



# The (Re)socialization of participatory political culture: Immigrants' political participation between their contemporary country and their ancestral country

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## ABSTRACT

We study the reproduction and change of participatory political culture by examining how immigrants' political engagement develops in the cross-pressure between their country of residence and their ancestral country. To explain patterns of political (re)socialization, we suggest a mechanism of proximity-conditioned social diffusion, which stipulates that immigrants' retention and adoption of a given participatory culture is a function of spatial and temporal proximity to native bearers of this culture, from which diffusion occurs. Analyzing the political participation of thousands of first and second generation immigrants in the European Social Survey (2002–2018), we find that immigrants come to adopt the participatory culture of their new country and lose that of their ancestral country through a symmetrical temporal process: having stayed longer in the destination country—either being a second generation immigrant or a first generation immigrant, who lived there longer—they adopt this participatory culture more strongly, while at the same time loosening their connection to the culture of the ancestral country. Spatial proximity to natives also conditions immigrants' adoption of the prevailing culture of the destination country as immigrants' participatory inclinations resemble that of natives in their residential regions *within* the destination country.

## 1. Introduction

When and how do immigrants and descendants of immigrants<sup>1</sup> become integrated into the political mainstream of their new country? Is there a prompt adaptation to the political habitus of this country? Or do the political practices of the ancestral country linger for decades—even generations—in the new country? And how do we explain the patterns of political (re)socialization we observe among immigrants?

Beyond the obvious importance of understanding political integration of an important minority group, addressing these questions can also provide insights into more general processes of reproduction and change of political culture, which is our main focus in this paper. By studying how immigrants' inclination to participate in politics develops in the cross-pressure between their contemporary country and their ancestral country, respectively, we can examine the dynamics of socialization of one core manifestation of political culture—political engagement

(Almond & Verba, 1989 [1963]; Verba et al., 1995)—and thereby speak to long-standing questions within political socialization research (Sears, 1990; Sears & Levy, 2003). First, by examining whether immigrants' political ways continue to reflect the practices of their ancestral country or, conversely, align with that of their new country, we can provide evidence on the fundamental question of whether political participatory cultures are sticky or, alternatively, continuously updated. Secondly, moving beyond the first-order question of retention of the ancestral participatory culture versus adopting the one of the contemporary country, we can ask *how*—by which processes—such practices come to be preserved or updated.

We make two distinct contributions. First, we provide the hitherto most extensive—temporally and spatially—mapping of immigrants' retention of the participatory political culture of their ancestral country and adoption of the political culture of their contemporary country. Second, making sense of the observed patterns of political (re)

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<sup>1</sup> For ease of presentation, we use the term “immigrant” to refer to both immigrants (first generation immigrants) and descendants of immigrants (second generation immigrants) in the manuscript.

socialization of immigrants, we uncover the processes by which adaptation and persistence in participatory political culture come about (Neundorff & Kaat Smeets, 2018). More specifically, we suggest that one intuitive, yet largely unarticulated mechanism underlying the observed patterns of political (re)socialization is what we term *proximity-conditioned social diffusion*. This mechanism stipulates that immigrants' retention and adoption of a given (participatory) political culture is a function of spatial and temporal proximity to bearers of this culture (i.e., native residents of the ancestral/contemporary country), from which diffusion takes place. By proposing this *bottom-up* perspective, we provide an important addition to the literature on immigrant political participation, which has overwhelmingly focused on *top-down* processes, especially the role of naturalization and integration policies.

To study the (re)socialization of immigrants' participatory political culture, we rely on the nine existing rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS), which holds tens of thousands first and second generation immigrants, residing in 36 European destination countries, and having ties with a large number of ancestral countries. Utilizing variation in participatory political culture—proxied by the average political participation of natives—in ancestral and contemporary countries, this provides an ideal testbed for studying to which extent immigrants' inclination to participate in politics aligns with the participatory political culture of their ancestral country and their current country of residence, and how this varies by spatial and temporal proximity to native bearers of a given culture.

We find that immigrants come to adopt the participatory political culture of their new country and lose the culture of their ancestral country through a symmetrical temporal process: having stayed longer in the destination country—either being a second generation immigrant or a first generation immigrant, who lived there longer—they adopt this participatory culture more strongly, while at the same time loosening their connection to the culture of the ancestral country. Spatial proximity to natives also conditions immigrants' adoption of the prevailing culture of the destination country as immigrants' participation tracks that of native participation in local regions *within* the country of residence. More tentatively, our analyses also indicate that the participatory political culture of the ancestral country is preserved more strongly when immigrants have strong social ties to other people rooted in this country, while adoption of the culture of the contemporary country appears to primarily occur through weaker social ties. Taken together, our analyses show that while participatory political cultures are somewhat inert, they are to a considerable extent formed by contemporary socialization processes, of which the social diffusion of norms from individuals proximate in space and time—in line with our proposed mechanism—appear to be of great import.

## 2. The (re)socialization of political culture

The prevalent political culture of a given society—including the manifestation studied here: the inclination to participate in politics—is transmitted *in toto* through the cumulative and mutually overlapping influences of various socialization agents in society, including through parents and the educational system (Hyman, 1959; Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Sapiro, 2004). While this process of socialization is relatively straightforward for natives/members of the majority culture in a country, it is less obvious how it applies to immigrants and their descendants. The former grew up in a country with a different political culture than their present country, and the latter typically preserve ties with the ancestral country despite having grown up in a different country. This begs the questions of *whether*, and if so, *how* these immigrant groups are (re)socialized into the political culture of the contemporary country upon living—and thus meeting socialization agents transmitting the prevailing culture—in this context (Cho, 1999; White et al., 2008). And, conversely, whether the political culture of the ancestral country persists through socialization within the immediate family, extended networks, or contact with other agents from this culture.

In theoretical terms, the two diverging conjectures regarding immigrants' political socialization reflect two prominent perspectives on the development of political culture (broadly understood as political behavior and attitudes) within political socialization research (Neundorff & Kaat Smeets, 2018; Sears, 1990; Sears & Levy, 2003). The *persistence* perspective predicts a continued dominant influence of the political culture of the country of origin as a residue of early-life socialization into this culture. The *lifelong openness* perspective entails a continuous updating of political beliefs and inclinations throughout life, and hence predicts that exposure to the destination country context (and the experiences this entails) brings immigrants' political inclinations into synch with the political culture of this country.

