Abstract
This paper develops a model of immigrant political action that connects individual motivations to become politically involved with the macro-social context in which participation takes place. It posits that a country’s opinion climate in the form of hostility or openness toward immigrants shapes the opportunity structure for immigrant political engagement by contributing to the social costs and political benefits of participation. I argue that a friendly opinion climate toward immigrants enables political action among immigrants generally, and facilitates the politicization of political discontent specifically. Using survey data collected as part of the European Social Survey (ESS) between 2002-06 in 20 European democracies, the analyses reveal that a positive opinion climate increases immigrant political engagement, and this effect is particularly strong among immigrants dissatisfied with the workings of the political system. However, the results also suggest that this effect is limited to uninstitutionalized political action, and that the opinion climate has no observable impact on participation in institutionalized politics.
International migration has manifold and complex effects on both sending and receiving countries. In Europe as elsewhere, one contentious issue related to migration is the desirability and feasibility of integrating immigrants into the political fabric of receiving countries. In particular, whether immigrants do or should have opportunities to express their political views and how they make use of these opportunities are critical questions surrounding immigrant political incorporation in their host societies. As it turns out, we have surprisingly few answers to respond to these debates. In particular, little is known about what mobilizes migrants into different types of political action and the role that host country’s socio-political environment plays in this process.

In this study, we develop a model of immigrant political action that connects individual motivations to become politically involved with the macro socio-political context in which political participation takes place. Our model posits that a country’s opinion climate in the form of hostility or openness toward immigrants is a critical determinant of immigrant political engagement by shaping immigrants’ perceptions that their participation is welcome and likely to be effective. We argue that a friendly opinion climate can be an important stimulant of immigrant engagement in two ways: first, a friendly opinion climate toward immigrants reduces the social costs of political action among immigrants generally and enhances their perception that political action will be acceptable and efficacious; second, in reducing the social costs of participation, the opinion climate facilitates the translation of political discontent into political action.

We test these arguments with the help of cross-national and individual-level data collected as part of the European Social Survey (ESS) in 20 European democracies between 2002 and 2006. We first estimate our models using multi-level statistical techniques, and then test the robustness of our findings using two-stage instrumental variable approach designed to ensure that our results are not driven by endogeneity or omitted variable bias. Our analyses reveal that a positive opinion climate towards immigrants increases political engagement among foreign-born, and this effect is particularly strong among immigrants dissatisfied with the political system’s performance. However, the results also indicate that this effect is limited to uninstitutionalized political action, and that the opinion climate has no observable impact on participation in institutionalized politics. Thus, immigrants in countries with friendly opinion climates are more likely to participate in uninstitutionalized ways, while institutionalized participation depends to a much greater degree on immigrants’ formal incorporation into the polity through citizenship, as well as macro-level factors such as level of economic development and the proportion of foreign-born residents in the country. Taken together, these results reveal that a hostile opinion climate
impedes political action among politically dissatisfied foreigners, but this effect is conditional on
the type of political action immigrants engage in.

Our paper is designed to contribute to research on immigrant political participation and
political incorporation as well as research on anti-immigrant opinion in several ways. First, on a
theoretical level, we highlight the critical and complex role that the socio-political context in the
form of public opinion towards immigrants plays in shaping immigrant political participation. In
doing so, we go beyond existing research on formal institutions and political actors and
investigate a critical, but hitherto unexamined aspect of the broader macro environment that
shapes immigrant political incorporation. Second, we seek to combine the study of anti-
immigrant opinion with the study of immigrant political participation, and contribute to the
literature of anti-immigrant attitudes by considering them as a critical independent, rather than
dependent, variable. Third, by distinguishing theoretically and empirically between different
kinds of political acts, we extend our focus beyond electoral participation – a type of participation
most immigrants are not entitled to – and develop a more comprehensive view on the role that
socio-political context and individual-level determinants play in shaping the patterns of political
participation among immigrants. Finally, our analysis breaks new ground by going beyond the
most heavily studied case of immigrant participation – the United States – and by putting existing
arguments to a test against a varied and extensive sample of European nations with diverse
groups of foreign-born residents.

We proceed as follows: the next sections present and elaborate our argument; we then
describe our data and measures, present our analyses and discuss our findings, and finally
conclude by offering suggestions for further research.

Macro Context and Political Participation

Scholars have long assumed that social and political environment systematically shapes
people’s political engagement (Huckfeldt 1986; Zuckerman 2005).1 There is a rich treasure trove
of research focusing on how individual-level variables as well as the immediate (micro-) political
environment affect individuals’ propensity to engage in political action. However, few studies
have considered how the wider political community, or macro socio-political context, influences
people’s inclination to engage in political action. This relative lack of consideration of the impact

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1 Because political engagement can be considered both an individual act – individuals cast ballots, sign
petitions, or demonstrate – as well as a social one – individuals are part of electorates, they discuss politics
with social others, and they protest together – it is useful to think of both individual and contextual
variables that may shape participation.

2 This is not to say that social context at a regional or local level is not important (for arguments on how
local context matters for immigrant political behavior, see, for example, Morales and Giugni (2011)). In
of the wider political community is perhaps not surprising, given that most studies of political participation have been conducted in single-country settings where the macro-context can be held constant.

The use of a single-country design has two important drawbacks, however: For one, it is difficult to establish whether the individual-level factors that drive political behavior in one country also play a role in other countries. It is easy to imagine that such factors may have dissimilar effects on individuals exposed to different political, social, and cultural contexts. But more importantly for the purposes of this analysis, single-country studies cannot consider whether and how differences in countries’ macro environment – that is, variation in the make-up of the country’s public space – influence political participation among individuals generally, and among immigrants specifically.

Within the literature on immigrant political behavior, researchers have argued that standard explanations of political behavior, such as the socio-economic model, are helpful but insufficient for understanding immigrant political behavior (e.g. Ramakrishnan 2005; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu 2006). In large part, this is because being an immigrant means having had a particular set of experiences with and exposure to both country of origin and receiving country (e.g. White et al. 2008; Fennema and Tillie 1999). However, little systematic cross-national research exists with respect to the consequences of macro socio-political environment for immigrant political action due to the fact that most studies focus on only one or few countries (or even cities) in their analyses.

The general question we seek to answer below, then, is how an immigrant’s exposure to the socio-political environment, measured at the level of countries, affects the nature and extent of their political engagement. In particular, we ask, do countries’ levels of hostility towards immigrants have consequences for political participation among foreign-born? If so, does hostility breed mobilization or apathy – that is, does it affect immigrant participation positively or negatively? And finally, does the opinion climate affect different kinds of participatory acts differently? As it turns out, there are good reasons to suspect that the opinion climate matters to immigrants’ engagement in politics. We argue that these reasons have to do both with the costs and benefits of political action.

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2 This is not to say that social context at a regional or local level is not important (for arguments on how local context matters for immigrant political behavior, see, for example, Morales and Giugni (2011)). In principle, the arguments we develop below should apply to both country and local levels. However, considering that most migration-related debates take place at the national level, we believe that opinion climate measured at a country-level is a meaningful factor that, as we demonstrate below, systematically shapes immigrant political behaviour.
Opinion Climate and Immigrant Political Action

It has been long known that people’s political ideas, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of what others do or think (Cooley 1956; Mutz 1994, 1998). Scholars have argued that individuals constantly (and to a large extent unconsciously) scan their environment in order to assess the opinion climate (i.e. the aggregate distribution of opinions on a given issue) to see which opinions the majority may come to favor and which ones might lead to social exclusion (e.g. Scheufele and Moy 2000). Thus, Noelle-Neumann (1974, 1993), in her classic work on the spiral of silence, suggests that people become less likely to express their political views as they perceive themselves to occupy a more extreme minority status in the population (see also Glynn, Hayes, and Shanahan 1997). Consistent with this, a number of studies have shown that opinion polls affect voter turnout and vote choice (e.g. Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Atkin 1969; de Bock 1976; Cook and Welch 1940; Lavrakas, Holley, and Miller 1991; Noelle-Neumann 1993; Skalaban 1988; West 1991), and that electoral behavior is sensitive to exit polls and early election returns (e.g. Sudman 1986; Delli Carpini 1984) as well as voters’ perceptions of the popularity of the candidates (Bartels 1988).

