

Social Mobility through Immigrant Resentment: Explaining Latinx Support for Restrictive Immigration Policies and Anti-immigrant Candidates

Flavio Rogerio Hickel Jr.^{1,*} , Kassra AR Oskooii², Loren Collingwood³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Washington College, Chestertown, MD, US

²Associate Professor, Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, US

³Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, US

Abstract Various polls suggest that Donald Trump has enjoyed the support of a sizable minority of the Latinx electorate despite his racially offensive rhetoric and support for some of the most restrictive immigration policies in recent memory. Building on Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, we contend that some Latinxs harbor negative stereotypes about immigrants, blame them for the status devaluation of the Latinx community, and cognitively distinguish themselves from Latinx immigrants. Rather than viewing anti-immigrant policies, rhetoric, and politicians as a direct status threat, those exhibiting this “Latinx Immigrant Resentment (LIR)” may regard them as a means to enhance the status and interests of “prototypical” Latinxs by signaling their distinction from “atypical” Latinxs. To evaluate this theory, we use the 2020 American National Election Study (ANES) and 2016 Collaborative MultiRacial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) as a proof-of-concept to first confirm that negative immigrant stereotypes and cognitive intragroup distinctions are associated with increased support for Donald Trump and restrictive immigration policies. We then introduce a more refined measure of LIR by fielding online surveys of US Latinxs administered through Lucid in 2020–2021 (N = 1,164) and 2021/22 (N = 1,017). We demonstrate the validity of this measure and its predictive power for attitudes toward Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, and restrictive immigration policies after accounting for a range of rival explanations.

*Corresponding author: Flavio Rogerio Hickel Jr., Political Science Department, Washington College, 300 Washington Ave, Chestertown, MD 21620, US; email: FHickel2@washcoll.edu.

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Introduction

The narrative that Latinx immigration is an economic, security, and cultural threat to the United States has inextricably wedded the social status of “legal” and undocumented immigrants to the broader Latinx community (Chavez 2008; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). Unsurprisingly, the majority of Latinxs oppose restrictive immigration policies¹ and the politicians who support them as a means of challenging further status devaluation (Gutierrez et al. 2019). And yet, despite his inflammatory rhetoric against Latinx immigrants and the implementation of some of the most restrictive immigration policies in a generation (Wadhia 2021), polls suggest that Donald Trump secured 28 percent of the Latinx vote in 2016 and increased his vote share to 32 percent in 2020.² Trump’s relative success has raised questions about whether his support from the Latinx community occurs despite his immigrant hostility or because of it. According to the 2020 American National Election Study (ANES), 22 percent of Latinxs favor the construction of a border wall with Mexico and 17 percent support the deportation of all undocumented immigrants. Why does a sizeable minority of Latinx voters support restrictive immigration policies and what impact does this have on evaluations of the politicians that espouse them?

Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel et al. 1979) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) (Turner et al. 1987) are often utilized to explain the individual and collective response of Latinxs to the perceived status threat posed by anti-immigrant rhetoric, policies, and politicians. Individuals with strong Latinx identity who are cognizant of the group’s marginalized status and believe that collective action is necessary to improve these conditions (e.g., group consciousness) are motivated to challenge the source of devaluation (Pérez 2015; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016). Similarly, individuals who believe that their fate is inextricably linked to the broader Latinx community are more likely to oppose Republican candidates and restrictive immigration policies (Sanchez 2006; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez 2017). Conversely, those lacking in these characteristics may attempt to improve their individual status by dissociating from their Latinx identity and “passing” as a member of a higher-status group (Hickel et al. 2020). Support for Republican candidates and restrictive immigration policies serves as a signal of their distinction from the prototypical Latinx and loyalty to a US-American identity, which is interpreted as hostile toward the interests of Latinx immigrants (Alamillo and Collingwood 2017; Hickel et al. 2020).

1. Pew Research Center, 10/25/2018, “More Latinos Have Serious Concerns About Their Place in America under Trump.”

2. National Election Pool (NEP) and Edison Research 2016 & 2020 National Exit Poll.

However, we contend that some Latinxs (including those with strong group identity and consciousness) harbor negative stereotypes about immigrants, blame them for status devaluation of the Latinx community, and cognitively distinguish themselves from Latinx immigrants. Individuals exhibiting this “Latinx Immigrant Resentment” (LIR) would not regard anti-immigrant policies, rhetoric, and politicians as a direct status threat to “prototypical” (e.g., nonimmigrant) Latinxs, and their support may reflect a belief that it actually enhances the status and interests of Latinxs by signaling their distinction from “atypical” Latinxs.

We begin by examining the impact of immigrant stereotypes and cognitive intragroup distinctions on Latinx support for Donald Trump and restrictive immigration policies with existing nationally representative samples. This analysis of the 2016 Collaborative MultiRacial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) and the 2020 American National Election Study (ANES) confirms our expectations of a positive relationship and serves as a proof-of-concept for the development of a more precise measure of LIR. We administered this novel measure to online panels of Latinx adults living in the United States provided by Lucid in 2020–2021 ($N = 1,164$) and 2021–2022 ($N = 1,017$). Our analysis concludes that this measure is both valid and distinct from similar theoretical constructs. We further demonstrate that after controlling for a range of standard covariates and alternative explanations, LIR is a powerful predictor of support for Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, and restrictive immigration policies.

Navigating Marginalization

While discrimination against Latinxs is not a new phenomenon in American history (Beltrán 2020), Latinx’s emergence as the dominant immigrant group to the United States in the 1990s gave rise to a series of important developments.³ The term “immigrant” itself has become increasingly associated with Latinxs and attendant negative ethnic stereotypes (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008). The tendency for many Anglo-Americans to view Latinxs as a threatening out-group inherently inferior to Anglo-Americans and immutably foreign (Masuoka and Junn 2013; Zou and Cheryan 2017) has been exacerbated by elite and media frames coupling Latinx immigration with domestic crime, national security concerns, and broader cultural changes (Chavez 2008; Branton et al. 2011; Farris and Silber Mohamed 2018). Donald Trump’s description of Mexican immigrants

3. Not least of which is that a number of states and local governments have pursued more restrictive immigration policies (Collingwood, El-Khatib, and Gonzalez O’Brien 2018; Wallace 2014).

as criminals and rapists⁴ along with his characterization of the Central American “Caravan” of asylum seekers as an enemy invasion⁵ has further conflated the Latinx community with both “legal” and undocumented immigrants, even though the majority of Latinxs in the United States are now native born (Pérez 2010, 2016). Suffice it to say that Latinxs are often regarded as occupying a “lower status” in the US social hierarchy (Levin and Sidanius 1999; Masuoka and Junn 2013).

Scholars utilize Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel et al. 1979) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) (Turner et al. 1987) to explain the individual and collective response of Latinxs to these conditions. Both theories contend that the relative status of social groups is socially constructed through inter-group comparisons and that individual self-image is in part derived from the status of those social groups we identify with and/or are ascribed to. SIT emphasizes the psychological motivation of group members to positively differentiate and protect the status of their social group as a means of attaining/preserving a positive self-image, most often manifesting as in-group bias and out-group derogation (Tajfel et al. 1979). SCT is described as a “cognitive elaboration” on SIT (Turner et al. 1987, p. 42), addressing a priori questions of when, how, and to what extent an individual self-identifies as a member of a social group along with how individuals define group membership and interact with other members. Because individuals can claim membership in multiple social groups (at various levels of abstraction), whose relative salience fluctuates depending on the context (Turner et al. 1987; Roccas and Brewer 2002), the strategic response to status threats (SIT) is powerfully influenced by the strength and salience of an individual’s group identification and consciousness (SCT) in a particular moment.