While examining different research questions than ours, a number of studies have examined how immigrants' attitudes and behaviors are shaped by features of their ancestral as well as their contemporary country. Illustrative of this, Rice and Feldman's (1997) demonstrates that the "civicness" (i.e., the political culture) of European immigrants in the United States reflects the culture in the ancestral country on a wide range of indicators, including political participation. Similarly, Giavazzi et al. (2019) find marked persistence of political orientations and family values using data on several generations of European immigrants in the US. There are thus evidence that the political culture of the ancestral country persists in the new country for generations.

At the same time, several studies show that immigrants' level of political participation tracks that of the native population in European destination countries, which suggests that a socialization into the prevailing political culture in this context also takes place, thus supporting the *lifelong openness* perspective (de Rooij & Eline, 2012; Helbling et al., 2016; Just & Anderson, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Prokic-Breuer et al., 2012; for evidence on this process from the US see Cho, 1999). Aleksynska (2011), as the only study, examines the alignment of first generation immigrants with the level of participation of natives in *both* the ancestral and the contemporary country. She finds limited evidence for persistence of the ancestral culture, and a substantially stronger adaptation to the culture of the present country. Collectively, existing evidence from related studies thus suggests that the political habitus of immigrants and descendants is a concoction of the participatory culture of their ancestral country and their contemporary country.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper we study how political participation of immigrants and descendants of immigrants evolve in the cross-pressure between the participatory political cultures of the contemporary and the ancestral country. We make a number of distinct contributions compared to the previous studies focusing on political participation with partially overlapping aims. First, compared to the only previous study examining both persistence and adaptation of political participatory practices (Aleksynska, 2011), we include both more destination and ancestral countries (using two separate datasets), thereby resulting in higher external validity. Second, and more importantly, we also focus on second generation immigrants. This allows us to study the wider dynamic of political (re) socialization and to provide a stronger test of the persistence and *lifelong openness* perspective by studying those born and raised in the contemporary country. Third, and more importantly still, we provide a novel theoretical account to explain the observed patterns of (re)socialization of participatory culture of immigrants emphasizing social diffusion, which we then substantiate empirically in our data. We unfold this account in the following.

## 3. How is participatory culture (re)socialized? Proximity-conditioned social diffusion

The patterns of political (re)socialization of immigrants beg the second-order question of precisely how immigrants come to be

<sup>2</sup> The literature on generalized social trust finds a similar pattern (Dinesen and Hooghe (2010)).

socialized into the participatory culture of their new country, and, concomitantly, how they uphold (or loosen their connection with) the culture of their ancestral country? To this end, we suggest a general mechanism emphasizing social diffusion from native peers (in the country of residence and that of ancestral heritage)—what we label *proximity-conditioned social diffusion*—underlying this process.

When considering societal agents of political (re)socialization of immigrants, it is helpful to distinguish between *top-down* and *bottom-up* influences. The former focuses on the socializing effects of national institutions or nationally enacted policies, while the latter perspective emphasizes the diffusion of norms from interactions with other people in various social settings. Previous research on immigrants' political engagement has overwhelmingly focused on top-down influences, more specifically integration/naturalization policies (Finseraas et al., 2022; Helbling et al., 2016; Just & Anderson, 2012). The general finding from this line of research is that policies easing (political) integration—e.g., extending voting rights (Finseraas et al., 2022; Just & Anderson, 2012) or enacting more immigrant-friendly integration policies more generally (Helbling et al., 2016)—reduce gaps in natives and immigrants' political engagement (i.e., resocialize immigrants into their new country).<sup>3</sup>

While the top-down focus in the existing literature is indeed reasonable given its direct link to public policies vis-à-vis integration of immigrants, we argue that this should be complemented by a bottom-up perspective. By this we mean to suggest that a given participatory political culture may be learned from “below”—by diffusion of norms through social interactions—rather than exclusively through formal policies or institutions instigated from “above”. One implication of the bottom-up perspective is that proximity—in space and time—to bearers of a given participatory culture, should “rub off” on others. Such social diffusion of the prevailing participatory culture may occur through both strong social ties (e.g., in families or among friends) (Bond et al., 2012) as well as through weaker ones (i.e., more loosely connected others) (Cho & Rudolph, 2008). Further, the diffusion may occur through overt enforcement of social norms (Gerber et al., 2008), or in a subtler—even subconscious—manner through casual observation and eventual imitation of others during the “slow drip of everyday life” (Baybeck & McClurg, 2005, 498; Cho & Rudolph, 2008).

In our case, a bottom-up perspective implies that more exposure to native peers—especially if occurring for longer periods of time—should result in immigrants adopting the prevailing participatory culture of the destination country to a larger extent because such norms diffuse from contact with natives. Similarly, extended exposure to representatives of the ancestral country is expected to lead to a stronger preservation of the participatory culture of this country. As an additional distinguishing feature, the bottom-up perspective also entails that immigrants' political habitus should be more strongly aligned with the subset of natives that they are more likely to be exposed to (Bilodeau et al., 2010)—*in casu*, those living closer to them (i.e., natives in the same region *within* a given destination country).

Existing studies indirectly indicate that bottom-up processes may shape immigrants' political ways. Maxwell (2013, 118) shows that immigrants “are closer to native-born individuals living in the same sub-national region than to migrants living elsewhere in Europe” in regard to political trust and government satisfaction. This could be interpreted as such outlooks diffusing from geographically more proximate natives to immigrants. Regarding persistence of the participatory political culture of the ancestral country, Luttmer and Singhal (2011) find that immigrants living among a higher concentration of immigrants with a similar background in the destination country, more strongly align with

<sup>3</sup> As a more informal aspect of the destination country context, Just and Anderson (2014) show that a more positive public opinion climate in terms of natives' opinions toward immigrants furthers the political participation of immigrants. Depending on interpretation, the opinion climate of natives could also be seen as a bottom-up influence.

attitudes toward redistribution in the country of origin. This indicates that exposure to people from the same ancestral country has a preserving function vis-à-vis the participatory culture of this country. Lastly, several studies find that immigrants display higher levels of political participation with longer cumulative exposure to their adopted country (i.e., being born or having stayed longer in this country) (Cho, 1999; de Rooij & Eline, 2012; Finseraas et al., 2022; Ramakrishnan & Espen-shade, 2001; White et al., 2008). This plausibly reflects an adaptation to the level of participation of natives in this context.

In summary, we propose that the predominant top-down perspective on immigrants' political (re)socialization should be supplemented with a bottom-up perspective, which emphasizes social diffusion of participatory political culture conditioned by proximity in time and space of socializing agents carrying this culture—by proximity-conditioned social diffusion.