Research on social psychology also shows that individuals who belong to subordinate or less powerful groups are significantly more attuned to their environment and pay more attention to shifts even in the affective and nonverbal tone of dominant group members (Oyserman and Swim 2001; see also Hall and Briton 1993; Frable 1997). Since immigrants typically lack or perceive themselves to lack access to important political rights and protections enjoyed by the natives, and thus objectively and subjectively occupy a less powerful position in their host societies, they should be especially sensitive to their social environment. Hence, we believe that opinion climate towards immigrants plays an important role in shaping immigrants’ attitudes and behavior in their host societies.  

We conceptualize a country’s political climate as a social constraint that increases the costs of political participation. Such costs come in the form of the actual or perceived social acceptability of expressing a minority opinion and the consequences of it (see also Muller and Opp 1986; Opp 1986). As a result, high social costs may discourage immigrant political engagement whereas reduced social costs create incentives for political mobilization. Specifically, we argue that immigrants are more likely to engage politically if they feel appreciated and welcomed by the local populations. In contrast, perceptions of hostility and

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3 Social context arguably plays a more important role than formal political institutions because immigrants encounter social context on a daily basis. In contrast, understanding institutions and their consequences require special knowledge and direct experience that is much less common than experiences of social context.
stigmatized social status may increase the social costs of participation, resulting in lower levels of participation among foreign-born.  

By conceptualizing a country’s opinion climate as a social constraint, we define it as separate from a country’s formal institutions or policies. At the same time, thinking of it as a constraint allows us to interpret opinion climate within the framework of a country’s political opportunity structure. Political opportunities – a concept developed most prominently in the literature on social movements – refer to “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people’s expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1998: 76-77; see also Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1982, 1996). While political opportunities do not inevitably produce social movements, they often provide a strong incentive for political mobilization. This is because favorable political opportunities increase the chances that even weak and less assertive movements may succeed (e.g., Amenta 2005; Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992; Amental et al. 1994; Kitschelt 1986; Costain 1992; Soule et al. 1999; Giugni 2007).

Most scholars of social movements focus on formal state institutions and elite alignments to denote a country’s or region’s political opportunity structure (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; McAdam 1996). In line with this tradition, researchers of immigrant political engagement have argued that a country’s legal and institutional framework – particularly citizenship and residency laws – as well as the presence of political parties, trade unions, and other interest groups.  

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4Existing research has shown that anti-immigrant sentiments typically are the product of a complex set of factors. On one hand, they are consistently shaped by values of natives, such as racism and intolerance to social diversity, particularly when these are enhanced by the presence of culturally distinct newcomers (e.g., Schneider 2008; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). Friendship ties with foreign-born and minority status among natives, however, reduce the negative impact of these factors (e.g., McLaren 2003; Schneider 2008; Herreros and Criado 2008). On the other hand, scholars have argued that economic attitudes, especially perceptions of threat from labor market competition with immigrants and pessimism about the current state of economy, undermine people’s support for immigration (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Fetzer 2000; Citrin et al. 1997; but see Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Schneider 2008; Sides and Citrin 2007).

5Anti-immigrant public sentiment does not necessarily translate into more restrictive immigration or immigrant integration policies. While more tolerant societies tend to have more liberal citizenship laws and government policies towards immigrants than countries whose populations are hostile towards newcomers (Weldon 2006), there also is a persistent gap between expansionist policies and restrictive public opinion in a number of countries. This gap has been attributed to the fact that policymakers are more powerfully affected by pro-immigrant lobby groups – usually business groups that benefit cheaper and/or more skilled foreign labor – than the general public (see Freeman 1995; Statham and Geddes 2006 on Britain; and Howard 2008 on Germany; Jacobs 1999 on Belgium; and Togeby 1999 on Denmark). Public preferences were found to have consequences on immigrant policy making only when migration becomes highly politicized in competitive electoral districts that are crucial for political parties (Money 1999, 1997).

6Social movement scholars acknowledge that the existence of grievances is a necessary condition for protest (e.g., McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). However, only a small proportion of the people holding those grievances usually participate in a movement, as such participation is conditioned by the individual’s characteristics (Dalton 2006; McAdam 1988), as well as characteristics of the movement and the political environment (McAdam 1982; Meyer 2006).

At the same time, however, the use of more informal factors, including public opinion, as indicators of political opportunity structure is not entirely uncommon. For example, Gamson and Meyer (1996) consider public opinion climate – or what they refer to as cultural climate, zeitgeist, or national mood – clearly as part of the political opportunity structure that shapes the emergence and success of social movements. Research on women’s movements similarly considers public opinion towards gender equality as part of “gendered opportunity structure” that, for example, played an important role in the ratification process of the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. (Soule and Olzak 2004). Within the literature of immigrant political engagement, Koopmans (2004) also argued that public discourse on migration and ethnic relations in major newspapers is an important feature of political opportunity structure that significantly shaped immigrants’ claim-making in the printed media of several European countries. Cinalli and Giugni (2011) similarly use content analysis of local newspapers to capture “discursive opportunity structures” to analyze immigrant political engagement in nine European cities.

Taken together, existing studies on political opportunity structure lead us to the following expectations about the impact of opinion climate on immigrant political engagement. Because the various elements that constitute a country’s political opportunity structure act as a structural constraints to political action external to individuals (e.g., Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1998), foreigners should be more likely to engage in collective action if they perceive their political environment to be favorable to their concerns – that is, if the benefits from participation are more likely to be realized. Thus, countries that provide opportunities for immigrants to express their grievances and contribute to collective policy decision-making are likely to have more politically involved foreign-born residents. In contrast, states that are hostile or closed to immigrant political input are more likely to produce apathetic and alienated migrant communities, whose grievances might occasionally manifest themselves through violence or crime among poor immigrants, and the return home or further migration to another location among highly-skilled foreigners.

While the opportunity structure perspective suggests that openness will beget immigrant engagement in politics, several single-country studies argue that migrant mobilization is most likely to take place under threatening circumstances. In the U.S., for example, anti-immigrant
legislation in the mid-1990s, which sought to restrict immigrant access to welfare benefits, had a positive impact on voting turnout among first and second generation immigrants (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, see also Pantoja et al. 2001; Ramakrishnan 2005, esp. Ch. 6). More recently, a study of Arab Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 reported that perceptions of threat associated with the Patriot Act legislation and incidents of racially motivated discrimination and violence significantly increased voter registration among more educated Arab immigrants (Cho, Gimpel, and Wu 2006). Similarly in France, the political mobilization of black Africans has been attributed primarily to their efforts to defend housing rights (Péchu 1999), while in Belgium immigrant groups mobilized and rallied fiercely for their enfranchisement in response to growing anti-immigrant sentiment in electoral competition (Jacobs 1999).

