

# Pre-Analysis Plan: How Does Contact with Street-Level Bureaucrats Impact Immigrant Political Incorporation?

Minhye Joo \*

`minhye.joo@email.ucr.edu`

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## 1 Introduction

How do immigrants develop their attitudes toward the American political system? What leads them to engage in politics in the host country? Political scientists have highlighted the importance of learning from parents and civic education about adult political attitudes and behaviors (Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Valentino and Sears, 1998; Jennings et al., 2009; Niemi and Hepburn, 1995). I propose that interactions with the new system also affect immigrants' political integration because interactions with the political system provide a path for immigrants to learn about how the new system works and how the government perceives and responds to them, which may affect the development of political attitudes toward the new country. In this project, I specifically focus on immigrants' contact with street-level bureaucrats.

To test the effect of bureaucratic encounters on immigrant incorporation, I conduct a large-N survey and two survey experiments. I conducted two pilot tests to check the validity of the treatments. This Pre-Analysis Plan focuses on two survey experiments that have not been conducted yet.

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\*Ph.D. Candidate, University of California, Riverside.

## 2 Research Questions

- (1) What comprises positive/negative bureaucratic interactions among immigrants?
- (2) Do immigrants evaluate their bureaucratic interactions differently than native-born nonimmigrants?
- (3) How does contact with street-level bureaucrats affect immigrants' political attitudes and behaviors in the United States?

## 3 Hypotheses

### **American Identity and Sense of Belonging**

*Hypothesis 1.1: If immigrants have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats, then they will have a higher degree of sense of belonging than immigrants who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats.*

*Hypothesis 1.2: If immigrants have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats, then they will have a stronger American Identity than immigrants who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats.*

### **Attitudes Toward the American Political System**

*Hypothesis 2.1: If immigrants have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats, then they will have a higher degree of external political efficacy than immigrants who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats.*

*Hypothesis 2.2: If immigrants have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats, then they will have a higher degree of trust in local government than immigrants who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats.*

In addition, I argue that the effect of bureaucratic interactions will be stronger among immigrants whose parents are less familiar with politics in the host country and/or who finished their high school education in their country of origin. While the native-born population can learn about American politics from their parents and school, immigrants may not have those opportunities. Therefore, immigrants are more likely than the native-born population to rely on bureaucratic experiences after migration as a substitute for their lack of information, which will help create their attitudes toward the host country.

*Hypothesis 2.3: The effects of bureaucratic experiences on trust in government and political efficacy will be largest among first-generation immigrants, moderate among second-generation immigrants, and smallest among non-immigrants.*

### **Political Engagement**

Lastly, I test whether contact with street-level bureaucrats impacts immigrant political participation. I measure both conventional and unconventional participation. Conventional participation includes political activities through existing institutions, such as voting, contacting a politician, or donating money to parties or candidates. Unconventional participation indicates a political activity that occurs outside of the institutions, such as attending a protest, demonstrating, boycotting, or signing a petition. I first hypothesize that positive bureaucratic encounters facilitate political participation among immigrants.

*Hypothesis 3.1: Immigrants who have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats are more likely to engage in political participation than those who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats.*

However, I expect that positive bureaucratic interactions do not always facilitate immigrant political engagement, and negative bureaucratic interactions do not always discourage immigrants from participating in politics. I argue that whether positive or negative interactions with street-level bureaucrats encourage or discourage political participation depends on the degree of one's internal efficacy. Internal efficacy will moderate the effect of political attitudes on political participation among immigrants.

*Hypothesis 3.2: Immigrants who have positive experiences with street-level bureaucrats are more likely to engage in conventional participation than those who have negative experiences.*

*Hypothesis 3.3: As the level of internal efficacy increases, the effect of positive experiences on conventional participation also increases among immigrants.*

*Hypothesis 3.4: Immigrants who have negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats are more likely to engage in unconventional participation than those who have positive experiences.*

*Hypothesis 3.5: As the level of internal efficacy increases, the effect of negative experiences on unconventional participation also increases among immigrants.*

## **4 Research Design**

### **4.1 Sampling**

I will recruit a nationally representative sample of 2500 subjects via YouGov, with 1500 immigrants and 1000 nonimmigrants. Immigrant subjects will be either first- or second-generation, whose parents were born outside of the United States and/or who themselves were born outside of the United States. After answering a battery of demographic questions, subjects will be randomly assigned to either the vignette survey experiment or the induction experiment block. 1000 subjects with 600 immigrant and 400 nonimmigrant backgrounds will be assigned to the induction experiment block, and 1500 subjects with 1000 immigrant and 500 non-immigrant backgrounds will be assigned to one of the vignette blocks.