#### 4. Hypotheses

From the theoretical perspectives presented above, we can derive several empirically observable implications regarding the (re)socialization of participatory political culture. More specifically, we propose two first-order hypotheses regarding immigrants' adoption of the participatory culture of the country they have migrated to, and, conversely, retention of the participatory culture of their ancestral country.<sup>4</sup> Further, we specify two supplementary hypotheses—further manifested in a number of implications—relating to the proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism proposed to explain the patterns of (re)socialization of participatory political culture. Table 1 presents these predictions.

#### 5. Research design, data, and measurement

##### 5.1. Analytical strategy

The key thrust of our strategy for examining the socialization of participatory political culture of immigrants is to examine the extent to which the political participation of individual first and second generation immigrants is correlated with the mean level of participation of natives in their contemporary country and natives in their ancestral country, respectively (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010). A stronger (partial) correlation between political participation of immigrants' and natives in the destination country is taken as an indication of stronger immigrant adoption of the participatory culture in this context as this implies a stronger tendency for immigrants to track natives' level of participation across destination countries. Conversely, a stronger correlation between immigrants' present-day participation and participation of natives in their ancestral countries implies that immigrants to a greater extent retain the participatory culture of their country of origin.

A second core feature of our strategy is to examine how immigrants' alignment with the participatory political culture in the destination and the ancestral country varies with their exposure to natives from these countries. More specifically, we expect a stronger correlation between immigrants' present-day participation and natives' average participation in the destination country for immigrants who have been more exposed to natives (i.e., second generation immigrants relative to first generation immigrants, and first generation immigrants having stayed for longer periods of time compared to those who arrived more recently), and vice versa for the correlation with ancestral country participation.

Note that our approach looks at the relative correspondence in participation between immigrants and natives across contemporary and

<sup>4</sup> While the two hypotheses yield contrasting predictions, it is possible—in fact, quite plausible—that they are both true (i.e., that we both see some adaptation and some persistence).

**Table 1**  
Overview of hypotheses.

Question	Hypothesis	Rationale
<p><i>First-order question:</i> How does immigrants' political participation develop in the intersection between their contemporary country and their ancestral country?</p>	<p>H<sub>1</sub>: Immigrants adopt the participatory political culture of their contemporary country</p>	<p>Tests "lifelong openness" perspective on political socialization</p>
	<p>H<sub>2</sub>: Immigrants retain the participatory political culture of their ancestral country.</p>	<p>Tests "persistence" perspective on political socialization</p>
<p><i>Second-order question:</i> Why do immigrants adopt the participatory culture of their contemporary country and/or retain the culture of their ancestral country?</p>	<p>H<sub>3</sub>: <i>Temporal proximity hypothesis</i> Immigrants' adoption of the participatory culture of their contemporary country, and retention of the culture of the ancestral country, varies by temporal proximity to this context.</p> <p><i>Implication 1:</i> Second generation immigrants adapt more strongly to the participatory culture of the contemporary country than first generation immigrants.</p> <p><i>Implication 2:</i> First generation immigrants more strongly retain the participatory culture of their ancestral country than second generation immigrants.</p> <p><i>Implication 3:</i> First generation immigrants having lived in the contemporary country for a longer period of time adapt more strongly to the participatory culture of this country than immigrants having lived there for a shorter period of time.</p> <p><i>Implication 4:</i> First generation immigrants who have lived in the contemporary country for a longer period of time retain the participatory culture of the ancestral country less strongly than immigrants, who have lived there for a shorter period of time.</p> <p><i>H<sub>4</sub>: Spatial proximity hypothesis</i> Immigrants' adoption of the participatory culture of their contemporary country and retention of the culture of the ancestral country varies by spatial proximity to this context.</p> <p><i>Implication 5:</i> Immigrants adapt more strongly to the participatory culture of natives that they live among in regions within the contemporary country.</p>	<p>Tests proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism <i>temporally</i> (across generations)</p> <p>Tests proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism <i>temporally</i> (across generations)</p> <p>Tests proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism <i>temporally</i> (with length of residence for first generation)</p> <p>Tests proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism <i>temporally</i> (with length of residence for first generation)</p> <p>Tests proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism <i>spatially</i> (within regions in the contemporary country)</p>

ancestral countries, *not* the correspondence in absolute levels of participation. Hence, immigrants may generally have lower (or higher) levels of participation than natives due to various (unobserved) individual-level differences. The key aspect for our purposes is the extent of a systematic component in immigrants' political participation—over and above various individual-level differences—that can be attributed to variation in natives'—in the contemporary or the ancestral country—average propensity to participate. It is arguably this systematic component that might be referred to as political culture (Fernandéz, 2011).

Lastly, it is relevant to note that our approach is related to, but different from, a line of work—often referred to as “the epidemiological” approach—that study immigrants to estimate causal effects of culture (and institutions) on different outcomes (see, e.g., Fernandez (2011), and Polavieja's (2015) innovative refinement (the “SISTER” method) of this approach). In contrast to this approach, we are, more modestly, interested in the *descriptive* question of immigrant adoption/retention of destination/ancestral-country culture, not the causal effect of the culture (of either of these contexts).<sup>5</sup> Some of our analyses are indicative of the mechanisms underlying the (re)socialization processes of participatory political culture, and while using stronger designs than many previous studies (see below), they do not provide for causal identification in a strict sense (and for that reason, we also refrain from using causal language).

### 5.2. Specifications and issues of unobserved heterogeneity

Because the aim of our analysis is to study the (re)socialization of participatory political culture *in toto* among immigrants, we do not control for any other aspects of neither the contemporary nor the ancestral country context as this would obfuscate this endeavor. We do, however, include sociodemographic (gender, age, and age squared) and socioeconomic (education, income and unemployment) covariates (control variables) at the individual level in order to take into account systematic differences in these variables between immigrants coming from and residing in different countries.<sup>6</sup> To the extent that these factors are also correlated with natives' mean participation in the contemporary and the ancestral country as well as immigrants' political participation, they would confound the estimated relationship. We also include citizenship as a covariate as we wish to rule out differences in citizenship practices—one of the key explanations in the top-down approach to immigrants' political engagement (Finseraas et al., 2022; Just & Anderson, 2012)—as a confounding explanation for observed differences in participation between immigrants coming from and residing in different countries. We do not include attitudinal measures such as political interest or political efficacy as these may themselves constitute other aspects of political culture more generally (Almond & Verba, 1989 [1963]), which in turn would introduce post-treatment bias in the models.

As a further means for addressing concerns stemming from unobserved heterogeneity among immigrants, we employ—along with the standard survey-round fixed effects—ancestral country and/or destination country fixed effects in some of our specifications. Ancestral country fixed effects imply that we obtain the association between native participation in the contemporary country and immigrants' present-day participation for immigrants stemming from the *same ancestral country*. Conversely, employing destination country fixed

<sup>5</sup> Another difference is that the epidemiological approach generally focuses on ancestral-country culture, whereas we are explicitly interested in also understanding resocialization into the destination-country culture.