The two contrasting perspectives may not be incompatible, however. After all, as Goldstone and Tilly (2001) point out, threat cannot be treated merely as a flip side of opportunity as increased threat does not always mean reduced opportunities. In other words, perceptions of threat to one’s rights or entitlements – or dissatisfaction with the political process more generally – are likely to have a different effect on political mobilization depending on political opportunity structures. We expect that dissatisfaction with the political process is more likely to translate into political action under conditions of favorable political opportunity structure, whereas political frustrations are likely to remain unexpressed in the environment of closed or restricted opportunities. To put it differently, we expect political opportunity structures to be particularly important for shaping political action if they are connected to the expression of political discontent. This expectation is consistent with Tarrow’s work who notes “the concept of political opportunity structure emphasizes resources external to the group. Unlike money or power, these can be taken advantage of by even weak or disorganized challengers … Contentious politics emerges when ordinary citizens … respond to opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies, show were elites and authorities are most vulnerable, and trigger social networks and collective identities into action …” (Tarrow 1998: 20).

Welcoming environments should encourage migrants to engage in politics if they believe that their complaints will be heard and addressed by their host society, and this might be particularly important for people in a minority, such as immigrants, who, as the spiral of silence theory suggests, are more likely to become inhibited in expressing themselves and engaging in

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8 This perspective is consistent with a more general empirical finding in the literature on social movements that in many situations increased repression leads to increased protest mobilization and action (Goldstone and Tilly 2001).
9 Goldstone and Tilly (2001) suggest defining ‘opportunity’ as the probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving desired outcome. In contrast, ‘threat’ is best conceptualized as the costs that a social group will incur from protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action (183).
politics (Scheufele and Moy 2000; see also Noelle-Neumann 1993). We therefore hypothesize that the macro-social context in the form of a country’s macro-opinion climate toward immigrants will have both a direct and a contingent effect on political participation. Specifically, immigrant political engagement will be higher in countries that exhibit more friendly attitudes toward immigrants, and the effect of political dissatisfaction on participation will be particularly pronounced in countries that are more favorable to immigrants.

**Opinion Climate, Discontent, and Varieties of Political Action**

While early studies of political participation in democracies focused mostly on understanding standard modes of political engagement, such as electoral participation, the scope of inquiry into political engagement widened considerably in the aftermath of waves of popular unrest during the 1960s and 1970s, as researchers began to take into account a broader repertoire of political acts, including protest behavior. This expansion of the empirical terrain considered by behavioral researchers brought with it the conceptual distinction between the traditional conventional, institutionalized acts of participation on one hand and unconventional, uninstitutionalized, action on the other (Barnes et al. 1979; Muller 1979).

Institutionalized action was defined as involving routine political acts (mostly) oriented toward electoral processes, while uninstitutionalized action was conceptualized as taking place outside of electoral politics and involving often more spontaneous, episodic, and disruptive political acts (Kaase 1989).

Considering the options available to individuals for engaging in politics, one important question is what motivates any particular act. Traditionally, conventional political activities such as voting have been viewed as acts that affirm individuals’ allegiance to the political system. Consistent with this view, considerable evidence shows a strong correlation between positive attitudes about politics and the political system (civic orientations) on one hand and participation in conventional political activities on the other (Leighley 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Finkel 1985; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). While high levels of political trust, combined with high levels of efficacy encourage what Gamson and others called “allegiant activity” by way of conventional access to governmental institutions and actors, a number of studies have found that high levels of mistrust and political dissatisfaction increase engagement in unconventional political acts (Gamson 1968; Muller 1977; Milbrath and Goel 1977). And the connection between dissatisfaction and unconventional action appears to be particularly pronounced among political

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10 We use the terms conventional and institutionalized action as well as unconventional and un-institutionalized action interchangeably.
and ethnic minorities (Craig and Maggiotto 1983; Shingles 1981). This finding is consistent with the idea that unconventional politics provide an outlet for the economically disadvantaged, repressed minorities, as well as other groups that lack access to politics through conventional channels and are alienated from the established political order (Dalton 2006, 62-3).

In light of these findings, it is striking that the vast majority of studies on how and why immigrants engage politically have focused on institutionalized political action. Yet, because they are generally less well incorporated in social, economic and political spheres of their host societies than natives, they may find uninstitutionalized activities to be a particularly useful avenue for expressing themselves politically and make their grievances known. We therefore expect dissatisfaction with the political system to be an important determinant of unconventional political participation among the foreign-born.

Moreover, because uninstitutionalized political action is a particularly important avenue for the expression of discontent among immigrants, and because uninstitutionalized political acts by definition are less socially acceptable, less formalized, and less routinized, the country’s opinion climate should be a particularly valuable catalyst for connecting discontent and political action. As a consequence, we expect the impact of political dissatisfaction on participation to be especially powerful in countries that are marked by positive opinion climates vis-à-vis immigrants, and this effect should be stronger for shaping less institutionalized political acts.

Strategy of Inquiry

Following on the discussion above, the general model of political action underlying this paper thus contains two basic elements: individual motivations and macro context. First, we posit that, to understand immigrant political participation, we require information about individuals’ motivations to participate; second, to understand cross-national differences in the levels of immigrant participation, we need to know the macro environment in which immigrants choose to engage in politics. Our model posits that each of these factors independently shapes the frequency of political action among immigrants, but also that they interact: immigrants who are motivated to express their political discontent will be more likely to do so in countries characterized by a friendlier opinion climate toward immigrants.

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11 In more recent decades, however, protest activities have become more accepted by the general public as a political resource for mobilizing public opinion and influencing policy makers (Dalton 2006, 64). As a consequence, protests have become more numerous, better planned and organized, as well as more closely connected to interest groups. Yet despite these changes they remain a key political tool for the disadvantaged and dissatisfied groups.
Data

Our models of the influence of anti-immigrant sentiment on the propensity to participate in politics among foreign-born individuals are estimated using data collected at the level of individuals in a variety of countries. The data analyzed below come from two waves of the *European Social Survey* (ESS) conducted in 2002-6 (ESS 1-2 cumulative file). The ESS project is known for its high standards of methodological rigor in survey design and cross-national data collection (Kittilson 2009). It is based on hour-long face-to-face interviews using survey questions designed for optimal cross-national comparability and strict random sampling of individuals aged 15 or older regardless of nationality, citizenship, language, or legal status to ensure representativeness of national populations.12

In addition to providing high quality data, this collaborative project is the only set of cross-national surveys that include questions about people’s attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, questions designed specifically for foreign-born respondents, as well as standard items measuring political participation (it also is the only set of surveys that ask these questions in identical format across a range of countries). The relevant survey items were available for 20 European countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Conducting our analyses requires that we pool the data for all countries in order to account for variation in cross-national differences in our main independent variable – a country’s opinion climate towards immigrants.

Dependent Variables

Since we hypothesize that the impact of opinion climate will vary across types of political engagement, we follow the extant literature and distinguish between institutionalized and uninstitutionalized forms of political engagement (following the distinction made by Barnes et al. 1979; see also Dalton 2006). We measure institutionalized participation in politics as an additive index of the following three activities respondents reported having engaged in during past 12 months: 1) contacting a politician, government or local government official, 2) working in a political party or action group, and 3) working in another organization or association.13 Our

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12The target minimum response rate is 70 percent, and minimum effective sample sizes (completely responded units) are 1,500 or 800 where population is smaller than 2 million inhabitants. Further information on the ESS methodology is available on the ESS website and from the Norwegian Science Data Services ([http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/) and [http://ess.nsd.uib.no/](http://ess.nsd.uib.no/)). For an extended discussion on the ESS sampling design, see Lynn et al. (2007).

13Our list of institutionalized activities does not include voting because many foreign-born are not citizens and therefore do not have a legal right to vote in national elections.
second dependent variable, uninstitutionalized political participation, is based on the following three activities respondents reported having done last year: 1) signing a petition, 2) taking part in a lawful demonstration, and 3) boycotting certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons. Both indexes yield scales that range from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more political engagement. Combining different types of acts allows us to capture political participation in a relatively broad way, which permits individuals to choose their preferred form of action and for us to take into account the wide variety of political acts that individuals typically engage in.