Group identification reflects a psychological attachment based on shared beliefs, feelings, and interests (Miller et al. 1981; McClain et al. 2009). Turner et al. (1987) contend that self-categorization as a group member is not just a function of intragroup similarities, but also intergroup differences, both of which may vary based on the nature of the comparison made. Group consciousness emerges when this identity becomes politicized by ideological beliefs about the group’s social status and the necessity of collective action to improve that status (Miller et al. 1981; McClain et al. 2009).

Discriminatory actions by out-groups have been shown to strengthen in-group identification as individuals become more cognizant of group distinctions and reliant on the in-group for acceptance and psychological well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Armenta and Hunt 2009; Oskooii 2016). Because these experiences are often interpreted as

4. Donald J. Trump, (06/16/2015), “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for President in New York City.”

5. TheHill.com, 10/29/2018, “Trump: Migrant Caravan ‘Is an Invasion.’”

manifestations of systemic inequities that are difficult to surmount on an individual basis, they tend to be associated with the development of group consciousness (Sanchez and Vargas 2016). For some, such processes generate a sense of linked fate whereby individual life opportunities and constraints are believed to be inextricably connected to the status of the group. Under these conditions, social group interests are regarded as a cognitively efficient heuristic for determining individual political attitudes and behaviors (Dawson 1995). While the tremendous diversity within the Latinx community (e.g., national origin, immigration status, colorism) complicates the development of this type of group consciousness (Masuoka 2006), the shared difficulties with social integration and marginalization due to socioeconomic and immigration status have led the majority of Latinxs to exhibit linked fate (Sanchez and Masuoka 2010).

The strength and salience of an individual's group identity, along with the presence of group consciousness or linked fate, is theorized to have a powerful influence over the strategic response to status threats. Under these conditions, individuals are motivated to challenge the source of devaluation and restore a positive value to the social group (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002). Responding to the perceived status threat of anti-immigrant rhetoric/policy, Latinxs exhibiting these qualities are more likely to negatively evaluate Donald Trump (Gutierrez et al. 2019), express pro-Latinx political attitudes, and respond positively to GOTV efforts in support of Latinx group interests (Collingwood, Barreto, and Garcia-Rios 2014; Barreto and Collingwood 2015; Pérez 2015; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016). Mohamed (2017) similarly documents how the 2006 immigrant protest movement not only challenged discriminatory immigration policies but also advanced a more positive characterization of the Latinx community as patriotic.

In contrast, when group identity strength, salience, and consciousness are lacking, individuals either decline opportunities to challenge status devaluations or, if possible, dissociate from the targeted social group (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002; Sherman and Cohen 2006; Pérez 2015). Such individuals may prioritize existing alternative social identities (Garcia-Rios, Pedraza, and Wilcox-Archuleta 2018) or attempt to "pass" as members of a higher-status group, both of which serve to improve individual status without challenging the prevailing social hierarchy or altering the status of their former social group (Tajfel et al. 1979; Jackson et al. 1996). Hickel et al. (2020) argue that support for anti-immigrant policies and politicians is a means by which some individuals signal their dissociation from the Latinx community and solidify their passage into a higher-status, US-American social group. Similarly, Alamillo (2019) argues that adopting a color-blind ideology reflects efforts by some Latinxs to achieve "Whiteness." While the capacity and desirability of "passing" is powerfully influenced by experiences with, and/or perceptions of, discrimination against members of the social

group an individual is dissociating from (Taylor et al. 1987; Golash-Boza 2006; Masuoka and Junn 2013), a significant minority of Latinxs prioritize a US-American identity (Hickel et al. 2020) and self-identify as “White” regardless of their phenotype (Darity, Dietrich, and Hamilton 2005; Yadon and Ostfeld 2020).

The preceding discussion suggests that Latinxs with strong group attachment and consciousness are more likely to take collective action to preserve/advance the status/interests of the group in the face of out-group threats. Because the status of the Latinx community has become inextricably tied to that of “legal” and undocumented immigrants (Chavez 2008; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015), hostility toward anti-immigrant policies, rhetoric, and the politicians who espouse them is interpreted as a manifestation of this strategy (Sanchez 2006). Although immigration policy is seldom the most salient issue for Latinx voters (Ocampo, Garcia-Rios, and Gutierrez 2021), a wealth of scholarship demonstrates that higher levels of group consciousness and/or linked fate are associated with opposition to restrictive immigration policies and politicians within the Latinx electorate (Gutierrez et al. 2019; Wallace and Zepeda-Millán 2020). In contrast, ambivalence toward, or support for, restrictive immigration policies, rhetoric, and politicians is theorized to be a result of a weak group identity and/or consciousness.

However, a growing number of scholars have cautioned against assuming that the political implications of group consciousness or linked fate will be uniform (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Gay, Hochschild, and White 2016). While those exhibiting these characteristics share a recognition of the marginalized status of their social group and belief that collective action to ameliorate those conditions is necessary, individuals may disagree on how best to achieve those goals. We contend that a significant percentage of Latinxs exhibit resentment toward immigrants and support restrictive policies as a means of enhancing the status/interests of the Latinx group.

Latinx Immigrant Resentment

Turner et al. (1987) argue that self-categorizations are based on perceptions of intragroup similarities and intergroup differences between an individual and the prototypical member of these respective groups. Prototypicality is socially constructed to represent a valued and stereotypical characteristic of in-group members, and in-groups themselves are evaluated more positively when their prototypical members exhibit characteristics consistent with an ideal vision of humanity (Turner et al. 1987). Because individuals strive to maintain a positive evaluation of the groups to which they belong, they may be motivated to also define in-group prototypicality in terms of these ideal characteristics. While systemic racialization in the United States constrains these efforts (such that Latinxs often adopt negative stereotypes attributed to

their group), the majority of Latinxs regard criminality and economic dependence as atypical characteristics of group members (Masuoka and Junn 2013).

Research on the “Black Sheep Effect” illustrates that individuals more negatively evaluate in-group members who deviate from positively valued prototypical characteristics of the group (Marques and Paez 1994; Marques, Abrams, and Serôdio 2001). Marques and Paez (1994, p. 38) argue that “derogation of unlikeable ingroupers is a cognitive-motivational strategy to purge from the group those ingroup members who negatively contribute to social identity.” While the majority of Latinxs reject stereotypes of Latinx immigrant criminality and economic dependence (Masuoka and Junn 2013), others should be prone to negatively evaluate Latinx immigrants due to their perceived deviation from the prototypical group member and the negative impact they have on the status of the broader Latinx community.