<sup>6</sup> A related, but more subtle challenge is that immigrants may not be representative of the country in which they originate (Fernandéz, 2011), although this is likely to be reduced, if not eliminated, by individual-level control variables.

effects, we obtain the association between native participation in the ancestral country and immigrants' participation for immigrants residing in the *same destination country*. Using fixed effects at the ancestral or destination country level is a marked strength of our study compared to most previous studies of related questions, which have typically not applied a similarly rigorous control strategy. Including destination country fixed effects is particularly powerful in our test of immigrant adaptation to the political culture of natives in the *subnational region* in which they reside (*within* a given country) as this removes all national-level influences—e.g., national integration policies or institutions—that could otherwise confound this relationship.

### 5.3. Data

Our primary data source is the nine existing rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) collected from 2002 to 2018. The ESS is based on random samples in the participating countries and presently covers 36 European countries (plus Israel) surveyed in one or more rounds. It is thoroughly validated and widely considered among the best surveys for studying attitudes cross-nationally (Norris, 2004). Essential for our purposes, the survey, unlike a number of other cross-national surveys, asks not only about whether the respondent is born in their country of residence or not, but also which country he or she comes from, and, from the second round onwards, in which country the parents of second generation immigrants were born. Consequently, we can link each first and second generation immigrant to an ancestral country, which, together with data on the destination country, allow us to study the dynamics of (re)socialization of participatory political culture.

While the ESS is not designed specifically for studying immigrants, the random sampling employed in principle ensures that sub-populations should be adequately represented in the survey. Yet, there is arguably an issue of potential non-response among immigrants, which renders the survey non-representative of this population. Specifically, the fact that the survey is most often conducted exclusively in the language of the destination country makes it likely that more recent immigrants, and those less integrated in the destination country more generally, are underrepresented in the survey. However, despite the problem of representativeness of immigrants in general, the ESS constitutes the best survey available for studying political participation of immigrants on a broader scale cross-nationally in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

In the analyses, our data set consists of first and second generation immigrants in the 36 European countries in the survey (see Table A1 in Appendix A). To avoid conflating migration with redrawn borders, we exclude individuals, who have migrated (themselves or their parents) from a previously existing country (e.g., Czechoslovakia) that their present-day country (e.g., Czech Republic) used to be part of. Relatedly, we construct ancestral country participation means for former union states based on data from the available presently existing countries (e.g., participation means for Czechoslovakia are based on data from the Czech Republic and Slovakia). This also implies that our sample consists of more ancestral countries than destination countries in the ESS. The largest ancestral country in our main sample (used in Table 2) is Russia, followed by Germany, Italy, Poland, the UK, Ukraine and Turkey.

In the primary analyses, we use the ESS for calculating natives' mean participation in the ancestral and the destination country (see the next section). This limits the analysis to European ancestral countries. Therefore, to bolster the robustness of the results in ancestral countries outside of Europe, we supplement our main analysis with analyses based on ancestral country data from the World Values Survey.

<sup>7</sup> Relatedly, in Appendix B, we explain why—in line with previous analyses (e.g., Just & Anderson, 2012, 2014)—we do not apply survey weights in our analyses.

### 5.4. Measurement of key variables

Our dependent variable, *political participation*, is measured by an additive scale (rescaled to range between 0 and 1) based on survey items asking about the following seven forms of participation (yes/no) during the last 12 months: contacted a politician/government official, worked in political party or action group, worked in another organization/association, worn/displayed campaign badge/sticker, signed a petition, taken part in a lawful demonstration, boycotted certain products. Cronbach's alpha of the participation scale is 0.67/0.66 for first and second generation immigrants, respectively (based on respondents in the sample used in Model 1a with at least four valid answers). Similar to Just and Anderson (2014), we exclude voting from the scale as immigrants' eligibility to vote differs substantially between European countries. Table C1 in Appendix C provides details on measurement and descriptive statistics of this and all other variables used in the analyses.

Our main independent variables of interest are natives' mean political participation in the destination country (nationally or regionally) and in the ancestral country, respectively. *Mean political participation of natives in the contemporary country* is calculated as the ESS country-round mean of the dependent variable (the political participation scale) for respondents who are neither first nor second generation immigrants (i. e., native-born) in the contemporary country. *Mean political participation of natives in the region of residence in the contemporary country* used in some analyses is calculated in the same manner, but as the regional mean of the dependent variable across all rounds (see Table C1 in Appendix C).

*Mean political participation of natives in immigrants' ancestral countries* is calculated as the mean of the dependent variable over all available rounds in the ESS for respondents in the ancestral country, who are neither first nor second generation immigrants. First generation immigrants are assigned the level of participation in their ancestral country and second generation immigrants that of their parents' ancestral country. Second generation immigrants with parents born in two different countries (other than the respondent's country of residence) are given the average value for mean political participation of the two countries of parental descent.<sup>8</sup> Ideally, we would measure political participation in the ancestral country at the time of departure of individual immigrants to reflect pre-departure participatory culture of this country, but such measurements do often not exist (particularly for second generation immigrants). Yet, this is unlikely to constitute a problem as national participatory political cultures are rather sticky: aggregate political participation among natives in the first and the ninth round of ESS (over a 16-year period) correlates at  $r = 0.90$ , and with a mean absolute difference of 0.025. However, to ascertain that this is unlikely to be consequential, we compare the results using the participation measure aggregated across all years to a round-specific measure for the subset of first generation immigrants, who have migrated during the survey period of the ESS.

Lastly, immigrant generation and length of residence (for first generation immigrants) are key moderators of the relationship between natives' level of participation and immigrants' present-day political participation. We define *first generation immigrants* as those who have been born in a different country than that of their current residence. *Second generation immigrants* are defined as individuals being born in their country of residence, but who have at least one parent born in another country.<sup>9</sup> *Natives* are those born in the destination country with two parents also born in this country. *Length of residence* in the destination country of first generation immigrants is measured by a dummy

<sup>8</sup> In the case of missing data for one parent, second generation immigrants are given the average participation of the ancestral country of the other parent.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents' parents' country of birth is only available in the ESS from the second round and second generation immigrants are therefore only included in round 2–9.

**Table 2**  
Adaptation and persistence in political participation of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants in Europe.