The descriptive statistics show that while the overall levels of political participation among foreigners are low, they are not much different from the ones among natives. The average scores of institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political action among foreigners are .28 and .48 respectively. Looking at the underlying distribution of reported acts, 79.9% of foreign-born respondents reported that they had not engaged in a single institutionalized act, while almost 15% said they participated in at least one. Similarly, about two thirds of foreign-born respondents (68.1%) said they had not engaged in any uninstitutionalized acts, a fifth (20%) indicated they had participated in one, and about 3% reported that they been involved in all three unconventional activities.

**Independent Variables**

**Opinion Climate**

Following prior research, our key independent variable – opinion climate towards immigrants – is based on three survey questions (cf. Schneider 2008). Respondents were asked whether immigration was bad or good for their country’s economy, whether immigrants undermined or enriched the country’s cultural life, and whether immigrants made the country a worse or better place to live. Using answers to these questions measured on a scale from 0 to 10, we first calculated an average score for each respondent that was then used to compute a country mean (for details on question wording and variable coding, see appendix).

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14Our distinction between institutionalized and uninstitutionalized participation activities follows the model of participation modes developed by Edward Muller (1972) and Alan Marsh (1974) that ordered various forms of participation along a continuum from least to most extreme, using four thresholds to mark transitions to more unorthodox, direct, illegal, and violent acts (see also Dalton 2006: 64). All activities (institutionalized and uninstitutionalized) included in our study fall within the category of orthodox political behavior, that is, they do not cross the second threshold of unconventional participation.

15In comparison, the average scores of institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political action for natives are .36 and .46 respectively.
We expect responses to these questions to reflect long-standing practices and opinions about immigrants and immigration rather than the politics of the day. The data show that this is a reasonable assumption. Because the ESS data available to us reflect surveys done at two different points in time, we can calculate the correlation of opinion climates between Wave 1 of the survey in 2002/3 and Wave 1 two years later (in 2004/5). The Pearson correlation between the two time points is .91, indicating a relatively high level of stability in the macro-opinion environment towards immigrants within countries over this period of time.

For ease of inspection, Figure 1 shows the average levels of openness towards immigrants in 20 European democracies for the two survey waves. We find that, although theoretically the scale ranges from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating more favorable opinion climate towards immigrants, the actual numbers in our sample of European countries varied from a low of 3.62 in Greece to the most friendly opinion climate in Luxembourg (at 6.24), and an average value of 5.1. The figure also shows that populations in three of the four newer democracies in our sample – Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia – exhibit more anti-immigrant opinions than other countries. At the same time, the level of openness to immigrants in these countries is similar to the United Kingdom, which appears to welcome foreigners less than Italy or Austria – that is, countries with prominent anti-immigrant parties. At the upper end of the distribution we find Scandinavian countries, such as Finland and Sweden, as well as countries such as Spain and Ireland that have allowed significant inflows of immigrants to boost their rapidly growing economies.

[Figure 1 about here]

**Foreign-born**

To identify foreigners in the ESS data, we relied on the survey question: “Were you born in this country?” Respondents who responded negatively to this question were coded as foreign-born. Pooling data across countries generates a sample of 6,219 foreign-born (8.02% of all survey respondents). Because our individual-level these analyses are based on samples of foreign-born respondents only, we sought to establish to what extent these samples matched the characteristics of the populations under investigation by conducting two preliminary analyses. First, we calculated the percentages of foreign-born respondents in the original sample and compared these to data measuring the actual percentages of foreign-born individuals collected by the European Union’s statistical agency, Eurostat. The Pearson correlation between the percentage of foreign-born individuals in the surveys and the percentage of foreign-born residents according to Eurostat in the countries included in our study was .98, indicating an extremely close fit between survey
and official statistics. Second, using a question indicating respondents’ country of origin, we then investigated the extent to which our samples of foreign-born respondents were representative of populations in the countries under investigation by calculating the percentages of individuals from different regions of the world. We differentiated individuals by the following regions of origin: Africa, Asia, the Balkans, East Central Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and Western Europe. The Pearson correlation between the percentages of foreign born individuals in our surveys from specific regions and the official percentages of foreign born residents in the countries from these regions was .90, indicating yet again a very close fit between survey and official statistics.16

**Political Dissatisfaction**

To test whether the country’s opinion climate also has an indirect effect on immigrant political participation, that is, whether it also operates as a catalyst for connecting discontent to political action among the foreign-born, we employ our second independent variable of interest – dissatisfaction with the performance of the political system. It was measured using survey question: “On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?” To facilitate the interpretation of our results, we reversed the original survey scale, ranging from 0 to 10, so that higher values indicate higher levels of dissatisfaction with democracy. Using David Easton’s categories, this indicator has been validated as measuring support for the performance of the political regime, not support for democracy as an ideal (cf. Klingemann 1999; Linde and Ekman 2003; Norris 1999).

**Control Variables**

Our multivariate analyses include a range of control variables past research has identified as consistent micro- and macro- determinants of political engagement. At the level of individuals, we include a standard set of demographic variables (age, gender, marital status) as well as indicators of people’s socio-economic resources and status (income, education, and employment). Generally speaking, people are more likely to engage in a variety of modes of political participation if they have the necessary resources to get involved. The most prominent proxy for resources has been socio-economic status (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). A substantial literature documents that education and social status (measured by income or class) have a positive impact on political engagement across a variety of countries (Almond and Verba 1963; Barnes et al. 1979; Jennings et al. 1989; Nie, Verba, and Kim 1971). Participation also tends to

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16 For more details about individual countries, please contact the authors.
increase with age, although it declines slightly among the elderly (Verba and Nie 1972). Furthermore, researchers have found that men are more likely to have the resources needed to engage in political acts (Dalton 2006) and that gender stereotypes contribute to a greater proclivity of men to be politically involved (Hansen 1997; Jennings 1983).¹⁷

In addition to standard demographic variables, we include measures of social connectedness found to be important for political participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; for the literature on immigrants, see Ramakrishnan 2005, esp. Ch.4; Fieldhouse 2008; see also Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2001 for a related approach). Further, the unemployed tend to engage politically less not just because they tend to have lower incomes but also because they do not participate in social networks in the workplace that reward political participation. Further, marital status has been found to have the strongest impact on political involvement among those who only need a slight push to participate – those with low to moderate levels of education and political interest (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Finally, we add a direct measure of social connectedness based on survey item measuring how often respondents meet socially with friends, relatives, or work colleagues. Aside from demographic variables, we include a set of attitudinal predictors of participation in a form of political interest as well as negative everyday experiences – discrimination and crime – that can motivate political engagement.