Intragroup cooperation occurs when there is a shared and mutual perception among members that their interests are interchangeable (Turner et al. 1987). Given the strong familial and social connections that many Latinxs share with the immigrant community and the perception that anti-immigrant rhetoric inherently reflects anti-Latinx sentiment, it is reasonable to assume that most nonimmigrant Latinxs view their interests as at least somewhat interchangeable with immigrant Latinxs. This is reflected in research demonstrating that “immigrant linked fate” is strongly associated with support for immigrant rights activism (Wallace and Zepeda-Millán 2020) and negative attitudes toward Donald Trump (Gutierrez et al. 2019). However, Garcia-Rios, Pedraza, and Wilcox-Archuleta’s (2018) research on “Identity portfolios” within the Latinx community suggests that cooperation is not assured among individuals who share an “identity category” with a threatened group but are not themselves directly targeted by it. More specifically, while Latinxs of Mexican and non-Mexican heritage share a pan-ethnic identity, in response to Donald Trump’s derogatory rhetoric against the former, the latter emphasize their national-origin identity to avoid status devaluation.

Similarly, it is possible that Latinxs who harbor negative stereotypes about immigrants may cognitively distinguish themselves from what they consider to be atypical group members in an effort to avoid status devaluation, thus limiting their sense of commonality and shared interests. Existing scholarship provides some evidence for these tendencies. Bedolla (2003) describes selective dissociation as a process whereby members of a low-status group distance themselves from sectors of that group who they regard as primarily responsible for the negative stigma experienced by all group members. Her interviews with Los Angeles Latinxs demonstrate that many view immigrants (who consciously choose not to learn English) as “asking” to be treated poorly by the native population due to their failure to assimilate/accurturate. Lavariega Monforti and Sanchez (2010) similarly find that Latinxs

who are less integrated into US society are more likely to report discrimination by more assimilated/acculturated Latinxs, due to the perception that the former may exacerbate out-group discrimination against the broader Latinx community. The preceding discussion suggests that some Latinxs harbor negative stereotypes about immigrants which renders them atypical group members, believe that immigrants are contributing to status devaluation, and cognitively distinguish themselves from Latinx immigrants. Individuals exhibiting this “Latinx Immigrant Resentment” (LIR) are therefore unlikely to regard anti-immigrant policies, rhetoric, or politicians as a direct status threat, and therefore lack an identity - based motivation to oppose them. But more importantly, we contend that this resentment provides a permission structure that enables some Latinxs to support restrictive immigration policies and politicians without denigrating the status or contradicting the interests of “prototypical” (e.g., nonimmigrant) Latinxs. Such support may even be motivated by the belief that it serves to enhance the status and interests of “prototypical” Latinxs by signaling to out-groups their distinction from “atypical” Latinxs. Basler (2014) argues that Latinx support for California’s anti-immigrant Proposition 187 was influenced by a desire to distance themselves from undocumented immigrants, whose presence contributed to a general anti-Latinx political climate. Our theory of LIR suggests that similar processes may be operating in the contemporary context. We propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Latinx immigrant resentment will be positively related to support for restrictive immigration policies and the politicians who espouse them.

Measurement Strategy and Data

Our empirical examination begins by assessing the extent to which Latinxs (a) harbor negative stereotypes about immigrants in the United States and (b) view derogatory rhetoric directed toward immigrants as an assault on the Latinx community more broadly. The former suggests that individuals regard immigrants as “atypical” Latinxs, while disagreement with the latter is indicative of cognitive intragroup distinctions. To explore these beliefs and their association with support for anti-immigrant policies and the politicians who espouse them, we rely on the 2020 ANES and the 2016 CMPS (see [Supplementary Material sections B.1 and B.5](#) for discussion of these datasets and their methodology and measures).⁶

While each of these measures captures a component of LIR, a stronger test of our hypothesis requires more refined measures of the LIR concept.

6. See [Supplementary Material sections B.1 and B.5](#) for discussion of these datasets and their methodology and measures.

To this end, we fielded two online surveys administered by Lucid in December 2020/January 2021 and December 2021/January 2022 to a national sample of 1,164 and 1,107 (respectively) adult Latinxs residing in the United States to validate and assess measures of LIR and its effects on attitudes toward anti-immigrant policies and politicians.⁷

The statistical models presented in this article aim to also evaluate the strength of the hypothesized relationship in comparison to alternative explanations of this phenomenon. One prominent theory is that opposition to restrictive immigration policies and the politicians who support them is rooted in Latinx group consciousness (Pérez 2015; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016) or linked fate (Sanchez 2006; Gutierrez et al. 2019). Although these concepts are often conflated, scholars have noted that linked fate should be conceptualized as a particular type of group consciousness and that problems can arise when attempting to capture the latter with a measurement of the former (McClain et al. 2009; Gay, Hochschild, and White 2016; Sanchez and Vargas 2016). We address these concerns by incorporating commonly utilized measures of linked fate and discriminatory experiences into our models.

Similarly, Hickel et al. (2020) argued that support for conservative politicians and restrictive immigration policies reflects individuals dissociating from their Latinx identity to “pass” as “US-Americans.” We follow their operationalization in our analysis of the ANES and CMPS datasets by constructing a ratio measure of US/Latinx Identity Prioritization whereby the importance of being Latino/Hispanic to the respondent’s identity is subtracted from the importance of being “American.” We utilized a measurement technique inspired by standard partisan affiliation questions to operationalize this concept in the Lucid datasets. Participants first indicated whether they thought of themselves more as a Latinx, an American, or both.

Respondents who chose the Latinx or American option were then asked to indicate whether they thought of themselves as much more or a little more Latinx than American or vice versa. Participants who indicated that they thought of themselves as both Latinx and American were subsequently asked to indicate which identity, if any, they felt closer to. Responses were coded into a seven-point Identity Prioritization scale such that negative values indicated prioritizing a Latinx identity and positive values indicated prioritizing a US-American identity.

Alamillo (2019) offers a similar explanation for Latinx support of Trump in his work on color-blind ideology/denial of racism. We follow this operationalization in our analysis of the Lucid datasets and rely on a commonly

7. See [Supplementary Material section C.1](#) for a discussion of the quotas, survey weights, quality control procedures, and variable construction utilized for the Lucid datasets. Summary statistics are provided in [Supplementary Material table D1](#).

employed racial resentment scale to serve as a proxy in the ANES analysis. Further, given the prevailing media narrative that Latinx support for Trump may be rooted in anxiety about the rising influence of socialist ideology within the Democratic Party, participants in the ANES and Lucid datasets were also asked to indicate whether they have a positive or negative impression of socialism. Unfortunately, these variables were not available in the CMPS.

Finally, in addition to accounting for standard sociodemographic variables commonly employed in analysis of Latinx public opinion, we discuss the inclusion of other alternative explanations for Trump support in [Supplementary Material section A.1](#).

Stereotypes, Commonality, and Anti-immigrant Attitudes Results

After subsetting the ANES sample to Latinx respondents ($n = 473$), we constructed a scale comprising three survey questions capturing the extent to which Latinxs agree⁸ with prominent negative immigrant stereotypes: (1) “Immigrants are generally good for America’s Economy,” (2) “America’s culture is generally harmed by immigrants,” and (3) “Immigrants increase crime rates in the United States.” The scale mean is -0.93 , indicating moderate disagreement with such negative characterizations of immigrants.

Next, we regressed our immigrant stereotype scale on the following outcome variables: (a) Donald Trump FT, (b) Support deporting the undocumented, and (c) Support for the construction of a border wall between the United States and Mexico.⁹ We find that agreement with negative immigrant stereotypes has a significant association ($p < .001$) in the anticipated direction with each of the outcome variables ([Supplementary Material tables A2 and A3](#)). [Figures 1 and 2](#) present the changes in predicted values (min-max effects) with 95 percent confidence bands. While partisanship, ideology, denial of racism, and identity prioritization¹⁰ exert substantively large effects, those who hold negative stereotypes regarding immigrants express more favorability toward Donald Trump, support the deportation of the undocumented, and support the construction of a border wall. We find that these individuals evaluate Trump nearly 15 points more favorably than their counterparts. Likewise, such individuals score roughly 1 point higher on the 0–4

8. Responses were measured on a 5-point (-2 to $+2$) agree/disagree scale, with negative values indicating agreement with Question 1 and positive values indicating agreement with Questions 2 and 3.

9. Support for deporting the undocumented and construction of a border wall were measured on a five-point (0 to $+4$) oppose/favor scale.

10. See [Supplementary Material section B.1](#) for operationalization of these measures.

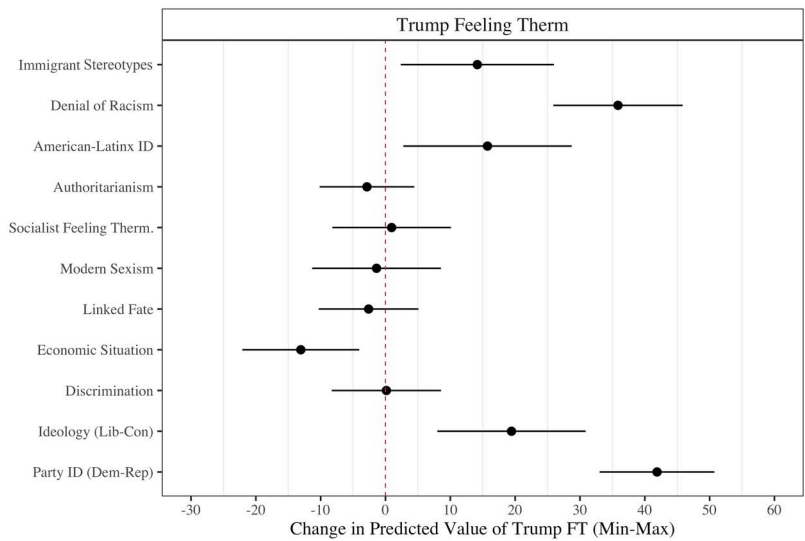


Figure 1. Change in predicted values of Trump FT, 2020 ANES. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table A2](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

border wall support measure and approximately 1.75 points higher on the 0–4 deportation measure.

We conduct a similar analysis on a Latinx subset of the CMPS dataset ($n = 2,409$). As a measure of intragroup distinction, we rely on participant disagreement with the following statement: “Anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments” (mean = -0.31).¹¹ We conducted OLS regression analysis of several key outcome variables: (a) favorability toward Donald Trump,¹² (b) voting for Trump in 2016,¹³ (c) support deporting the undocumented (binary variable representing a preference that “Undocumented/Illegal immigrants who are already living and working in the U.S. should be required to leave their jobs and immediately leave the U.S. rather than being allowed to stay in their jobs on either a temporary or permanent basis”), and (d) opposition to a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented (“Undocumented immigrants should qualify for US citizenship,

11. Five-point (-2 to $+2$) agree/disagree scale.
12. Five-point (0 to $+4$) unfavorable to favorable scale.
13. Binary variable representing whether the participant voted for Donald Trump or supported Trump more than other candidates if they did not vote.

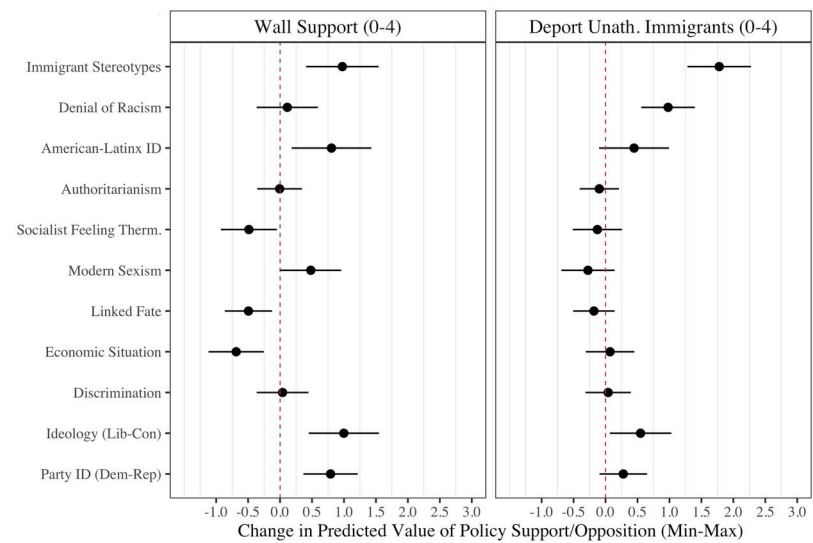


Figure 2. Change in predicted values of immigration policy, 2020 ANES. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table A3](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

if they meet certain requirements like paying back taxes and fines, learning English, and passing a background check”).¹⁴

Consistent with our expectations, intragroup distinction has a significant effect in the anticipated direction for each of the outcome variables ($p < .001$) ([Supplementary Material tables A4 and A5](#)). Those who view a distinction between nonimmigrant and immigrant Latinxs express more favorability toward Donald Trump, voted for Trump in 2016, support the deportation of the undocumented, and oppose a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented. [Figures 3 and 4](#) depict changes in predicted values (Min-Max effects) with 95 percent confidence bands for these models. While partisan affiliation and ideological orientation have the largest effects in the Trump models, those who view Latinx immigrants as a distinct social group were 20 percent more likely to vote for Trump and rated him 0.5 points higher on the 0–4 favorability measure compared to those who expressed no such distinction. Similarly, these individuals were nearly 20 percent more supportive of deporting undocumented immigrants and scored 0.5 points higher on the 0–4 opposition to a pathway to citizenship measure.

14. Five-point (0 to +4) agree/disagree scale.

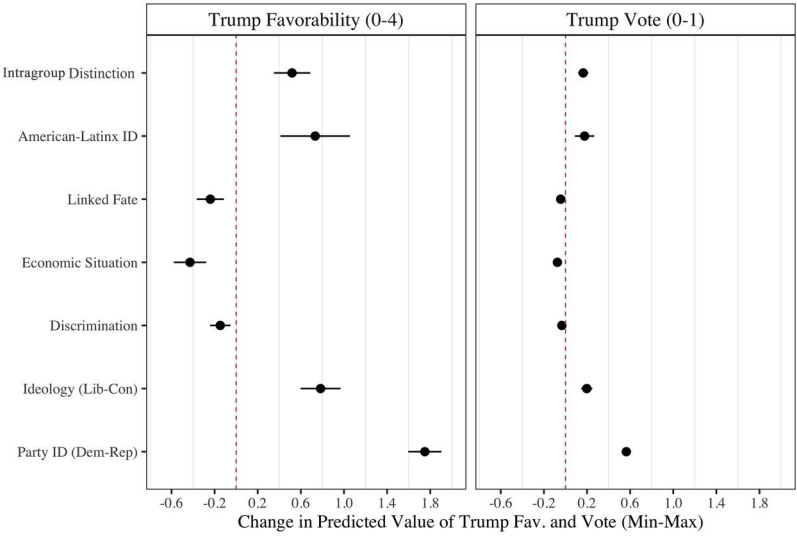


Figure 3. Change in predicted values of Trump favorability/vote, 2016 CMPS. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table A4](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, religious identification, and country of origin.