	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 1e
2nd generation immigrant (ref = 1st gen.)	0.022*** (0.006)	0.011 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.005)	0.040** (0.012)	-0.006 (0.005)
Destination country participation	0.755*** (0.037)	0.604*** (0.052)	0.624*** (0.058)	-	0.604*** (0.054)
2nd gen. imm. * Dest. country participation	-	0.353*** (0.061)	0.209** (0.065)	-	0.226*** (0.055)
Ancestral country participation	0.375*** (0.061)	0.523*** (0.074)	-	0.463*** (0.086)	-
2nd gen. imm. * Ancest. country participation	-	-0.355*** (0.079)	-	-0.193 (0.097)	-
Generation	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd
Ancestral countries	ESS sample	ESS sample	ESS sample	ESS sample	All
Individual-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESS round fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	None	None	Ancestral	Destination	Ancestral
<i>N</i> (destination countries)	36	36	36	36	36
<i>N</i> (ancestral countries)	42	42	42	42	218
<i>N</i> (individuals)	38,393	38,393	38,393	38,393	55,473
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.153	0.156	0.158	0.156	0.153
Root Mean Squared Error	0.169	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.169

Note: Estimated coefficients from an OLS regression with two-way clustered standard errors in parentheses. See Table E1 in Appendix E for coefficients for control variables. Models 1a-1d are based on the same observations. See note 11 regarding the differences in observations between models including ancestral country fixed effects. See Appendix J for models controlling for immigrant generation interacted with individual-level controls.

\**p* < 0.05, \*\**p* < 0.01, \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

indicating whether a respondent has stayed more than 20 years in the contemporary country (for comparability between ESS rounds). Measurement of the remaining covariates are explained in Appendix C.

## 6. Analysis

In the following, we present an empirical assessment of our hypotheses in a series of analyses estimated using OLS regression models. To take into account that immigrants and descendants are nested within ancestral countries and destination countries, we employ two strategies. First, we cluster standard errors by *both* ancestral country and contemporary country (two-way clustering) to obtain unbiased standard errors (Cameron et al., 2011). We opted for the two-way clustering approach over a random effect (multilevel) model as we are not specifically interested in the variance components at the destination country and the ancestral country-level estimated by the latter. Further, the cross-level interactions we estimate would potentially entail a very complex random effects structure in a random effects set-up (Schmidt-Cartran & Fairbrother, 2016). In contrast, two-way clustering asymptotically ensures correct statistical inference for cross-level interactions automatically because the resulting standard errors are consistent for any kind of sub-clustering or heterogeneity within clusters (Wooldridge, 2003).<sup>10</sup> Second, in some models we include fixed effects for the ancestral country and/or the destination country, which allow us to hold constant all factors pertaining to either the destination or the ancestral country.<sup>11</sup>

### 6.1. Political (re)socialization of immigrants

Table 2 examines the extent to which immigrants retain the participatory political culture of their ancestral country and adopt the culture of their contemporary country by regressing individual immigrants' level of participation on the mean level of participation of natives in their contemporary and their ancestral country, respectively, in a series

<sup>10</sup> For second generation immigrants, we cluster by father's ancestral country. If this is not available, we use mother's ancestral country.

<sup>11</sup> Using fixed effects for the ancestral country results in a larger sample of immigrants because it does not require valid values on the participation measure for this context. To rule out differences in samples as explanation for differences in models with and without fixed effects, we apply fixed effects both to the sample on which the baseline model is based as well as the full available sample.

of models. The reported models include only the main coefficients of interest, but coefficients for all individual-level controls are reported in Table E1 in Appendix E. Model 1a is the baseline specification, which includes a dummy for being second generation immigrant as well as control variables. Subsequent specifications are extensions of this model, which include various interaction terms, fixed effects, and samples. The key coefficients of interest are those involving natives' participation in the ancestral and the contemporary country (their main effect or interacted with immigrant generation). The main effects express how much immigrants' predicted level of participation increase with natives' mean level increasing by one unit on the participation scale. Higher values thus indicate that immigrants' level of participation tracks that of natives—in the destination or the ancestral country—more closely.

Consistent with our first-order hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>), Model 1a demonstrates that immigrants' political participation is strongly positively associated with natives' participation in both the ancestral and the contemporary country. In other words, immigrants are to a considerable extent resocialized into the participatory political culture of their new country, while at the same time retaining some of the participatory culture of their ancestral country. In relative terms, the alignment with the participatory culture of the present-day country is around twice as strong as that of the ancestral country; a one-unit change in natives' participation in the contemporary country translates into a change in immigrants' participation of 0.76 units on the participation scale, while a corresponding change in ancestral country participation changes immigrants' participation by 0.38 units. More substantively, the model predicts a difference between immigrants residing in the destination country with the most participatory culture (Iceland; mean participation = 0.33) compared to those residing in the least (Bulgaria; mean participation = 0.03) of 0.23—more than one standard deviation or one and a half extra activity—on the participation scale. This is a very substantial difference. Similarly, the difference between originating in Iceland and Bulgaria, amounts to a predicted difference in participation of about 0.11 on the participation scale. There is thus strong evidence for retention of the participatory culture of the ancestral country, and, in particular, for a substantial adoption of the prevailing participatory political culture in the destination country. This is further underlined by the finding that none of the control variables—even education, generally

among the strongest predictors of participation (Verba et al., 1995)—come close to having associations similar to that of average participation of natives in the contemporary country.<sup>12</sup>

Why do we observe these patterns of re- and desocialization? We have suggested a theory of proximity-conditioned social diffusion, from which we have derived several observable implications that we now test. Model 1b-1e test implications 1 and 2 of the temporal proximity hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) regarding differential generational adaptation and retention, by adding interaction terms between immigrant generation (second versus first generation) and natives' participation in the ancestral and in the destination country. The results reported in Model 1b are consistent with implication 1. As indicated by the significant positive interaction term between natives' mean participation in the contemporary country and immigrant generation, second generation immigrants more strongly adopt the participatory culture of the destination country than do first generation immigrants. While participation of both first and second generation immigrants is significantly associated with destination country participation, second generation immigrants' adoption of the participatory culture of this country is around 60 percent stronger than that of first generation immigrants as indicated by the ratio of the coefficients for the two groups (i.e. the main term and the interaction term). A one-unit change in natives' participation for natives in this context translates into a striking 0.96-unit change for second generation immigrants and a 0.60-unit change for first generation immigrants. Hence, our analysis overwhelmingly supports the prediction that second generation immigrants, who have been more extensively exposed to the political culture of the destination country, are also more strongly socialized into this context. There is also support for implication 2 of hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>, specifying that second generation immigrants less strongly retain the participatory political culture of the ancestral country, as indicated by the significant negative interaction term between ancestral-country participation and immigrant generation. The association with natives' participation in the ancestral country is reduced by around 70 percent for second generation immigrants compared to the first generation. A one-unit change in natives' participation in the ancestral country corresponds to a 0.52-unit change for first generation immigrants, but only a 0.17-unit change for second generation immigrants. This pattern of strongly decreasing retention of the participatory culture of the ancestral country for second generation immigrants aligns with recent registry-based findings from Norway (Finseraas et al., 2022). In short, the analysis suggests that the participatory culture of the ancestral country is to a considerable extent desocialized with the second generation in the contemporary country.