To capture immigrant specific experiences, we rely on three variables: level of democracy in the respondent’s country of origin (e.g., White et al. 2008; Black, Niemi, and Powell 1987; Ramakrishnan 2005; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Bueker 2005), duration of stay in the host country (Bass and Casper 2001a, 2001b; Liang 1994; Bueker 2005; Jones-Correa 1998, Xu 2005; White et al. 2008), and citizenship status (Just and Anderson 2011). Virtually all prior studies have measured democratic origin by categorizing respondents with regard to whether they come from a democratic or undemocratic country. Such a simple categorization misses considerable variation in immigrants’ political experiences, and it confounds a number of factors that may be associated with a country’s level of democracy. To overcome these shortcomings and provide a more fine-tuned indicator of democratic socialization, we measure democracy in the country of origin with the help of three survey questions and a measure of democracy from the

¹⁷ Research on immigrant political behavior, however, shows the opposite effect with respect to gender: foreign-born Latinas in the U.S. seem to integrate politically at a faster rate than their male compatriots (Jones-Correa 1998), although others argue that the gender effect seems to disappear when immigrants from other countries are included in empirical analyses (Bass and Casper 2001a; Junn 1999).
Polity IV dataset. To identify respondents’ country of origin, they were asked, “Were you born in this country?” If the answer was “no”, the follow up question was “In which country were you born?” To identify when respondents arrived in the host country, those who were born abroad were asked “How long ago did you first come to live in this country?” We then matched information about the immigrant’s country of origin and the time of migration with Polity IV data that measure the level of formal democracy (the extent to which citizens can express preferences about alternative policies and leaders, constrain executive power, and are guaranteed civil liberties in their daily lives) in the country of origin at the time of their departure (see appendix for further details). To facilitate interpretation of the results, we rescaled the original polity variable so that the resulting variable of democracy in the immigrant’s country of origin ranges from 0, indicating that someone was socialized in a “strongly autocratic regime,” to 20, which indicates that someone came from a “strongly democratic regime”.

Duration of stay in the host country, designed to capture the extent to which a foreign-born respondent might have been exposed to and socialized into the receiving country’s political environment, is a five-category variable: it ranges from 1, which denotes that a respondent first came to live in host country more than 20 years ago, to 5, which indicates immigrant’s arrival within last year. Finally, citizenship is based on a straightforward survey question “Are you a citizen of this country?” and is coded dichotomously, with 1 indicating a positive response and 0 – otherwise.

At the macro-level, existing literature also suggests taking into account a country’s level of economic prosperity (measured by the GDP per capita) and economic performance (annual percentage of GDP per capita growth), as participation rates and involvement tend to increase with higher levels of development and better economic conditions (Almond and Verba 1963; Lipset 1994). In addition, we account for government expenditure as a factor that might motivate public participation to influence the nature of state intervention in the economy (van Deth 1991; van Deth and Elff 2004). Finally, we control for immigration-specific contextual characteristics, such as the size of the foreign-born population and the country’s citizenship policy regime. Details on coding procedures for all variables are listed in the appendix.

Analysis and Results

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18 Polity IV is a widely used dataset of regime characteristics that provides comparative data for virtually all countries in the world on an annual basis between 1800 and 2007.
19 The original polity score ranges from -10 to 10.
To examine the impact that the opinion climate towards immigrants has on institutionalized and uninstitutionalized forms of political action among foreign-born individuals, our analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we analyze the direct effects of opinion climate and dissatisfaction on political involvement. In the second step, we test whether favorable attitudes towards immigrants also play an indirect role – that is, as a catalyst linking immigrant discontent with political action. Finally, to test the robustness of our results – that is, to ensure that our results are not affected by endogeneity and omitted variable bias – we present two-stage instrumental variable estimations.

**Direct Effects of Opinion Climate and Political Discontent**

Because our analysis requires that we combine information collected at the level of individuals and at the level of countries, our dataset has a multi-level structure (where one level, the individual, is nested within the other, the country). To avoid a number of statistical problems associated with such a data structure (clustering, non-constant variance, underestimation of standard errors, etc.) (cf. Snijders and Bosker 1999; for applications in political science, see Steenbergen and Jones 2002), we estimated multi-level mixed-effects maximum likelihood models with random intercepts (to allow for cross-country heterogeneity in levels of participation) and respondents clustered at the level of countries.

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that a positive opinion climate increases immigrants’ political engagement in uninstitutionalized political acts but has no effect on institutionalized forms of political action, such as working in a political party or contacting government officials. Thus, we find that foreigners’ engagement in unconventional politics – which tends to be less routinized or mobilized through conventional channels – is indeed more sensitive to pro- or anti-immigrant sentiments in their host country than are conventional political acts. Moreover, consistent with our expectations, the results show that foreigners who are more dissatisfied with the performance of the political system are more engaged in both types of political action. However, political discontent has a significantly stronger effect (both substantively and statistically) on unconventional political participation than on conventional action.  

[Table 1 about here]

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20 It is worth noting that this contrasts with the patterns of political engagement among native-born individuals: dissatisfaction with democracy is negatively correlated with both institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political action among native-born respondents (-.09 for institutionalized and -.06 for uninstitutionalized engagement).
While a friendly opinion climate thus appears to be a critical factor shaping uninstitutionalized participation among immigrants, involvement in institutionalized politics depends to a much greater degree on migrants’ formal incorporation into the polity: the results show that naturalized foreigners exhibit significantly higher levels of conventional participation than noncitizens, while citizenship has no effect on uninstitutionalized political action. Similarly, the percentage of foreign-born residents in a country matters only for institutionalized participation, and its effect is negative. This suggests that a higher share of foreign-born residents may inhibit immigrant political mobilization, a finding that possibly reflects a collective action problem. As well, the level of economic development affects institutionalized participation as foreign-born residents in countries with higher GDP per capita are more engaged in politics (GDP per capita is significant at the .1 level for uninstitutionalized political action).

The coefficients for other control variables show some interesting patterns as well. Specifically, they indicate that, while experiences of discrimination and having been a victim of crime increase both types of political action, demographic characteristics have a more powerful effect on unconventional participation. For example, we find that female, unmarried, and employed foreigners are more likely to be engaged in politics than male, married, or unemployed ones, but this is true only for uninstitutionalized political acts. Further, we find that income has no effect on political participation among foreign born, while social connectedness, education, and interest in politics contribute positively to both types of political action. Finally, with respect to immigrant-specific variables, the results show that citizenship policies have no effect on political participation. However, foreigners who arrived more recently participate less, while the level of democracy in the country of origin has a positive effect only on unconventional political participation, suggesting that norms and skills acquired through democratic socialization are more important for generating less formalized types of action among foreigners.

**Interactive Effects of Opinion Climate and Political Discontent on Political Action**

Our results of the interaction between openness towards immigrants and political dissatisfaction (shown in Table 1) indicate that the opinion climate also plays an important indirect role. Specifically, foreigners who live in countries with a more favorable opinion climate and are dissatisfied with politics in their host country are particularly inclined to engage in less institutionalized forms of participation. Openness towards immigrants continues to have a direct positive effect in these models, suggesting that pro-immigrant attitudes increases political participation even among foreign-born who are fully satisfied with the way democracy works in their country of residence. However, the additive term for the dissatisfaction with democracy
coefficient is no longer statistically significant, indicating that migrants’ grievances are unlikely to be translated into political action in countries with high levels of hostility towards immigrants.

How much does opinion climate contribute to political participation among foreigners in substantive terms? To assess our results in greater detail, we calculate the marginal effect of opinion climate at the highest and lowest level of dissatisfaction with democracy among foreigners. Figure 2 plots the magnitude of these effects for uninstitutionalized participation, using interaction model estimations reported in Table 1. The dark-grey bars indicate the levels of uninstitutionalized acts among foreign born who are completely dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their host country, and the light-gray bars participation by foreigners who are fully satisfied, holding other variables at their means and dichotomous variables – at their medians; the vertical bars show the 95% confidence intervals.

Calculations of the substantive effects reveal that our key variables of interest indeed have a sizable impact on uninstitutionalized political participation among foreign-born. Specifically, Figure 2 indicates that the participation score of a foreigner who is extremely dissatisfied with democracy and lives in the most immigrant-friendly environment in our sample of countries (Luxembourg) is .809 higher than the participation score of an individual who is similarly dissatisfied but resides in a country that is highly hostile towards immigrants (Greece) (.904 vs. .095). Similarly, there is a considerable difference in participation levels between the most and the least satisfied respondents in the most immigrant-friendly country (.475 vs. .904), while the gap between the most and the least satisfied in the most hostile climate towards immigrants is rather modest (a difference of only .067). This suggests that the opinion climate towards immigrants has a powerful mobilizing impact on unconventional activities among the foreign-born, especially for those who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their host society.