Validating a Latinx Immigrant Resentment Measure

Consistent with our theoretical expectations, the preceding analysis demonstrates that negative immigrant stereotypes and intragroup distinction are positively associated with support for anti-immigrant policies and politicians. While each of these measures captures a component of LIR, a stronger test of our hypothesized relationship requires a series of questions that can more effectively tap into different aspects of the concept. To address this limitation, we developed a new measure of LIR that drew inspiration from commonly employed measures of symbolic racism and an immigrant resentment scale created by [Ramirez and Peterson \(2020\)](#) used to explore white animus toward Latinxs. Our measure consists of four questions (see [table 1](#)) that feature prominent stereotypes of Latinx¹⁵ immigrants which negatively impact their collective social status (e.g., economic dependence, criminality, and inability to assimilate into American society) along with an explicit

15. At the onset of our survey, participants were asked to indicate their preferred terminology to describe those of Latin American descent/heritage (e.g., Latino/a, Latinx, or Hispanic). We then used the preferred term in all subsequent survey questions where applicable. For ease of readability, the reproduction of our survey questions utilizes the term “Latinx.”

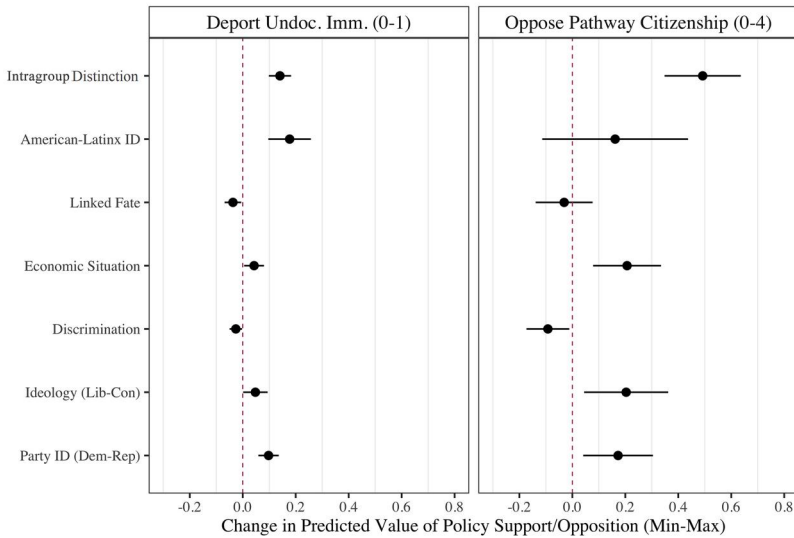


Figure 4. Change in predicted values of immigration policy, 2016 CMPS. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table A5](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, religious identification, and country of origin.

reference to the purported negative impact that undocumented immigrants have on the status of the broader Latinx community.¹⁶

Consistent with our theory of LIR, we designed this scale to capture these sentiments as they relate to both the undocumented and “legal” immigrant community.¹⁷ Although hostile rhetoric and negative stereotypes are more powerfully associated with the undocumented in the contemporary context, their origins were motivated by opposition to “legal” Latinx immigrants who continue to be victimized by them ([Chavez 2008](#); [Masuoka and Junn 2013](#); [Beltrán 2020](#)). For these reasons, both “legal” and undocumented immigrants may be regarded as “atypical” Latinxs who threaten the status of the broader Latinx community. However, because undocumented immigration inherently reflects a violation of US immigration laws, some Latinx may

16. All questions were measured on a five-point (−2 to +2) agree/disagree scale and recoded such that negative values represent a favorable impression of immigrants and positive values represent resentment toward immigrants. See [Supplementary Material section C.2](#) for discussion on our decision to rely on negatively worded statements.

17. Although Questions #2 and #3 do not explicitly characterize immigrants as “Latinx,” this association is strongly implied, given the continued dominance of the “Latino Threat Narrative” ([Chavez 2008](#)) in media and elite discourse on immigration.

Table 1. Latinx immigrant resentment questions.

Questions	Lucid 20/21 Mean (item-rest r)	Lucid 21/22 Mean (item-rest r)
1. Undocumented immigrants make other *Latinx* look bad.	−0.40 (0.66)	0.01 (0.66)
2. Previous generations of immigrants were able to become successful without relying on government welfare benefits - new immigrants should do the same.	0.33 (0.60)	0.51 (0.60)
3. There is no excuse for breaking the law and entering the US illegally.	−0.05 (0.68)	0.34 (0.67)
4. *Latinx* would be treated better in the US if immigrants would try harder to learn English and adopt US customs like other ethnic groups have done.	−0.18 (0.64)	0.26 (0.64)
Scale average	−0.08	0.28
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.82	0.82
N	1,164	1,017

believe that stereotypes about criminality are more applicable to the undocumented than to “legal” immigrants. If so, the former may be regarded as more “atypical” and a greater status threat compared to the latter. Our scale captures this range of resentment through questions that invoke both “legal” (Questions #2 and #4) and undocumented immigrants (Questions #1 and #3).¹⁸ Table 1 illustrates that while Latinxs were somewhat more resentful in the 2021–2022 survey compared to 2020–2021, the average response to each question (and a scale comprising the average response to all questions) is best characterized as neither supportive nor resentful of immigrants. Figures 5 and 6 depict histograms of the immigrant resentment scale for the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 Lucid datasets (respectively).¹⁹ We find that while responses approximate a normal distribution, there is a slight negative skew that is somewhat more prominent in the 2021–2022 data. Roughly 42

18. Analysis comparing the impact of resentment derived from the undocumented (Questions #1 and #3) and “legal” immigrants (Questions #2 and #4) on attitudes toward Donald Trump and restrictive immigration policies is provided in [Supplementary Material tables E16 and E17](#). Although the coefficients are larger for the former across these models, both subsets of resentment have significant predictive power.

19. We also include histograms of our LIR scale emerging from our factor analysis in [Supplementary Material figures D1 and D3](#).

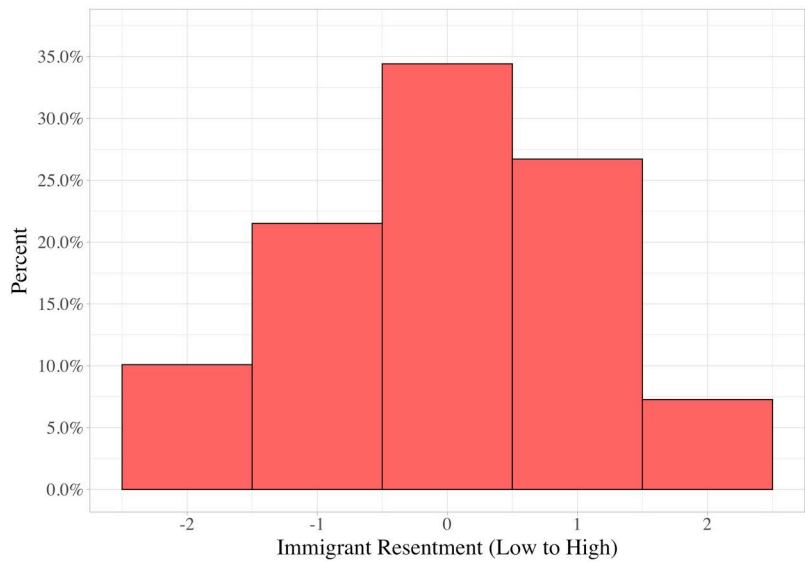


Figure 5. Distribution of Latinx immigrant resentment, 2020–2021 Lucid.