Model 1c through 1e include fixed effects for the ancestral and the contemporary country, respectively, to eliminate all sources of confounding originating in either. This changes the estimates somewhat—most notably, the differential (de)socialization patterns for first generation immigrants are reduced—but the overall results are generally reproduced. Hence, even when comparing people from the same ancestral country, or those living in the same destination country, we observe the same differential pattern of adoption and retention of participatory political culture for first and second generation immigrants. As another test of the robustness of the results, we tried interacting the immigrant generation dummy with the control variables to account for their potential differential effect across first and second generation immigrants. Reassuringly, the results for our variables of interest are left substantively unaffected by this more rigorous control strategy as we report in Appendix J.

A direct comparison of destination country adaptation and ancestral country retention is hampered by the latter being measured more noisily due to unavailability of data for average participation among natives in

the destination country at the time of migration (especially for second generation immigrants). The limited change in aggregate native participation over time speaks against this being consequential for our results as mentioned earlier. Yet, in Appendix F we address this concern directly by focusing on first generation immigrants, for whom we can generate an ancestral country measure based on their length of residence in the destination country (a plausible proxy for timing of migration). That is, a model in which native participation in the ancestral and the destination country is measured equally temporally precisely. The results are parallel using both measures, thus indicating that temporal imprecision in measuring participation in the ancestral country is unlikely to be consequential for our results.

Lastly, to probe the robustness of the results reported in Table 2 in a larger and more geographically diverse sample of ancestral countries, we used data on political participation in ancestral countries from the World Values Survey, which covers a substantially larger set of ancestral countries (see Appendix D for details). Appendix G reports this analysis and discusses the results. Broadly speaking, the results based on the larger sample of ancestral countries confirm the patterns observed in Table 2 and thus suggest that the overall patterns of political (re)socialization generalize to a more diverse set of countries.

On the whole, our results thus far tell a story that is consistent with our proposed account of proximity-conditioned political socialization of immigrants. Second generation immigrants, who have been more cumulatively exposed to natives in the destination country, more strongly adopt the participatory culture of the destination country than first generation immigrants, and vice versa for retention of the participatory political culture of the ancestral country.

## 6.2. Political socialization of first generation immigrants and length of residence

We now zoom in on first generation immigrants to test another implication of our theory of (re)socialization through proximity-conditioned social diffusion. Specifically, we examine whether length of residence in the destination country (i.e., extended proximity to this participatory culture) conditions adoption of this participatory culture as well as retention of the culture of the ancestral country (implication 3 and 4 of H<sub>3</sub>). We use a simple dichotomous measure—more than 20 years versus less—for time spent in the destination country. By interacting length of residence with destination and ancestral country participation we can assess whether the time-conditioned dynamics of (re)socialization of participatory political culture also takes place *within* first generation immigrants. Table 3 reports the results from this analysis in a series of models.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the socializing influences in the destination country context accumulate over time, thus showing that political resocialization is conditioned by length of residence in this context. First generation immigrants' participation positively tracks that of natives in the contemporary country to a significantly higher extent for immigrants who have stayed for more than 20 years as evidenced from Model 2b. More specifically, the association with participation of destination country natives' is around 40% stronger for those who have stayed for more than 20 years compared to those who have arrived more recently (a unit-change in natives' participation corresponds to a 0.50-unit change on the participation scale for those having arrived within the last 20 years and a 0.69-unit-change for those having stayed for more than 20 years). Including ancestral country fixed effects in Model 2c and Model 2e reduces this ratio somewhat, but the results generally tell a similar story. This is strong evidence in favor of temporal proximity-conditioned adoption of the prevailing participatory political culture of the destination country; the longer you stay, the more strongly you adopt this culture.

The hypothesized pattern of desocialization of the participatory culture of the ancestral country is also supported, although more tentatively than the pattern for destination-country adaptation. First

<sup>12</sup> A move over the full scale of education—from having completed less than secondary schooling to completing a tertiary education—amounts to a difference on the participation scale of around 0.10 units.

**Table 3**  
Gradual adaptation and persistence in political participation of 1st generation immigrants in Europe.

	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d	Model 2e
Lived in country more than 20 years	0.028*** (0.006)	0.018 (0.012)	0.011 (0.008)	0.047*** (0.013)	0.019* (0.008)
Destination country participation	0.597*** (0.051)	0.496*** (0.064)	0.506*** (0.068)	–	0.520*** (0.064)
More than 20 years * Dest. cntry. participation	–	0.192*** (0.048)	0.107* (0.048)	–	0.107* (0.049)
Ancestral country participation	0.530*** (0.068)	0.615*** (0.102)	–	0.610*** (0.118)	–
More than 20 years * Ancest. cntry. participation	–	–0.176 (0.104)	–	–0.163 (0.100)	–
Ancestral countries	ESS sample	ESS sample	ESS sample	ESS sample	All
Individual-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESS round fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	None	None	Ancestral	Destination	Ancestral
<i>N</i> (destination countries)	36	36	36	36	36
<i>N</i> (ancestral countries)	40	40	40	40	209
<i>N</i> (individuals)	20,050	20,050	20,050	20,050	31,840
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.155	0.156	0.162	0.160	0.155
Root Mean Squared Error	0.161	0.161	0.161	0.161	0.162

Note: Estimated coefficients from an OLS regression model with two-way clustered standard errors in parentheses. Models include the same control variables as in Table 2 (excluding immigrant generation). Models 2a-2d are based on the same observations. See note 11 regarding the differences in observations between models including ancestral country fixed effects. See Appendix J for models controlling for length of residence interacted with individual-level controls.

\**p* < 0.05, \*\**p* < 0.01, \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

generation immigrants’ participation align less strongly with ancestral-country participation for immigrants having lived in the destination country for more than 20 years (reduced by about 30% compared to those having lived there for less) as the negative interaction term in Model 2b and 2d indicate. However, the interaction term is just shy of statistical significance at conventional levels (*p* = 0.100 and 0.113, respectively). In other words, there are indications that staying longer in the contemporary country increasingly decouples immigrants from the participatory political culture of their ancestral country.