[Figure 2 about here]

Robustness Checks: An Instrumental Variable Approach

One difficulty with estimating the effects of opinion climate on immigrant engagement in politics is that pro-immigrant attitudes might change as a result of immigrant political action, suggesting that opinion climate might be endogenous to political activism. In addition, it is important to demonstrate that differences we observe in the levels of foreigners’ political action are indeed a consequence of opinion climate rather than some unobserved heterogeneity not captured by our data that might be driving both opinion climate and political participation among foreign-born.
To address the potential problems of endogeneity and omitting an unobserved but relevant explanatory variable, we rely on a two-stage instrumental variable (IV) approach (Baum 2006, Ch 8). Ignoring these problems may produce biased and inconsistent estimates, but these can be corrected using the IV approach under the assumption that valid instruments can be identified. This means that we need to find instruments that have a significant partial correlation with opinion climate, controlling for all the other determinants of political participation, while being uncorrelated with the error term in the model of political participation.

We argue that the level of unemployment and the share of university educated population in a host society can be used as such instruments. One key argument that has frequently been made in the literature is that threat is a prime motivator behind anti-immigration attitudes. Perhaps most commonly, this threat has been examined with regard to labor market competition (Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Since threat to scarce economic resources generally increases people’s hostility towards out-groups (e.g. Hardin 1995), labor market competition has been long thought to be an important source of anti-immigration sentiment and support for more restrictive migration policies in Europe and elsewhere (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Fetzer 2000; Money 1999; Hix and Noury 2007). We therefore include a percentage of unemployed to predict pro-immigrant opinion climate, with an expectation that higher levels of unemployment in a country will produce a more hostile opinion climate towards newcomers in their host society.

Aside from economic threat, recent research also emphasizes cultural threat as a powerful determinant of people’s attitudes towards migration. Specifically, scholars have argued that natives commonly perceive migration and immigrants as constituting a challenge to traditional values and practices as well as to their national identity and cultural cohesiveness (e.g., Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007; see also Schneider 2008). Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) argue that education plays a particularly important role in this respect, as more educated respondents form significantly less racist attitudes, place greater value on cultural diversity, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism. The positive relationship between education and pro-immigrant views is attributed to the fact that most Western educational systems are designed to increase social tolerance not only by increasing students’ knowledge of foreign cultures but also by generating more diverse and cosmopolitan social networks, especially at college level (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007: 405). Since the critical difference exists between

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21Moreover, a voluminous literature has documented the success of extreme right-wing parties that position themselves as defenders of the national community and culture against foreigners (e.g., Betz and Immerfall 1998; Hainsworth 1992; Kitschelt and McGann 1995). While part of their appeal is to those who are marginal in the labor market, another part is geared toward highlighting traditional or conservative values that fuel opposition to social change, including the addition of new migrants.
those who are university educated and those who are not (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007: 429), we include percentage of university educated as our second instrumental variable to predict pro-immigrant opinion climate. We expect that higher share of university educated individuals will result in more favorable attitudes towards newcomers in their host society.

While the levels of unemployment and tertiary education matters for opinion climate towards immigrants in their host society, we know of no theories of immigrant political participation arguing that these factors directly influence political action among foreign-born. Thus, we have theoretical and empirical reasons to justify the selection of our instruments; however, we still need to demonstrate that our instruments meet the assumptions for the IV approach to provide consistent estimates. The assumption that the instruments are statistically independent from the disturbance process cannot be verified in the data directly (Baum 2006: 191). However, since our model is over-identified, we can provide evidence that instruments are adequate by reporting test statistics below.  

To operationalize our instruments, we rely on the World Bank indicator of unemployed measured as a percentage of total labor force in a host country at the time of the ESS fieldwork. In our data set, this variable ranges from 2.9% in Switzerland in 2002 to 19.9% in Poland in 2002, with the average of 7.1% in our sample of countries. The prevalence of university education is a variable we created using information from the ESS data. The ESS asked respondents what was the highest level of education achieved. We assigned respondents who reported having achieved first or second stage of tertiary education a value of 1, and 0 – otherwise. We then used this dichotomous variable to calculate a percentage of population with tertiary education in their country of residence. This variable ranges from 7.9% in the Czech Republic in 2002 to 35% in Norway, with the average of 17.8% in our sample of countries.

We report the results of two-stage IV estimations in Table 2 and Table 3 below. The first stage is designed to predict opinion climate towards immigrants using our instruments while controlling for all variables specified in the model of political participation. Since the IV approach does not allow for multi-level modeling, we also include country fixed effects to account for cross-country heterogeneity in the levels political participation, and estimate our models using robust standard errors (see Arceneaux and Nickerson 2009). The second stage then employs instrumented opinion climate as an independent variable in the model of political participation among foreign-born. These estimations also include country fixed effects.  

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22 For a similar approach, see Gabel and Scheve (2008).
23 The inclusion of country fixed effects requires that we drop substantive macro-level controls previously used in multi-level models due to collinearity.
Since we hypothesize that opinion climate interacts with dissatisfaction with democracy in shaping immigrant political action, we had to make one additional modification to our original model specification. Both stages in the IV models are estimated simultaneously, preventing us from generating a multiplicative term with instrumented opinion climate produced between the two stages. An alternative way of dealing with independent variables that are hypothesized to have an interactive effect with another independent variable is to stratify the sample into two subsamples (Hanushek and Jackson 1977, 101; see also Jusko and Shiveley 2005). We therefore split our sample between foreigners who are satisfied with the way democracy works in their host country and those who are not, using the median value of this variable among foreign-born to ensure that both samples were of similar size. If our hypothesis of the interactive effect is correct, we should observe a positive and statistically significant effect of opinion climate on political participation among politically dissatisfied foreigners, especially with respect to uninstitutionalized political acts, and a smaller or insignificant effect among those who are satisfied with the political system.

The first stage of the IV estimations, reported in Table 2, indicates that both instruments have the anticipated signs and are significantly correlated with pro-immigrant opinion climate. We find that, controlling for all predictors of immigrant political participation as well as country fixed effects, university education contributes positively to pro-immigrant opinion climate while unemployment undermines it. To systematically assess the validity of our instruments, we rely on several test statistics. First, the F-statistic for test of excluded instruments is equal to 3,788 and statistically significant at less than .001, indicating that our instruments are jointly significant. Furthermore, the Hansen J-test statistic in the models reported in Table 3 is statistically insignificant, showing that the instruments are appropriately uncorrelated with the error term in the second-stage estimations. Taken together, the results indicate that the selected instruments are relevant and statistically independent from the disturbance process, satisfying the key requirements of valid instruments of the IV approach.

The results of the second stage estimations, shown in Table 3, are in line with our expectations and the multi-level results reported above. As before, we find that pro-immigrant opinion climate has a positive effect on immigrant political action, but this effect is more pronounced among foreigners who are more dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their host country. What is more, the positive impact of opinion climate is particularly pronounced in the model of uninstitutionalized political action, although it reaches .1 level of statistical significance.

24 The median value is 3 on a scale from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating a more dissatisfied response
significance among politically dissatisfied foreigners in the model of institutionalized political action as well. Hence, our IV estimations indicate that opinion climate towards immigrants has a genuine effect on political action among foreigners that is robust to endogeneity and omitted variable bias.