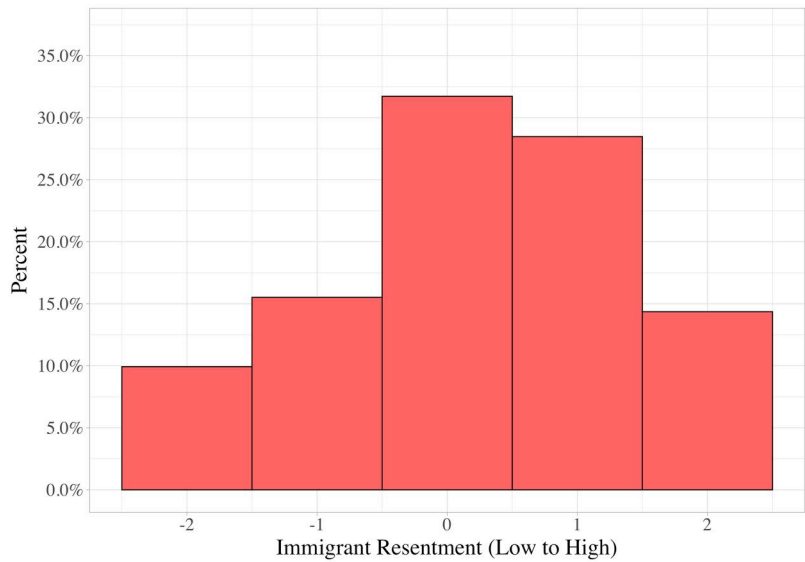


Figure 6. Distribution of Latinx immigrant resentment, 2021–2022 Lucid.

percent of the 2021–2022 sample expressed some resentment toward immigrants, compared to about 34 percent of the 2020–2021 sample. Conversely, the share of participants on the negative side of our scale decline by roughly 6 percent between 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 (32 percent and 26 percent, respectively). Although strong majorities of Latinxs have historically expressed more opposition toward restrictive immigration policies,²⁰ the elevated levels of resentment we report here are consistent with recent surveys demonstrating that 42 percent of Latinxs regard increasing security along the US-Mexico border to be a very important goal.²¹

Hickel et al. (2020) argue that support for anti-immigrant policies and politicians is a means by which some individuals signal their dissociation from the Latinx community and solidify their passage into the US-American social group. While it may be reasonable to suspect that such individuals with weak attachments to their Latinx identity would be more likely to exhibit LIR as part of these processes, our theory is applicable to Latinxs with varying levels of identity strength. [Supplementary Material figures E1–E4](#) depict histograms of LIR among individuals who prioritize a US-American identity over their Latinx identity and vice versa. Although a higher percentage of resentment was found among those prioritizing a US-American identity (40 percent in Lucid 2020–2021 and 55 percent in Lucid 2021–2022) compared to those prioritizing a Latinx identity (32 percent in Lucid 2020–2021 and 36 percent in Lucid 2021–2022), these percentages indicate that resentment is not restricted to those with strong/weak Latinx identity.

Next we examine the internal validity of the LIR scale. An analysis of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients shows that our scale is internally consistent (Lucid 20/21: 0.82, $N = 1,164$; Lucid 21/22: 0.82, $N = 1,017$). Confirmatory factor analysis reveals that the four questions load heavily on a single factor, while measures of Linked Fate, Denial of Racism, and US/Latinx Identity Prioritization load on different factors ([Supplementary Material tables D3 and D4](#)). All four resentment questions feature loadings between 0.67 and 0.72 in 2020–2021, and between 0.63 and 0.77 in the 2021–2022 survey, which falls within very acceptable norms for assuring unidimensionality (Field 2013). Collectively, the results support our contention that LIR is a unique construct.²²

As a test of the construct validity of our LIR scale, we examine its relationship to several outcome variables that are indicative of the theoretical

20. Pew Research Center, 10/25/2018, "More Latinos Have Serious Concerns About Their Place in America Under Trump."

21. Pew Research Center, 04/20/2021, "Most Latinos Say U.S. Immigration System Needs Big Changes."

22. Correlation analyses of both the LIR factor scale and additive LIR scale show that the two measures are nearly identical. In both the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 surveys, the two variables correlate at 0.99. For ease of interpretation, our analysis focuses on the additive LIR scale.

processes described. Consistent with the “Black Sheep Effect” (Marques and Paez 1994; Marques, Abrams, and Serôdio 2001), we should find that our measures are associated with (a) negative evaluations of “atypical” members and (b) intragroup distinctions. The former is evaluated by relying on an “Undocumented/Illegal immigrant” feeling thermometer,²³ while the latter measures disagreement with the following statement: “When people make disparaging comments towards undocumented immigrants, they insult all *Latinx.*”²⁴ We estimated two Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models per outcome variable to examine both the bivariate and multivariate relationships in 2020–2021 and 2021–2022. The association between our LIR scale and desire for non-Latinx to acknowledge a Latinx intragroup distinction was further examined in the 2021–2022 sample: “I wish Non-Latinx* in the U.S. would stop assuming that all Latinx* are like Latinx* immigrants. We are different groups.”²⁵ In all cases, the resentment scale has a significant relationship in the anticipated direction ($p < .001$).²⁶ Latinxs exhibiting high levels of resentment express significantly colder feelings toward the undocumented, are more likely to regard them as a distinct social group, and desire non-Latinxs to acknowledge this distinction.

We also examined the demographic characteristics associated with the LIR scale (including each scale item in isolation), along with its relationship to political covariates typically employed in the literature on Latinx public opinion. Due to space limitations, the results and attendant discussions can be found in [Supplementary Material E.1](#) and [F.1](#) (respectively).

The Political Impact of Latinx Immigrant Resentment

To assess the relationship between immigrant resentment and attitudes toward anti-immigrant politicians, we rely on standard feeling thermometers (FT) for Donald Trump (2020–2021 and 2021–2022) and Ron DeSantis (2021–2022). We also included a FT for Mitt Romney (2020–2021) to evaluate whether those resentful of immigrants distinguish between Republicans whose restrictive immigration policy proposals are less severe and less central to their broader policy agenda compared to Trump and DeSantis. Additionally, we measure attitudes toward the US border wall with Mexico and the status of the undocumented to explore the hypothesized relationship between immigrant resentment and support for restrictive immigration

23. While it is anticipated that our scale items which explicitly reference the undocumented should be strongly related to this outcome variable, this analysis is necessary to validate this expectation and ensure that our scale collectively (including items which do not explicitly reference the undocumented) is also having the anticipated effect.

24. Five-point agree/disagree scale.

25. Five-point disagree/agree scale.

26. [Supplementary Material tables E11–E15](#).

policies.²⁷ The former was assessed by asking: “How much do you favor or oppose building a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico?”²⁸ The latter was measured by asking: “Which comes closest to your view about what government policy should be towards unauthorized immigrants now living in the U.S.? 0 = Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the U.S. and apply for permanent residency without requirements or penalties, 1 = Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the U.S. and apply for permanent residency if they meet certain requirements and pay penalties, 2 = Have a guest worker program that allows unauthorized immigrants to work without permanent residency, 3 = Make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country.”