Comparing the coefficients for destination country adaptation and ancestral country persistence, we see that they are roughly parallel for those having resided in the destination country for 20 years or less—a one-unit change for natives in either the contemporary or the ancestral country corresponds to a 0.5-0.62-unit change in immigrants’ participation. After that, the adoption of the participatory culture in the contemporary country becomes dominant and the persistence of the culture of the ancestral country wanes somewhat.

In summary, our results show that among first generation immigrants, the hypotheses deduced from our theory of proximity-conditioned socialization holds considerable merit; first generation immigrants having stayed in the destination country longer adapt more strongly to this political culture and are more loosely tied to the political culture of their ancestral country.

### 6.3. Bolstering the mechanism of proximity-based diffusion further: regional adaptation

The evidence of immigrants’ gradual adaptation to the participatory political culture of the destination country and, conversely, decoupling from the participatory culture of the ancestral country is consistent with the suggested bottom-up account of immigrants’ political socialization stressing proximity-based social diffusion. However, while arguably less straightforward, the observed pattern could also potentially reflect a strengthened influence of top-down factors, such as nationally instigated laws and policies, on immigrants’ participatory inclinations over generations and time.

Our aim is not to claim that integration policies do not matter for political participation—there is considerable evidence for this as already noted—but we can probe whether they potentially overlap with our suggested bottom-up mechanism emphasizing proximity-based social diffusion. In Appendix H, we show in extensions of Model 1a that including various integration policy measures do not confound the relationship between immigrants’ political participation and natives’ political participation in the destination country (nor in the ancestral country).

Yet, we can probe the role of social diffusion from natives further by disaggregating our analysis to regions within countries. More specifically, from the suggested mechanism of proximity-conditioned social diffusion of political participation we would expect immigrants’ participation to resemble that of natives living closer to them (with whom they are more likely to interact) as stated in Hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>. In other words, to the extent that participatory cultures vary within countries (e.g., Putnam, 1993), this perspective predicts that immigrants adopt the regional participatory culture carried by individuals in closer spatial proximity to them. Conversely, intra-country variation in immigrants’ participation does not follow from the national-level socialization processes implied by the top-down perspective. Hence, this perspective cannot straightforwardly explain why immigrants in a given region tend to resemble natives in that region more than natives in the destination country at large.

In order to test immigrants’ socialization into a regional participatory culture, we regress their individual-level participation on natives’ average participation at the regional level (see details in Appendix C) in a series of models reported in Table 4. Regional-level political participation overlaps substantially with national-level participation, and it is therefore necessary to control for the latter to parse out regional adaptation more specifically (Model 3a). An even stronger test of regional adaptation is presented in the models that include ancestral and destination country fixed effects (Model 3b-e). Using only within-destination country variation in participatory political culture, this model thus examines whether immigrants adapt to natives’ regional level of participation net of all destination-country (and ancestral-country) influences at the national level.

The results reported in Table 4 provide very strong support for spatial regional diffusion of political participation among immigrants as stated in Hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>, and thus further support our theory of proximity-conditioned social diffusion of political participation. In Model 3a, we observe that beyond adapting to the participatory political culture of the destination country (the positive and significant coefficient on the “destination country participation” variable), immigrants adopt the participatory culture of the region in which they reside within that country (the positive and highly significant coefficient on the “regional destination participation” variable). In fact, the adaptation to the regional-level participatory culture in the destination country is stronger than the adaptation to the destination country overall as well as the retention of the ancestral country culture. A one-unit change in natives’ regional participation is predicted to lead to a 0.45-unit change in immigrants’ participation, which corresponds to around 135% of the national level adaptation (a 0.33-unit change for a one-unit change in natives’ participation), and roughly the same for retention of the



**Table 4**  
Regional adaptation in political participation of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants in Europe.

	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d	Model 3e
Destination country participation	0.330* (0.126)	–	–	–	–
Ancestral country participation	0.363*** (0.060)	–	–	–	–
Regional destination participation	0.445*** (0.121)	0.532*** (0.111)	0.473*** (0.102)	0.383*** (0.100)	0.367** (0.125)
Second generation immigrant	0.022*** (0.006)	0.020** (0.006)	0.021*** (0.005)	–0.011* (0.005)	–
Second gen. imm. * Regional destination participation	–	–	–	0.251*** (0.055)	–
More than 20 yrs.	–	–	–	–	0.014* (0.006)
More than 20 yrs * Regional destination participation	–	–	–	–	0.144*** (0.040)
Generation	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st and 2nd	1st
Ancestral countries	ESS sample	ESS sample	All	All	All
Individual-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESS round fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	None	Both	Both	Both	Both
<i>N</i> (destination countries)	36	36	36	36	36
<i>N</i> (ancestral countries)	42	42	218	218	209
<i>N</i> (destination regions)	523	523	529	529	513
<i>N</i> (individuals)	38,391	38,391	55,455	55,455	31,830
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.156	0.163	0.155	0.157	0.160
Root Mean Squared Error	0.168	0.168	0.169	0.169	0.162

Note: Estimated coefficients from an OLS regression model with two-way clustered standard errors in parentheses. Models include the same control variables as in Table 2 (Model 3a–3c) and Table 3 (Model 3d–3e). Model 3a and 3b, and model 3c and 3d are based on the same observations, respectively. See note 11 regarding differences in observations between Model 3b and 3c. See Appendix J for models controlling for immigrant generation/length of residence interacted with individual-level controls.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

participatory culture of the ancestral country (a 0.36-unit change). Model 3b and Model 3c confirm the finding of strong destination-region adaptation in the rigorous ancestral- and destination-country fixed effects specification. In fact, the regional level adaptation appears to be even stronger (a one-unit change in natives' regional participation is associated with a 0.47–0.53-unit change in immigrants' participation) in these models that eliminate all national-level variation at the ancestral and the destination country level. Because immigrants' adaptation to a regional participatory political culture cannot readily be explained by national institutions or policies, this is quite strong evidence in favor of a bottom-up process of social diffusion of participatory inclinations to immigrants from natives living in closer spatial proximity. In Model 3d and 3e we show that immigrants' gradual temporal adoption of the participatory culture of the destination country also applies to the regional level culture; the adaptation is significantly stronger for second generation immigrants, and for first generation immigrants having resided in the destination country for longer. This further corroborates the suggested proximity-conditioned social diffusion mechanism.

In short, utilizing within-destination country variation in the political participation of natives that immigrants are exposed to, we find evidence strongly supporting the contention that immigrant socialization into the prevailing participatory culture of their present-day country (also) works through a bottom-up process.