### **4.2 Survey Design**

This survey includes a within-subjects (or repeated-measures) design with two survey experiments - a vignette-based experiment and an induction experiment. In the pre-treatment block, subjects will receive one question about their external political efficacy, one about their sense of belonging, and two questions about their internal political efficacy with additional demographic questions. Then, they will be randomly assigned to one of the experimental blocks, the vignette survey experiment or the induction experiment. Lastly, after completing their experimental block, subjects will be asked about additional demographics, political orientations, their past bureaucratic interactions, and a series of outcome measures in the post-treatment block. To make within-subject comparisons, respondents will be asked about their external political efficacy and sense of belonging both before and after the experimental block.

### **4.3 Vignette Survey Experiment**

Subjects will randomly be assigned to receive one vignette describing a hypothetical scenario that could happen in a local government agency. I chose two agencies for the vignettes, local police and public schools, based on the four pilot tests that I conducted in 2023 and 2024. Subjects will read one hypothetical story about either a positive or negative bureaucratic interaction that could happen at one of the agencies (for wordings, see Appendix A).

**Manipulation Check:** For the manipulation check, I will ask respondents which agency was featured in the story, how the story made them feel, and how the person in the story was treated.

## 4.4 Induction Experiment

The induction experiment will ask subjects to recall and write about their past experiences with street-level bureaucrats. I will manipulate the experience that subjects are asked to describe. Subjects will be randomly assigned to one of three groups, two treatment groups and one neutral group. The first treatment group will be asked to describe their most positive experience with street-level bureaucrats, and the second treatment group will be asked to describe their most negative experience with street-level bureaucrats. The neutral group will write about one of their past bureaucratic interactions without priming positive or negative experiences. Subjects will have unlimited time and space to write their responses (for wordings, see Appendix B).

**Manipulation check:** For a manipulation check, I will use sentiment analysis on the text responses to determine if the responses differ as expected based on the assignment to the positive, negative, or neutral groups. Also, two research assistants will manually review and categorize the text responses without the information about the experiment and treatment.

## 4.5 Outcome Variables

In this project, I look at three types of social and political outcomes. The first set of outcome variables is American identity and sense of belonging. The second set of outcome variables is political attitudes toward the American political system. I will measure political attitudes toward the American political system using measures of external political efficacy and trust in different levels of government. The last set of outcome variables is political engagement. I will ask which types of political activities they have engaged in since January 2023 and how they are likely to engage in different types of political activities during the next 12 months (for wording, see Appendix C).

## 5 Analysis

### 5.1 Treatment Effect

The hypotheses will be tested using a one-tailed regression test, and I will report 95% confidence intervals for the average treatment effect obtained from OLS regression. For the robustness check, I will run the same model with covariates, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, income, partisanship, ideology, and political interest.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.5 argue for a direct effect of bureaucratic interactions on outcome variables. I will run a series of regression models with OLS to examine the direct effect. I expect that the coefficient on the treatment variable will be significantly different than 0.

$$Y_{var} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Treatment} + \text{Covariates} + \epsilon$$

In the induction experiment, the baseline group for comparison will be the neutral group. I will examine whether the responses from the treatment groups are statistically different from those from the neutral group.

In the vignette experiment, I will compare the effect of positive and negative treatments to examine whether the conditions yield responses that are statistically distinct from each other. I will first estimate the treatment effects separately for the public school teacher and local police vignettes. Then, I will pool the responses from two vignettes to test whether the treatment effects of two positive treatments can be statistically distinguished from the responses from two negative treatments.

I will also estimate the complier average causal effect (CACE) using a 2-stage least squared regression with the variables from the manipulation check. I will use manipulation check questions to code the compliance with the vignette survey experiment. I will code how many correct answers each subject selects based on their assigned treatment and create a continuous variable from 0 to 3. Also, I will employ two research assistants to code the compliance rate for the induction treatment. Research assistants will manually read the open-ended responses from the induction treatment and create a variable about compliance. For instance, if a response follows the instruction, coders will assign 1, while a response that does not follow the instruction will be assigned 0.

After creating the variables, I will use assignment to treatment and control as an instrument variable and regress this instrument variable on the compliance rate

variable. Then, I will regress the coefficient from the previous regression on the outcome variables to estimate the treatment effect for the compliers.<sup>1</sup>

$$C_{Treated} = \gamma + \gamma_1 \text{Intent.To.Treat} + \epsilon_{1i}$$

$$Y_{var} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \hat{C}_{Treated} + \epsilon_{2i}$$

**Within-Subjects Analysis:** For within-subjects analysis, I will compare the responses from pre- and post-treatment for the external political efficacy and sense of belonging measures to identify whether the treatment affects the degree of external political efficacy and sense of belonging among respondents. I will calculate the difference between the pre-treatment and post-treatment measures of political efficacy and sense of belonging and estimate the average treatment effect within the subjects with OLS regression. I will report 95% confidence intervals for the average treatment effect within the subjects because I have a directional hypothesis. I expect that the coefficient on the treatment variable will be significantly different than 0.