We begin by first evaluating the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for Donald Trump, Mitt Romney, and Ron DeSantis. Trump made restrictive immigration policies a centerpiece of his campaign and presidency, while Florida governor DeSantis signed into law restrictive immigration policies along with employing similarly hostile rhetoric toward the undocumented. Although the latter has less national visibility and recognition²⁹ compared to the former due to the nature of their respective offices, DeSantis garnered considerable national media attention on account of his controversial approach to Covid-19, his crusade against “wokeness” in education, and his vocal opposition to sanctuary cities. In contrast, although candidate Romney indicated in 2012 his intent to implement restrictive immigration policies so severe that the undocumented would “self-deport,” his proposals would be considered quite moderate within the Republican Party today. Further, in contrast to Donald Trump, immigration policy was not a centerpiece of Romney’s platform during the Republican primary or general election campaign and was seldom mentioned after securing his party’s nomination (Hickel and Bredbenner 2020). We estimated two OLS regression models per outcome variable to examine both the bivariate and multivariate relationship between LIR and feeling thermometer scores (Supplementary Material tables E7 and E8).

27. Because our LIR scale contains several items that explicitly mention the undocumented, there may be concerns about its appropriateness as a predictor of immigration policy which targets the undocumented. However, we note that there is a distinction between evaluations of a group and evaluations of policy which targets that group. Although a correspondence between these attitudes should be anticipated, it is important to empirically validate this expectation.

28. Five-point oppose/favor scale.

29. The percentage of national survey participants who indicate that they “Don’t Know” when asked to report their favorability of Ron DeSantis can be utilized as a rough approximation of his national visibility in the time frame in which our Lucid survey (2021/22) was administered. YouGov/The Economist (12/21) reports 35 percent, YouGov/Yahoo! News (1/22) reports 32 percent, and YouGov/The Economist (2/22) reports 30 percent.

Consistent with our hypothesis that LIR is highly predictive of support for anti-immigrant politicians, we find a positive relationship ($p < 0.01$) between LIR and affinity toward both Trump and Desantis. This hypothesis is further buttressed by what we find with respect to evaluations of Mitt Romney, who is not considered an anti-immigrant politician relative to his counterparts (Hickel and Bredbenner 2020). At the bivariate level, immigrant resentment is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward Romney; however, it has a significant negative relationship in the multivariate model.

To report the substantive strength of the relationships across all the key explanatory variables, we calculated and present changes in predicted values (min-max effects) with 95 percent confidence bands in figures 7 and 8. LIR exerts a substantively strong influence on affinity toward Donald Trump and Ron Desantis. Even after accounting for several prominent rival explanations for such support, we find that Latinxs who are highly resentful of immigrants rate Trump approximately 20 points more positively than their counterparts who do not resent immigrants in 2020–2021 and about 16 points more positively in 2021–2022. While the impact of resentment on support for DeSantis is smaller than Trump, the roughly 10-point difference is

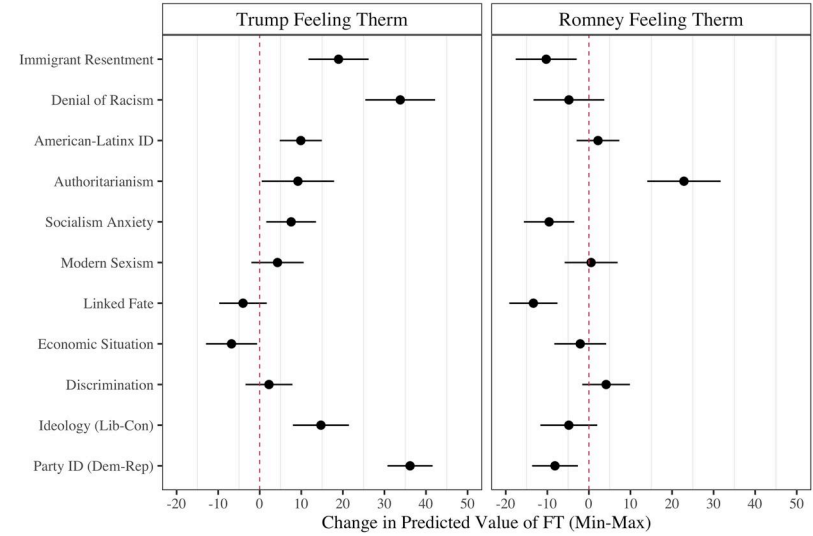


Figure 7. Change in predicted values of Trump and Romney FT, 2020–2021 Lucid. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table E7](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, Spanish language fluency, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

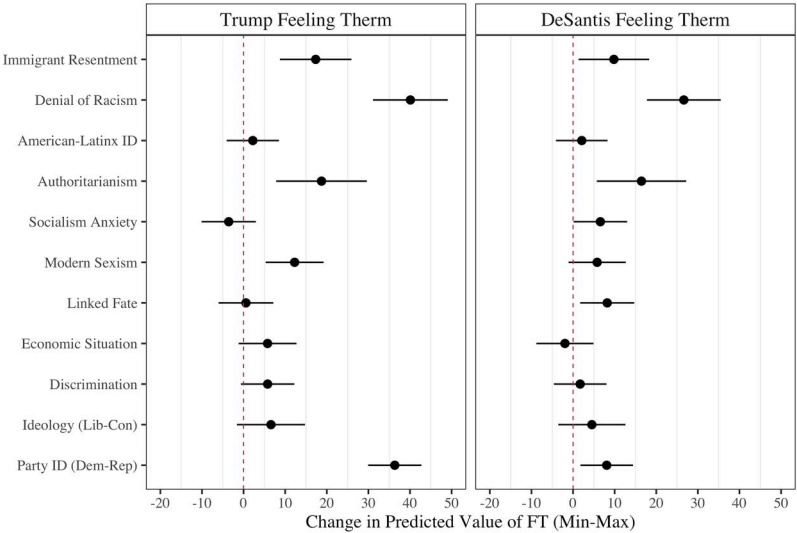


Figure 8. Change in predicted values of Trump and DeSantis FT, 2021–2022 Lucid. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table E8](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, Spanish language fluency, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

statistically significant. In contrast, we find that LIR has a negative impact on support for Romney. This finding is consistent with our theoretical expectations in that support for Romney would not be a strong signal to out-groups of Latinx intragroup distinction. Overall, then, Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis represent a particularly compelling force in American politics for resentful Latinxs who wish to distinguish themselves from immigrant Latinxs.

We also find evidence that denial of racism (Alamillo 2019) has a very large substantive effect on affinity toward Donald Trump. Those who endorse a color-blind ideology rate Trump about 34 points higher than their counterparts in 2020–2021 and about 40 points higher in 2021–2022; such individuals also rated Ron DeSantis about 26 points higher. However, we find mixed evidence in support of a relationship between US-American Identity Prioritization (Hickel et al. 2020) and support for conservative politicians. Those prioritizing a US-American identity more positively evaluated Trump in 2020–2021, but no significant relationship was detected for 2021–2022. While we do not find evidence that linked fate is associated with evaluations of Trump, it was associated with more negative assessments of Romney and

positive assessments of DeSantis. We can only speculate that these results may be a function of the inclusion of several linked fate covariates in our models (e.g., Experiences with Discrimination, Socio-Economic Status, Proximity to Immigrant Generation, and Spanish Language Proficiency).