#### 6.4. Tentative evidence on strong versus weak ties as the locus of social diffusion

A logical question following from the results reported so far is by which social mechanisms proximity-conditioned social diffusion of political participation occurs? Earlier, we noted that such social diffusion may take place both through more intimate social connections (strong ties) as well as looser and more superficial ones (weak ties). The regional adaptation observed in the previous section could be taken as an indication of the importance of looser social ties (i.e., to those living in the same region), but this could also reflect a concentration of more intimate social ties in these regions.

Albeit tentatively, we can go some way in addressing the role of strong(er) social ties in producing the observed (re)socialization of immigrants more directly by analyzing how adaptation and persistence of participatory cultures vary by social ties with immigrants/ethnic minorities of varying degree of intimacy for which there are proxy

measures (friends, colleagues, and neighbors) in ESS round 1 and 7 (for related approaches, see Luttmer and Singhal (2011), Maxwell (2013), and Cho et al. (2006)). More specifically, we expect that stronger social ties with representatives of the ancestral culture result in stronger retention of this culture and, vice versa, weaker adoption of the destination country participatory culture.<sup>13</sup>

Appendix I reports and elaborates on these analyses. The results reveal an apparent asymmetrical role of close social ties in cultural reproduction and change. None of the social ties with other immigrants had a discernible influence on adoption of the participatory practices of the destination country. Destination-country adaptation thus appears to be independent of closer social ties. In contrast, retention of the participatory culture of the ancestral country is to a significant extent conditioned by having other immigrant friends and, more tentatively, colleagues ( $p = 0.050$  and  $0.102$ , respectively). Immigrants with social ties with representatives of the ancestral country in these social spheres to a much higher extent retain the participatory culture of their home country than do those without such ties.

When seen in combination with the results regarding regional adaptation in the destination country, these findings indicate that the participatory political culture of the destination country is primarily diffused through weaker social ties, plausibly through casual observation of natives. In contrast, the participatory political culture of the ancestral country is to a significant extent upheld by closer social ties.

## 7. Conclusion and discussion

In this paper, we have addressed what is arguably the cardinal question of political socialization research: how is political culture reproduced and changed? We have analyzed this question by examining how immigrants' political engagement develops in the intersection between the participatory political culture of their contemporary country and their ancestral country, respectively. The empirical analyses revealed that participatory political culture evolves dynamically over time in a symmetrical pattern of adaptation and persistence; over time

<sup>13</sup> These indicators of social ties may also reflect a larger presence of people from the same ancestral country, which might then in turn contribute to upholding the participatory culture of this country simply through more exposure to it.

and generations, immigrants come to adopt the participatory culture of their contemporary country and soften their connection with that of their ancestral country.

While the question of cultural adaptation and persistence has not previously been examined systematically in a way similar to ours, our finding resonates with findings from the broader literature showing that factors in the ancestral country and, in particular, the contemporary country correlate with immigrants' political participation. However, whereas these previous studies emphasize the role of top-down influences—first and foremost naturalization and integration policies—as drivers of political integration of immigrants, we have argued that this perspective should be supplemented by a bottom-up perspective emphasizing how participatory inclinations also diffuse from those we are in more proximate spatial and temporal contact with through a process of “proximity-conditioned social diffusion”. This theory explains why second generation immigrants, who grew up in the contemporary country, have taken in this participatory political culture more than first generation immigrants, as well as let go of the culture of their parents' country to a larger extent (and similarly for first generation immigrants having stayed longer in the contemporary country relative to those who have stayed for a shorter period of time). Further, the most convincing support for the suggested social diffusion mechanism vis-à-vis an alternative top-down process is arguably that immigrants tend to adopt the participatory inclinations of those living around them *within* the country of residence. Finally, our analysis tentatively indicated that the participatory political culture of the contemporary country is primarily adopted through weak social ties, whereas the participatory culture of the ancestral country is to considerable extent preserved through stronger interpersonal ties with other representatives from this culture.

We believe that our analysis has illustrated the fruitfulness of studying immigrants to elucidate the evolution of political culture. Building on our study and previous related studies, future work should delve deeper into the dynamics of political culture by studying immigrants with increased theoretical and methodological sophistication. On a theoretical level, our analysis has suggested that the role of social diffusion is somewhat undervalued in understanding how immigrants—and, by extension, people more generally—are socialized politically. Providing more evidence on the specific mechanisms (e.g., norm enforcement or imitation) and networks (e.g., stronger or weaker social ties) fostering this diffusion is a logical next step in this regard. Methodologically, the emergence of increasingly detailed data on immigrants' location patterns is likely to lead to new inroads into the study of (re)socialization of political culture. Parallel to a recent study of female employment among second generation immigrants in Norway (Finseraas and Kotsadam, 2017), population-based registry data geocoded at more local levels than the ESS data allow for, could be used to study immigrant adaptation to political cultures in more local residential contexts, as well as help strengthen causal identification through (quasi-)random variation in refugee location (Dustman, Vasiljeva, & Piil Damm, 2019). Similarly, future work may follow in the footsteps of Polavieja's (2015) Survey-based Imputation of Synthetic Traits used as Exogenous Regressors (SISTER) method in trying to develop methods for pinning down the causal influence of ancestral country culture. Lastly, a closer matching of immigrants to comparable groups in their ancestral country would be an important step forward to obtain more accurate estimates of retention of the culture of the ancestral country (Fernandéz, 2011). For example, in line with our result regarding the importance of regional variations in context in the destination country, the persistence of the participatory culture of the ancestral country could be probed more rigorously by knowing the region immigrants originate in within this.

While we have analyzed immigrants migrating to and from a rather broad sample of countries, especially in the analysis using the WVS data, our focus is still centered on Europe, and we should therefore be cautious inferring beyond the geographical confines of this setting. With the emergence of suitable data from more countries and regions of the

world, a fuller mapping would hopefully become possible. Similarly, more information on the background of immigrants, including their reasons for migrating (work, seeking asylum etc.), would also be valuable to further our understanding of how the dynamics of (re)socialization of participatory political culture unfold across different groups.

Our findings give room for careful optimism regarding the (political) integration of immigrants into their new polity. Over time, immigrants come to resemble natives' political participatory inclinations and as such integrate into the political mainstream. This implies that even though immigrants to European and North American countries generally originate in less civic political cultures (compare average destination and ancestral country participation in Table C1 in Appendix C), they will eventually catch up to natives in their new country. This is not in any way to say that this happens promptly—it takes time, even generations—but this is still a more positive message than that conveyed by Rice and Feldman's (1997) analysis from the US showing that the civic culture from ancestral countries persisted well in to the third generation. With gradual parity in political participation follows better possibilities for articulating political preferences, and, ultimately, obtaining political representation.

#### Declarations of interest

None.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

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