because past research has shown that demographic and economic threats are more useful for understanding collective efforts among majority groups (see Almeida 2003; McVeigh 1999; Myers 1997; Okamoto 2010; Okamoto and Ebert 2010), we chose to examine how political threats affect immigrant civic activity.
2. Sampson et al. (2005) argue that collective civic action should be understood in terms of mobilizing structures such as local organizations that can be appropriated for emergent collective activity rather than local ties and individual memberships in

voluntary associations, which some scholars have argued will generate social capital and civic engagement (see Edwards and Foley 1998; Putnam 2000). We agree with Sampson et al. (2005:670) that collective action is a product of institutions and organizations, and the processes that occur within and between organizations cannot be equated with the aggregation of individual ties and memberships in these organizations.

3. Analyses available upon request.
4. Data collection manual available upon request.
5. Because only one municipality introduced an anti-immigrant ordinance in 2000 (see O'Neil 2010), we opted to use a state-level measure of restrictive legislation.

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