Next, we turn our attention to policy attitudes. In [Supplementary Material tables E9 and E10](#), we report regression results where support for the US-Mexico border wall and the deportation of unauthorized immigrants is regressed on our key explanatory variable and a host of alternative explanations. For ease of interpretation and to facilitate comparisons across different variables, we display changes in predicted values (Min-Max effects) with 95 percent confidence bands in [figures 9 and 10](#).

Across both outcomes, we find support for our hypothesis: LIR is highly predictive of support for restrictionist immigration policies ($p < 0.01$). Latinxs who are highly resentful toward immigrants score about 1.5 points higher in 2020–2021 and over 2 points higher in 2021–2022 on the 0–4 border wall scale when compared to Latinxs who do not resent immigrants. We find a similar effect size with respect to support for the deportation of unauthorized immigrants—a difference of about 1 point on the immigration policy scale that ranges from 0 to 3 in 2020–2021 and about 1.25 points in 2021–2022.

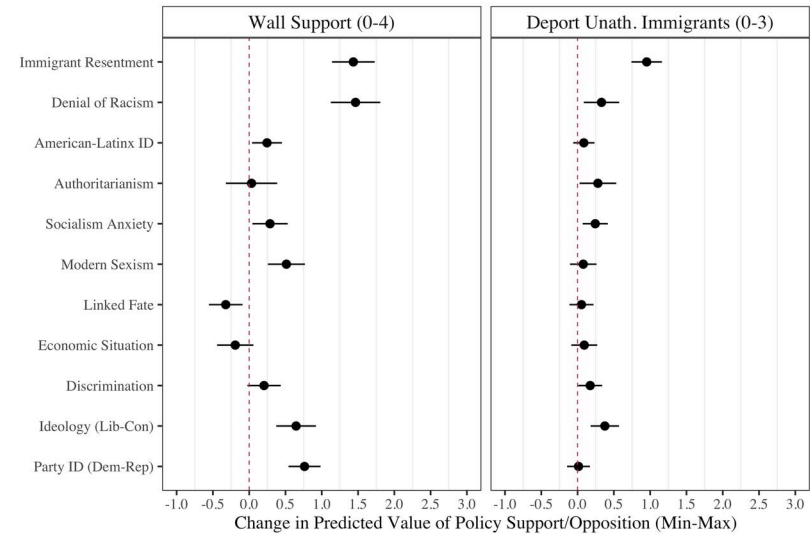


Figure 9. Change in predicted values of immigration policy, 2020–2021 Lucid. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table E9](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, Spanish language fluency, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

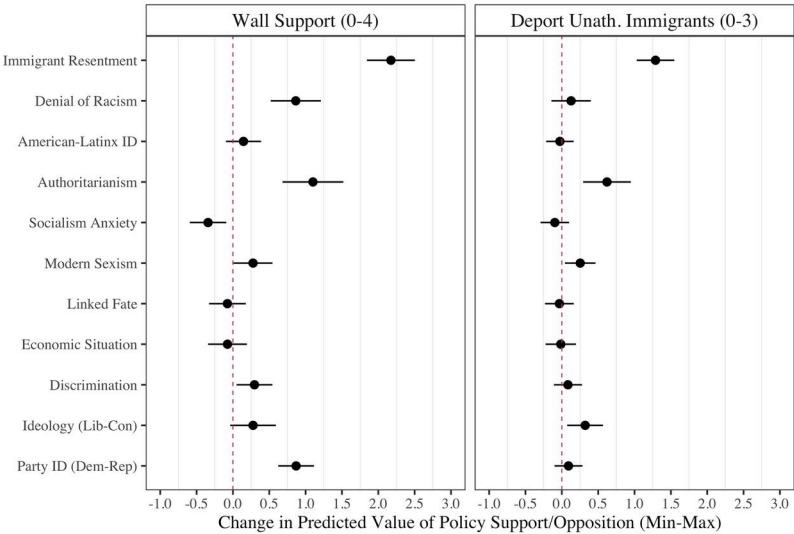


Figure 10. Change in predicted values of immigration policy, 2021–2022 Lucid. Changes in predicted values with 95 percent CIs are derived from OLS regression results reported in [Supplementary Material table E10](#). Models control for standard demographic variables, political knowledge, Spanish language fluency, religious identification, religious importance, and country of origin.

Once again, the results point in the same direction: for individuals exhibiting LIR, support for restrictionist or anti-immigrant policies is a compelling means to enhance the status and interests of “prototypical” Latinxs by signaling their distinction from “atypical” (e.g., immigrant) Latinxs.

Conclusion

While scholars continue to debate the veracity of exit poll data from the 2016 and 2020 elections, it is undeniable that a significant minority of the Latinx community support restrictive immigration policies and the politicians who espouse them. Although the political heterogeneity of the Latinx community is not unexpected, it is curious, given the rather clear negative impacts that such policy and rhetoric has had on the status of Latinxs in the United States. This raises the question of whether Trump’s support from within the Latinx community occurs despite his immigrant hostility or because of it. While there are many explanations for this phenomenon and how Latinxs rationalize their behavior/attitudes, this study articulates a novel approach. Our work demonstrates that a large percentage of Latinxs harbor negative stereotypes of immigrants and cognitively distinguish themselves

from these “atypical” Latinxs. These sentiments are statistically and substantively significant in explaining evaluations of Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, and restrictive immigration policies. We therefore conclude that an important subset of Latinxs are motivated to support anti-immigrant policies and politicians as a means of enhancing the status and interests of “prototypical” Latinx by signaling to out-groups their distinction from “atypical” Latinxs.

Although we find that immigrant resentment was more prevalent among those with weaker attachments to a Latinx identity, roughly one-third of those with stronger attachments endorsed these sentiments. In this way, our work illustrates the dangers of assuming that the political implications of group consciousness will be uniform (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Gay, Hochschild, and White 2016), along with articulating one explanation for why individuals sometimes support policies/politicians that seemingly work against their social group interests. While immigrant resentment remains a minority perspective within the Latinx community, many of these individuals remain committed to not only their Latinx identity, but also the advancement of Latinx interests. They simply have a different interpretation of what those interests are and how to achieve them.

Given the restrictions of our data, we are limited in our ability to evaluate causal relationships or explore the different conditions under which LIR may emerge and impact political behavior. We encourage future scholars to investigate these possibilities. In particular, although we failed to detect significant differences in the political implications of resentment derived from undocumented immigrants compared to “legal” immigrants, we encourage scholars to develop more sophisticated research designs that can more thoroughly evaluate this potential. In so doing, scholars may be able to elaborate upon the relative influence that “legality” and assimilation capacity play in perceptions of atypicality. Similarly, although we found that resentment was more prevalent among those who prioritize a US-American identity over a Latinx identity, we were unable to explore whether LIR was a cause or effect of “Passing.” We look forward to these and other research endeavors which can serve to refine the theoretical framework articulated here.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary Material may be found in the online version of this article: <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad066>.

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Data Availability

Replication data and documentation are available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0B5OCE>.

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