Discussion

Few issues have been more sensitive or politically explosive in contemporary European politics than immigration and immigrant incorporation in their host societies, perhaps because they touch on raw nerves closely connected to a country’s identity and sovereignty (Howard 2006, 450). On one hand, skeptics of immigration fear that changing the racial, ethnic, and religious composition of European societies introduces new social tensions, particularly at times of economic downturn and when immigrants are poorly integrated into their host societies. On the other hand, proponents of immigration believe that ethnic and racial heterogeneity enriches the cultural fabric of societies and brings important economic benefits such as a younger labor force necessary to offset an increasing share of the soon to retire population across a number of European states.

One thing is clear: these issues are unlikely to fade away any time soon. In 2003, roughly 23 million people living in the member states of the European Union were born outside of the country they resided in. Literally from all over the world, they constituted between around 1% (Lithuania, Czech Republic) and 35% (Luxembourg) of the population, with an average foreign-born population of about 5% across the EU. The foreign-born now constitute more than 10% of the total population in many European nations, with countries such as Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland, Germany, and Sweden recording proportions of foreign-born residents as high as or higher than those found in traditional immigration countries such as the United States (Lemaitre and Thoreau 2006). Given the increasing dependence of European countries on foreign-born labor due to aging native populations and the need for skilled workers in a highly competitive global environment, the smooth and successful political integration of new arrivals appears crucial for the quality and stability of democratic life in countries with sizable immigrant populations.

While political scientists have paid increasing attention to the effects that changing patterns of immigration may have on the attitudes and behavior of native populations or on the restrictiveness of immigration policies,\(^22\) we know surprisingly little about how the opinions

\(^22\)For research on public opinion, see Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007); Citrin and Sides (2008); Sides and Citrin (2007), Citrin et al. (1997); Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior (2004); Fetzer (2000); Mughan and
native-born populations hold about immigrants and immigration – what we refer to below as a country’s opinion climate – affect immigrants and their incorporation into the body politic. In fact, we know of no studies that have sought to examine how the level of pro- or anti-immigration sentiment affects the extent and nature of immigrant political engagement.26

This raises important issues for students of immigrant politics and policymakers alike. In recent years, a number of European countries have sought to address the issue of how to treat migrants, and specifically how to incorporate them into their societies, economies, and polities. Countries have sought to regulate the flows of immigration and revisited their immigrant citizenship laws. These debates and the decisions that emerge from them have real political implications. They define who is a member of the polity, and they communicate to immigrants whether they are welcome. To better understand the consequences that a society’s opinions about immigrants have on the level and nature of immigrants’ political engagement in European democracies, our paper thus focused on several important but unanswered questions in previous research: does political engagement among foreign-born depend on the opinion climate toward immigrants in the country they live in? Does the degree of hostility or hospitality affect the kinds of political action immigrants engage in? And, finally, does the opinion climate shape the extent to which political grievances translate into political participation among foreign, and what kinds of acts are more likely to be driven by political dissatisfaction?

On a general level, we argue that a more comprehensive explanation of political engagement among immigrants requires not only the consideration of information about individual attributes, experiences, and attitudes or formal political institutions, rules, and political allies, but also taking into account the macro context in which immigrants choose to engage with the political system. As such, this research builds on a growing body of literature that seeks to develop multilevel models of political behavior designed to systematically incorporate information about individuals and the political context they are exposed to (Anderson 2007) and contributes to it by focusing on informal, rather than formal constraints on political action.

More specifically, our study sought to shed light on a hitherto unexamined question – the role of macro social context in the form of a country’s opinion climate on political participation among foreigners – as well as to put competing expectations about the impact of this context to a

Paxton (2006); for research on immigration policies pursued by host governments, see Money (1997), (1999); Bleich (2003); Hansen (2000); Howard (2010); Hix and Noury (2007).

26Perhaps one exception is Koopmans’ (2004) study that sought to assess the impact on pro-immigrant public discourse on immigrant claim-making in major newspapers, both measured using newspaper content analysis in three European countries. This analysis, however, offers a limited perspective as it focuses on only one type of immigrant political engagement – claim-making in traditional printed media – and ignores a wider range of political actions immigrants typically engage in.
stringent test across a wide range of cases and outside the U.S. context. We argue that the opinion climate – specifically, the level of hostility or hospitality toward immigrants – shapes immigrants’ willingness to engage in political action, such that a more positive opinion climate fosters more participation.

We also argue for the importance of distinguishing between institutionalized and uninstitutionalized political acts: specifically, while a hostile opinion climate impedes political engagement among immigrants, this effect is conditional on the type of political action. Our analyses reveal that a positive opinion climate towards immigrants increases their political engagement in uninstitutionalized acts but has no impact on participation in institutionalized politics. Moreover, we posit and find that immigrants are more likely to translate political discontent into political action if the opinion climate is favorable toward immigrants. Consistent with expectations, the results show that the effect of the opinion climate on uninstitutionalized participation is particularly pronounced among immigrants dissatisfied with the political system’s performance.

This conclusion may not be politically congenial to everyone. Immigrants are more likely to engage in political action if they feel dissatisfied with the political process. This finding stands in contrast to conventional findings in the literature on political participation among majority populations. But recall that our results also show that a friendly macro-social environment fosters the peaceful expression of such grievances. Given that the kinds of institutionalized and uninstitutionalized acts analyzed here are legal and non-violent, this finding is encouraging. When aggrieved, immigrants appear to channel their frustrations into nonviolent, albeit uninstitutionalized political action, in particular in countries with majority populations who hold more positive opinions about immigrants. At a minimum, these results indicate that there is good reason to believe that a hospitable macro-social environment can counteract immigrants’ political dissatisfaction from going unexpressed, and this may ultimately prevent more violent expressions of such sentiments.
Appendix. Measures and Coding

**Institutionalized political action.** Additive index based on three survey items: “There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? 1) Contacted a politician, government or local government official, 2) Worked in a political party or action group? 3) Worked in another organization or association?” The resulting ordinal variable ranges from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more involvement in institutionalized political acts.

**Uninstitutionalized political action.** Additive index based on three survey items: “There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? 1) Signed a petition? 2) Taken part in a lawful public demonstration? 3) Boycotted certain products?” The resulting ordinal variable ranges from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating more involvement in uninstitutionalized political acts.

**Opinion climate towards immigrants.** Country mean based on three survey questions: 1) “Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country’s] economy that people come to live here from other countries?” 2) “Would you say that [country’s] cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? 3) “Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?” (Each item ranges from 0 ‘most anti-immigrant attitude’ to 10 ‘most pro-immigrant’ attitude.) We first calculated an average based on these three items for each respondent; this average was then used to calculate the country mean. Since our study employs the cumulative ESS1-2 file, we calculated separate values of the macro-opinion climate towards immigrants for the first and second round of the survey, conducted in 2002/3 and 2004/6 (For a similar approach, see Schneider 2008).

**Dissatisfaction with democracy.** Based on survey question: “And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?” 0 ‘extremely satisfied’, 10 ‘extremely dissatisfied’.

**Citizenship status.** Based on survey question: “Are you a citizen of [country]?” 1 ‘yes’, 0 ‘otherwise’.

**Discriminated against.** Based on survey question: “Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?” 1 ‘yes’, 0 ‘no’.

**Crime victim.** Based on survey question: “Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or assault in the last 5 years?” 1 ‘yes’, 0 ‘no’.

**Recent immigrant.** Based on survey question: “How long ago did you first come to live in [country]?” 5 ‘within last year’, 4 ‘1-5 years ago’, 3 ‘6-10 years ago’, 2 ‘11-20 years ago’, 1 ‘more than 20 years ago’.