$$Y_{post.treatment-pre.treatment} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Treatment} + \text{Covariates} + \epsilon$$

## Heterogeneous Effects by Immigration Status

Hypothesis 2.4 is about a heterogeneous treatment effect of bureaucratic interaction by immigration status. To test it, I will include an interaction term with immigration status and the treatment in the previous regression model. I expect that the coefficient of the interaction term between immigration status and the treatment will be significantly different from 0. To be specific, the absolute values of the coefficients among the first-generation immigrant subjects will be the largest, while those among nonimmigrant subjects will be the smallest.

$$Y_{var} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Treatment} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration.Status}$$

$$+ \beta_3 \text{Treatment} * \text{Immigration.Status} + \text{Covariates} + \epsilon$$

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the estimation, see Angrist et al. (1996), Albertson and Lawrence (2009), or Sovey and Green (2011).

## 5.2 Heterogeneous Effects by Internal Efficacy

Hypotheses 3.3 and 3.5 expect a heterogeneous effect of bureaucratic interaction on political participation depending on respondents' internal efficacy. To test these hypotheses, I will ask subjects about their internal political efficacy in the pre-treatment block and examine if the treatment effects differ based on respondents' level of internal political efficacy with OLS regression. Here, I also expect that the coefficient of the interaction term will be significantly different than 0.

$$Y_{var} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Treatment} + \beta_2 \text{Internal.Efficacy} \\ + \beta_3 \text{Treatment} * \text{Internal.Efficacy} + \text{Covariates} + \epsilon$$

## 6 Ethical Considerations

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at University of California, Riverside (23011).

## 7 Funding

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# Appendix

## Appendix A. Vignette Inquiry

### Set 1. School Teacher

Government agencies and organizations deliver many different services to people every day. One example is your local school district and its teachers, which are responsible for providing public education to students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Now, you will read about a scenario based on an experience that someone might have in school. Please read it carefully and respond to the questions.

One day, a student had a question about class material and decided to go to the teacher's office. When the student asked a question, the teacher was [friendly and warm/irritated and cold] in answering the question. The teacher [gave/]did not give] an additional solution and example and [actively tried to help/ did not try to help] the student to understand the material. When the student asked for additional resources, the teacher [provided/did not provide] more resources to the student. The student had a clear impression that the teacher [was /was not] willing to assist them.

### Set 2. Local Police

Government agencies and organizations deliver many different services to people every day. One such organization is the local police department, which is responsible for public safety.

Now, you will read about a scenario that someone might have had with their local police. Please read it carefully and respond to the questions.

One day, a person saw someone suspicious near their house and called the police for help. When the police arrived, they were [friendly and warm/irritated and cold] in handling the person's inquiry. [The police carefully listened to what happened to the person and actively tried to help them as the police asked for a description of the suspect. / The police did not carefully listen to what happened to the person and did not try to help them actively as the police did not ask for a description of the suspect.] When the person asked for additional resources for assistance, the police [did / did not] give the person a wide range of helpful resources. The person had a clear impression that the police [were / were not] willing to assist them.

## **Appendix B. Induction Inquiry**

### **B.1. Positive Treatment**

Now, we would like you to take a moment to think about your experiences with street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are non-elected government officials who provide public services to people at the local level, such as public school teachers, Department of Motor Vehicles officials, U.S. Postal Service officials, local police, lower court judges, social workers, and so on. Please describe the MOST POSITIVE experience you have had with street-level bureaucrats. When you think about your POSITIVE memories about street-level bureaucrats, what comes to your mind? It is fine if you don't remember all the details, just be as specific as possible about your most POSITIVE experience. If you can, write your description so that someone reading it might feel like they had a POSITIVE interaction with street-level bureaucrats. Take a few minutes to write out your answer.

## B.2. Negative Treatment

Now, we would like you to take a moment to think about your experiences with street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are non-elected government officials who provide public services to people at the local level, such as public school teachers, Department of Motor Vehicles officials, U.S. Postal Service officials, local police, lower court judges, social workers, and so on. Please describe the MOST NEGATIVE experience you have had with street-level bureaucrats. When you think about your NEGATIVE memories about street-level bureaucrats, what comes to your mind? It is fine if you don't remember all the details, just be as specific as possible about your most NEGATIVE experience. If you can, write your description so that someone reading it might feel like they had a NEGATIVE interaction with street-level bureaucrats. Take a few minutes to write out your answer.

## B.3. Neutral Condition

Now, we would like you to take a moment to think about your experiences with street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are non-elected government officials who provide public services to people at the local level, such as public school teachers, Department of Motor Vehicles officials, U.S. Postal Service officials, local police, lower court judges, social workers, and so on. Please describe an experience you have had with street-level bureaucrats. When you think about your memories of street-level bureaucrats, what comes to your mind? It is okay if you don't remember all the details, just be as specific as possible about your experience. If you can, write about your experience so that someone reading it can understand your interaction with street-level bureaucrats. Take a few minutes to write out your answer.

## **Appendix C. Survey Instruments**

### **Manipulation Check for the Vignette Block**

1. Which government agency was featured in the story you just read? [Randomize the orders of the options except 8 and 9]

- 1) Local school district and its teachers
- 2) US Postal Service (USPS)
- 3) Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- 4) Police
- 5) Judge
- 6) Social Security Office
- 7) Community Health Center
- 8) Others [text entry]
- 9) I want to read the story again. [show the vignette again]

2. How did the story you just read make you feel?

- 1) Very negative
- 2) Somewhat negative
- 3) Neither positive nor negative
- 4) Somewhat positive
- 5) Very positive

3. How do you think the person in the story was treated?

- 1) Very poorly
- 2) Somewhat poorly
- 3) Neither poorly nor well
- 4) Somewhat well
- 5) Very well

4. How much do you trust [assigned condition: public school teacher / local police]?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) A little
- 3) A moderate amount
- 4) A lot
- 5) A great deal

## **Outcome Measures**

1. How much do you trust your local government?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) A little
- 3) A moderate amount
- 4) A lot
- 5) A great deal

2. How much do you trust the [state of residency] government?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) A little
- 3) A moderate amount
- 4) A lot
- 5) A great deal

3. How much do you trust the government in Washington D.C.?

- 1) Not at all
- 2) A little
- 3) A moderate amount
- 4) A lot
- 5) A great deal

4. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“Public officials don’t care much about what people like me think.”

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Neither agree nor disagree
- 4) Somewhat disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

5. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Neither agree nor disagree
- 4) Somewhat disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

6. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“The political system helps people with their genuine needs.”

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Neither agree nor disagree
- 4) Somewhat disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

7. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“I feel like I belong in U.S. society.”

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Neither agree nor disagree
- 4) Somewhat disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

8. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“I feel like I am an outsider in the United States.”

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Somewhat agree
- 3) Neither agree nor disagree
- 4) Somewhat disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

9. How important do you think **having been born in the United States** is for being truly American?

- 1) Not important at all
- 2) Not very important
- 3) Fairly important
- 4) Very important

10. How important do you think **having American ancestry** is for being truly American?

- 1) Not important at all
- 2) Not very important
- 3) Fairly important
- 4) Very important

11. [if r=immigrant without citizenship] Do you intend to apply for U.S. citizenship in the future?

- 1) No, certainly not
- 2) No, probably not
- 3) Yes, probably
- 4) Yes, certainly

12. During the next 12 months, how likely are you to engage in the following activities? [randomize the order of the list]

- 1) Discuss politics with family or friends
- 2) Vote in the November election for President
- 3) Work or volunteer for a candidate, political party, or some other campaign organization
- 4) Contact a politician to ask for help or make a complaint
- 5) Sign a petition regarding an issue or problem that concerns you
- 6) Boycott a company or product for political reasons
- 7) Attend a protest march, demonstration, or rally
- 8) Discuss a candidate or political issue by posting on an internet site or social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, WeChat, Reddit, Youtube)



### **Internal Efficacy**

1. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“Politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.”

1) Strongly agree 2) Somewhat agree 3) Neither agree nor disagree 4) Somewhat disagree 5) Strongly disagree

2. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

“I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues.”

1) Strongly agree 2) Somewhat agree 3) Neither agree nor disagree 4) Somewhat disagree 5) Strongly disagree

### **Political Engagement**

Since January 2023, have you done any of the activities listed below? Please select all that apply. [Randomize the order of the options except 13, multi-select]

- 1) Discussed politics with family or friends
- 2) Voted in election
- 3) Worked or volunteered for a candidate, political party, or some other campaign organization
- 4) Contributed money to a candidate, political party, ballot issue, or some other campaign organization
- 5) Contacted a politician to ask for help or make a complaint
- 6) Attended a meeting to discuss issues facing the community
- 7) Signed a petition regarding an issue or problem that concerns you
- 8) Boycotted a company or product for political reasons
- 9) Attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally
- 10) Discussed a candidate or political issue by posting on an internet site or social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, WeChat, Reddit, YouTube)
- 11) Worked or volunteered for a community or local organization
- 12) Donated or raised money for community or local organization
- 13) I haven't done any of activities listed.