**Democracy in country of origin.** Based on survey questions: “Were you born in [country]?” If a respondent said “no”, then the follow up question was “In which country were you born?” and “How long ago did you first come to live in [country]?” Information about immigrant country of origin and the recency of immigrant arrival were then matched up with the polity scores from the Polity IV data set [http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/). Since recency of immigrant arrival is a categorical variable that captures only approximate number of years in host country, we calculated variable values in the following way. If a survey was conducted in 2002, then those who arrived more than 20 years ago were assigned the average value of the 1972-1981 polity score in their country of origin, those who arrived 11-20 years ago the 1982-1991 score, those who arrived 6-10 years ago the 1992-1996 score, those who arrived 1-5 years ago the 1997-2001 score, and those who arrived within the last year the 2002 score. We then calculated values...
separately for respondents interviewed in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. This generated a variable that ranges from 0 ‘least democratic regime’ to 20 ‘most democratic regime’ (recoded from the original polity measure that ranges from -10 to 10).

**Political interest.** Based on survey question: “How interested would you say you are in politics?” 0 ‘not at all interested’, 1 ‘hardly interested’, 2 ‘quite interested’, 3 ‘very interested’.

**Married.** 1 ‘married’, 0 ‘otherwise’.

**Male.** 1 ‘male’, 0 ‘female’.

**Age.** Number of years (calculated by subtracting respondent’s year of birth from the year of interview).

**Income.** Based on survey question: “Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household’s income nowadays?” 0 ‘very difficult on present income’, 1 ‘difficult on present income’, 2 ‘coping on present income’, 3 ‘living comfortably on present income’.

**Education.** Years of full-time education completed.

**Social connectedness.** Based on survey question: “How often do you meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues?” 1 ‘never’, 2 ‘less than once a month’, 3 ‘once a month’, 4 ‘several times a month’, 5 ‘once a week’, 6 ‘several times a week’, 7 ‘every day’.

**Unemployed.** Based on two survey questions: “Which of these descriptions applies to what you have been doing for the last 7 days? 1) unemployed and actively looking for a job; 2) unemployed, wanting a job but not actively looking for a job. This is a dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if a respondent gave a positive answer to at least one of these two questions, 0 – otherwise.

**GDP per capita.** Based on purchasing power parity (PPP) in constant 2005 international dollars (in 1000’s) in 2002 (for the Round 1 of the ESS data) and 2004 (for the Round 2 of the ESS data). **Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators, ESDS International, University of Manchester (2008).

**Economic growth.** Annual percentage growth rate of GDP per capita in 2002 (for the Round 1 of the ESS data) and 2004 (for the Round 2 of the ESS data). **Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators, ESDS International, University of Manchester (2008).

**Government expenditure (% of GDP).** General government final consumption expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2002 (for the Round 1 of the ESS data) and 2004 (for the Round 2 of the ESS data). The measure takes into account all government current expenditures for purchases of goods and services (including compensation of employees). It also includes most expenditures on national defense and security, but excludes government military expenditures that are part of government formation. **Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators, ESDS International, University of Manchester (2008).

**Citizenship policies in host country.** Citizenship Policy Index (Howard 2009, see also Howard 2005 and 2006). Additive index based on three indicators: a) citizenship by birth 0 ‘not allowed’ 1 ‘allowed’; b) residency requirement for naturalization: countries that require at least ten years are coded 0 ‘difficult’; those that require six to nine years of residence are coded 1 ‘medium’, and those that require five years or less are coded 2 ‘easy’; c) acceptance of dual citizenship for immigrants: 0 ‘no’ 1 ‘yes’. The resulting variable ranges from 0 ‘restrictive citizenship policies’ to 6 ‘liberal citizenship policies’.

**% Foreign-born in host country.** **Source:** Eurostat 2001 Census Data.
% university educated in host country. Based on the ESS question: “What is the highest level of education you have achieved?” Respondents who reported having achieved first or second stage of tertiary education were assigned a value of 1, and 0 – otherwise. This variable was then used to calculate the percentage of population with tertiary education in a country.

% unemployed in host country. Total unemployment as a percentage of total labor force in a host country at the time of the ESS fieldwork. Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, ESDS International, University of Manchester (2011).
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<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied against</td>
<td>.098*** (.025)</td>
<td>.097*** (.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime victim</td>
<td>.060*** (.020)</td>
<td>.060** (.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrant</td>
<td>-.047*** (.009)</td>
<td>-.047*** (.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy in origin country</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>.121*** (.009)</td>
<td>.121*** (.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>.013 (.018)</td>
<td>.013 (.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.015 (.017)</td>
<td>.015 (.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.007* (.003)</td>
<td>.007* (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-.000* (.000)</td>
<td>-.000 (.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.010 (.011)</td>
<td>-.011 (.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.018*** (.002)</td>
<td>.018*** (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social connectedness</td>
<td>.033*** (.006)</td>
<td>.033*** (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>-.017 (.032)</td>
<td>-.017 (.032)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>.011*** (.002)</td>
<td>.011*** (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic growth (%)</td>
<td>.010 (.008)</td>
<td>.010 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government expenditure (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-.004 (.004)</td>
<td>-.004 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship policies in host country</td>
<td>-.001 (.008)</td>
<td>-.001 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Foreign-born in host country</td>
<td>-.016*** (.004)</td>
<td>-.015*** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.717*** (.157)</td>
<td>-.646*** (.182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation of random intercept</td>
<td>.048 (.014)</td>
<td>.048 (.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation of residuals</td>
<td>.575 (.006)</td>
<td>.575 (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>4,999</td>
<td>4,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of groups</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald $X^2$ (df)</td>
<td>560.35(21)***</td>
<td>560.81(22)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Results are mixed-effects maximum likelihood estimates using STATA 11.0’s xtmixed command. Numbers in parentheses indicate standard errors. †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed).*
Table 2. Predicting Opinion Climate towards Immigrants in 20 European Countries, 2002-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Pro-Immigrant Opinion Climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% university educated in host country</td>
<td>.042***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% unemployed in host country</td>
<td>-.130***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included exogenous individual-level regressors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial R-squared for excluded instruments</td>
<td>.610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-statistic for test of excluded instruments</td>
<td>3,788.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F p-value</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The results are OLS coefficient estimates and their robust standard errors (in parentheses): *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.*
Table 3. Instrumental Variable Estimates of Institutionalized and Uninstitutionalized Political Action among Foreign-Born in 20 European Countries, 2002-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Institutionalized Action</th>
<th>Uninstitutionalized Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied with Democracy</td>
<td>Dissatisfied with Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-immigrant opinion</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.112†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.050)</td>
<td>(.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climate (instrumented)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship status</td>
<td>.081**</td>
<td>.059*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminated against</td>
<td>.075*</td>
<td>.117**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.038)</td>
<td>(.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime victim</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.074*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.031)</td>
<td>(.032)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrant</td>
<td>-.063***</td>
<td>-.031*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.012)</td>
<td>(.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy in origin country</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.002)</td>
<td>(.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>.128***</td>
<td>.116***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.014)</td>
<td>(.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>-.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.025)</td>
<td>(.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.048*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-.000</td>
<td>-.000†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>-.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.015)</td>
<td>(.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.013***</td>
<td>.026***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social connectedness</td>
<td>.036***</td>
<td>.026***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>-.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.050)</td>
<td>(.040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.821**</td>
<td>-1.182***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.289)</td>
<td>(.339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>2.566</td>
<td>2.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen J-statistic</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>2.565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X² (1) p-value</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The results are IV coefficient estimates and their robust standard errors (in parentheses): †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Pro-immigrant opinion climate is instrumented using % unemployed and % with university education in a host country’s population.
Figure 2. Marginal Effects of Pro-Immigrant Opinion Climate and Satisfaction with Democracy among Foreigners on their Uninstitutionalized Political Action.

Note: Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals