# Truly at Home?: Perceived Belonging and Immigrant Incorporation

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## Abstract

A significant amount of research has been devoted to studying the sociopolitical incorporation of immigrants and their descendants both socially and structurally. However, a lot of questions remain as to how immigrants and children of immigrants might develop a sense of belonging in light of historical and present-day forms of exclusion. While some might internalize a framework of social alienation, others might be able to overcome the detrimental impact of hostile treatment and develop a psychological sense of belonging to U.S. society. This paper investigates the factors that shape belonging and feelings of social alienation among Latinos. I rely on survey data from the 2016 Collaborative Multi-racial Post-election Survey and a survey experiment to examine how varying factors as well as political messaging can impact Latinos' perceptions of inclusion to U.S. society. The findings demonstrate that demographic factors and acculturation are associated with Latinos' perceived belonging in the U.S. The findings also suggest that personal and group discrimination as well as receiving messages that are hostile and disparage the pan-ethnic community can shift Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. These findings underscore not only the correlates of belonging but also shed light on how political messaging can be consequential in the sociopolitical incorporation process of immigrants and their descendants.

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# Introduction

A significant amount of research has been devoted to studying the sociopolitical incorporation of immigrants and their descendants both socially and structurally. However, the extent to which a psychological sense of belonging to U.S. society is related to processes of incorporation of immigrants has been understudied. Perceptions of belonging and membership to U.S. society vary a great deal, in particular among individuals who are, and have historically been, marginalized along the lines of race, ethnicity, legal status, religion, gender and other characteristics. Exactly how these perceptions vary for a large swath of the Latino community as well as how political messaging can directly impact these perceptions is not all too clear. However, it is imperative to understand how psychological and internalized notions of belonging to U.S. operate for immigrants and their descendants given the impact that these perceptions might have on processes of social and political incorporation.

Prior work indicates that Latinos' perceptions of membership and belonging to U.S. society are not always positive nor a given. A sense of belonging among Latinos has been shown to be shaped particularly by nativity and legal status (Chávez et al., 2014; Flores-González, 2017; García, 2019; Gonzales et al., 2020), geography and place (García, 2019; Schildkraut et al., 2019), school settings (Abrego, 2006) and policy contexts (Huo et al., 2018). Similarly, others have argued that perceived belonging is closely linked, if not equivalent, to American identity (Fraga et al., 2010) and that as such belonging is a function of acculturation –the process by which immigrants learn about and adopt to the culture, beliefs and customs of the host or new society–. Although there is a lack of consensus around the operationalization of American identity (Schildkraut, 2014) empirical studies have not fully disentangled the differences between the concepts of perceived belonging to the U.S. and American identity. In this paper, I expand on this by theorizing and testing the concept of perceived belonging to U.S. society as a separate construct from American identity, yet a very powerful one. Furthermore, I build on existent work by examining the factors that influence, and even shift, Latinos' sense of belonging to U.S. society beyond nativity, legal

status, and acculturation, and investigate the role of other consequential factors for social stratification outcomes such as skin color.

This paper presents a framework of perceived psychological belonging where U.S. society is the macro-level or superordinate entity to which Latinos are evaluating their membership and status. Such framework, I argue, allows us to better understand not only the antecedents of psychological notions of belonging to U.S. society, or alienation, but also the process by which these notions shape the incorporation process of immigrants. In order to investigate how Latinos evaluate their sense of membership and belonging to the U.S. I develop a set of belonging measures that are theoretically grounded and rely on existent social psychology constructs to tap into perceptions of belonging and acceptance among Latinos in U.S. society. This paper examines the factors that are associated with distinct perceptions of belonging among Latinos across an array of characteristics and experiences, including nativity, and strength of pan-ethnicity, demographics and others. I also investigate how political messages can shift perceptions of belonging and feelings of social alienation among Latinos. I leverage two data sources to achieve this. First, I draw from original data on the Latino subsample (n=3,003) of the 2016 Collaborative Multi-racial Post-election Survey (CMPS) to examine the correlates of perceived social inclusion among Latinos. Relying on this survey, I examine the extent to which demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status and other predispositions are associated with perceived belonging to U.S. society. To investigate how varying political messages and cues have a causal impact on Latinos' perceptions of inclusion or exclusion to U.S. society I fielded an experiment on a national sample of Latinos (n=689). This experiment manipulates the content of various message and evaluates how certain political messaging can in fact decrease Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society.

The paper finds that experiencing personal discrimination is strongly associated with lower perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. Perceived group discrimination of Latinos as a pan-ethnic group is also particularly important in shaping attitudes on belonging for U.S.

born Latinos. The findings reveal that acculturation plays an influential role in heightening perceptions of belonging to U.S. society – the longer that foreign born Latinos live in the U.S. the more likely they are to report higher perceptions of belonging. But even as Latinos become more acculturated and familiar with the United States, personal discrimination continues to play a role in negatively shaping their sense of social inclusion. Lastly, the data shows that self-reported skin color is negatively associated with perceptions of belonging for both foreign and U.S. born, thus indicating the impact of phenotype on psychological feelings of membership in the U.S.

The experimental findings reveal that political cues that are negative and that belittle the Latino community as a whole make Latinos feel more excluded from U.S. society. That is negative messages from political elites cause Latinos to have more negative perceptions of belonging and membership in U.S. society. This evidence suggests that through cues and messages political elites and everyday Americans critically shape how Latinos view themselves as members of the United States, and in doing so they also shape the process of political and social incorporation for Latinos.

# 1    A Framework of Belonging to U.S. Society

People can belong to various groups and communities and they can belong to these in a number of different ways. Individuals can belong to large or small groups and the affinities of people toward each one of these can vary. A sense of belonging, as it is examined in this paper pertains to feelings of perceived inclusion and attachment to U.S. society (Maslow, 1943; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011). As notions of belonging can be multifaceted and multilayered (Antonsich, 2010), I specifically focus on feelings of belonging *to* U.S. society as a way of understanding how these feelings might impact the process of immigrant incorporation.

Belonging has been theorized as a state of being where an individual who takes the

role of a member is then included in a social collective, a *Gemeinschaft* –a community– (Weber, 1978). As George Herbert Mead proposed in his conceptualization of the mind, the self and society, belonging is a symbolic feature that defines human and social interactions (Mead, 1934). According to this theory, an individual behaves in response to a sense of belonging as "he has a mind in which mental processes can go on, a mind whose inner structure he has taken from the community to which he belongs" (Mead, 1934, pg. 270).

The fundamental nature of the concept of belonging has also been underscored by psychologists. Although it is debated where in a human's hierarchy of needs belonging is located (Maslow, 1943; Lieberman, 2013), the need to belong and be socially connected to others has been found to be one of the most important and consequential needs that all people have and must satisfy in order to live. Given that belonging is such a core human need, individuals behave in ways to satisfy it. In other words, individuals seek to establish attachment to groups from which they develop positive feelings of belonging (Maslow, 1943).

The need to belong is a human need believed to be the driver of all individual behavior that defines all defines social relationships. As such, Baumeister and Leary argue that this concept has two main features (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The first is that people need frequent contact and positive interactions to meet this need. The second is that "to satisfy the need to belong, the person must believe that the other cares about his or her welfare and likes or loves him or her" (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, pg. 500). In other words, people must perceive and understand that there is a positive relationship between themselves and the group or community in order to have a sense of belonging. This suggests that a sense of belonging is more than just an affiliation. Research indicates that social interactions between group members must be positive and enduring, and these must lead to perceiving stability and affective concern (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Drawing on these theoretical underpinnings in social psychology on belonging, this paper presents a framework of perceived belonging where U.S. society is the macro-level group to which individuals, in this case immigrants are faced with evaluating their membership and

status. The framework of belonging that I present here has several components and I argue it is critical for understanding the process of immigrant incorporation. The first is the *individual* component. Established theoretical approaches on belonging center on the fact that an individual seeks attachment to a group or community. These theories highlight the self, and as a consequence, the individual component of the framework of belonging. The self seeks attachment to a group or a community (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), and the self evaluates its inclusion or exclusion based on context cues and other experiences.

However, the notion of social inclusion cannot be fully understood without delving into the dynamics of group membership and inter-group relations. Therefore, the theory also incorporates a *relative* or external component. Social identity theory and research on inter-group relations suggest that group dynamics inform a person's sense of belonging to that group. These theories help frame the relative component of belonging. According to Tajfel (1981, pg. 255), an individual's social identity involves "knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership." A sense of belonging is an internalized state of group membership (Huddy and Khatib, 2007) and it is fundamentally defined by the kind of perceived relation that an individual has to the group. While social identity theory outlines how individuals come to see themselves, it is evident that self-identity stems from how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the broader group membership.

One of the most established findings in social psychology is that individuals are greatly affected by how they are viewed and evaluated by group members. As such, my theory of perceived social inclusion or belonging relies on the group value model to further define the *relative* component of belonging. The group value model posits that people rely on their experiences within groups to inform their identity or sense of self (Tyler and Lind, 1992; Tyler, 1994). Individuals regard cues about their relationship with group or community members to learn about their status within these groups (Tyler and Lind, 1992; Spears et al., 2006). The group value model argues that respect cues are especially important in learning

of one's status in a group. If one is treated with respect by group leaders and group peers then this is a sign of group inclusion (Tyler and Lind, 1992). In this model of inter-group relations, the notion of respect is regarded as a relational concept as it is tied to the position that individuals hold within a group (Spears et al., 2006; Huo et al., 2010). More specifically, perceived respect is a critical construct that allows us to understand how an individual fits in a larger group.

Regardless of how perceived belonging it has been orperationalizalized, research in social psychology, higher education and other fields indicate that perceptions of belonging, membership and perceived respect in a broader group or community setting lead to positive outcomes. A sense of belonging has been shown to motivate individuals to voluntarily assist and work on behalf of their group or community (Boeckmann and Tyler, 2002). Other findings demonstrate that a sense of perceived social belonging promotes educational achievement (Walton and Cohen, 2007; Maestas et al., 2007; Cohen and Garcia, 2008; Walton et al., 2012) particularly for members of marginalized groups. On the contrary, feelings of social exclusion have been shown to result in a state of loneliness, social anxiety, depression and lead to anti-social behavior (Maslow, 1943; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Hagerty and Williams, 1999) and can ultimately be detrimental to our survival as human beings (Pinker, 2015). Thus, indicating how powerful psychological notions of belonging to U.S. society can be for impacting the process of social and political incorporation.

# 2    Former Approaches to Understanding a Sense of Belonging among Latinos in America

Existent scholarship has spent a great deal of effort trying to examine how America has been defined and who is defined as part of it. In this scholarly pursuit, researchers have investigated the conceptual boundaries of membership to the American polity and along with it they have examined markers of belonging in American society (Marshall, 1950;

Oboler, 2006; Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Rocco, 2014; Schildkraut, 2014). Scholars who have studied the contours of membership in the U.S. have paid particular attention to the concepts of American identity, patriotism and citizenship (Huddy and Khatib, 2007; Hochschild and Lang, 2011; Schildkraut, 2014). These concepts have been of critical important in the study of incorporation as well as political engagement.

However, much less attention has been paid to understanding what drives immigrants and their descendants to have varying perceptions of belonging to U.S. society and specifically Latinos. In her in-depth examination of Latinos in working-class East Los Angeles and the middle-class Montebello community Garcia Bedolla (2005) investigates to the role of stigma. As she posits, the experience of stigma acts as a boundary between how Latinos see themselves and how they see the broader political community (Garcia Bedolla, 2005). The way in which Latinos respond to stigma along with the political resources and opportunities available to them help determine their political engagement. While this work highlights how stigma plays an intermediary role between attachment to Latino pan-ethnic identity and political engagement, it does not specifically examine how stigma might be related to notions of perceived belonging and membership in the larger U.S. society. Research suggests, however, that given the detrimental impact of internalized stigma on Latinos' identity and personal wellbeing (Link and Phelan, 2001), it should also negatively influence Latinos' perception of belonging to U.S. society as a whole.

In their examination of undocumented youth, Chávez et al. (2014) show that the traumatic growing up experiences of the youth influenced many DREAMers to feel as if they will never truly belong. Part of this was because they did not feel accepted by various segments of U.S. society and they realized that they were perceived by others as "unwanted". However, despite the severe hardships of the undocumented youth, some did have a strong sense of belonging to U.S. society. In their attempt to re-affirm their sense of belonging to America they over-participated and heavily engaged in civic groups, churches and other local and justice oriented organizations (Chávez et al., 2014). Local contexts also shape Latinos'

sense of belonging as undocumented immigrants who often develop ties with their local communities that they grow up in are more likely to develop a sense of belonging (García, 2019). In addition to local settings, personal spaces and social circles can be vehicles of positive interactions that foment belonging among DACA recipients (Gonzales et al., 2020). From this research is it evident that legal status greatly shapes belonging for Latinos, but also that feelings of belonging and social alienation often times coexist together.

However, it is the case that feelings of belonging are not only relevant for foreign born Latinos, but also for Latinos who are also citizens by birth. For U.S. born Latinos, a two-pronged racialization process that deems them as perpetually foreign (often times conflating the U.S. born with being undocumented) as well as deeming them as culturally deficient, inferior and unable to assimilate, hinders their attachment to America and sense of belonging (Flores-González, 2017). Despite this, many U.S. born Latinos deploy notions of hard work ethic, the U.S. being a nation of immigrants, upward mobility and civic responsibility to make claims of Americanness and membership in U.S. society (Flores-González, 2017).

But as Latinos might try to make claims of membership and belonging, other factors might hinder their development of feelings of belonging in U.S. society. As Golash-Boza (2006) argues, discrimination influences one's racial and ethnic identification. Based on this work and the other research on stigma, we can expect that experiences of discrimination negatively influence Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. Discrimination is a mechanism of exclusion and it binds racial and ethnic boundaries (Telles and Ortiz, 2008). Therefore, discrimination should also influence one's understanding of social inclusion within a group or broader community and it should negatively influence how Latinos' perceive their sense of membership and belonging to U.S. society. As discrimination increases Latinos become more aware of their non-white status and are less likely to identify as American (Golash-Boza, 2006). This suggests that as Latinos experience more discrimination this should also negatively influence their sense of membership in U.S. society and belonging.

Several modes of acculturation have been investigated including various forms of as-

similation into to the host society or separation from it. While acculturation means espousing the cultural values, rules and symbols of the host society, assimilation might also mean that newcomers leave their formal and informal ethnic ties to be fully immersed in the non-ethnic institutions and ties in the host society (Gans, 1997). Early scholars of assimilation argued that immigrants assimilated and eventually become Anglo-Americans generation after generation (Gordon, 1964). Thus eventually also developing notions of full belonging and membership in the host society. However, more recent approaches to assimilation posit that this process can be multifaceted. The more recent frameworks of assimilation detail how it is not necessarily the case that immigrants and the children of immigrants assimilate into the majority group and become white Americans (Alba and Nee, 2003; Portes and Zhou, 1993). An important aspect of the new approaches highlight how minority immigrant communities also transform mainstream America (Alba and Nee, 2003). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) offer a different perspective by which they outline three paths of a segmented form of assimilation where assimilation into mainstream U.S. society is attainable for some immigrants but not all.

Given the various approaches to assimilation, it is not necessarily safe to assume that as Latinos become more familiar with the United States and incorporated in various ways generation after generation that they should be more likely to feel like they belong to U.S. society. In fact, prior research suggests that the more familiarized Latinos are with United States' customs, language and culture the more cognizant they become of hostility and animosity towards minority communities (Portes et al., 1980). Thus, it remains an open question if greater levels of acculturation lead to higher perceptions of belonging to U.S. society among Latinos.

Skin color and phenotype are important determinants of Latino social stratification as defined by income, education, occupational status, criminal justice sentencing, poverty rates and mental health outcomes (Telles and Murguia, 1990; Murguia and Telles, 1996; Codina and Montalvo, 1994; Espino and Franz, 2002; Morales, 2008; Faught and Hunter,

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2012). Scholars have also found that skin color leads to negative material outcomes for African Americans. However, as Hochschild and Weaver (2007); Faught and Hunter (2012) point out a skin color 'paradox' exists for African Americans and Latinos. Whereas skin color determines social stratification, it does not seem to be associated with political interest, political efficacy, government trust (Faught and Hunter, 2012). Nonetheless, as Faught and Hunter (2012) suggest, the inequalities faced by African Americans and Latinos due to skin color is evidence that systemic discrimination is continues to be at play and negatively affects their livelihoods. As Golash-Boza (2006) finds, dark-skinned Latinos are less likely to self-identify as American. Based on this, we might expect that skin tone could also influence Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society as dark-skinned Latinos are more likely to experience social rejection which could lead them to internalize a perceived sense of lack of belonging to U.S. society. While skin color might not directly impact political predisposition among Latinos as existent research as indicated, notions of perceived belonging might play an intermediary role in shaping these political predispositions and subsequently Latinos' sociopolitical incorporation.

Scholarship on American identity and belonging to U.S. society has used these two notions interchangeably. Some scholars rely on questions about the importance of American identity to indicate whether or not Latinos feel at home in the United States and whether or not they feel like they belong. But empirical work has not fully disentangled these two concepts. While research suggests that espousing an American identity and a sense of belonging to U.S. society are closely related (Fraga et al., 2010; Flores-González, 2017), it is not necessarily clear whether these two capture the same construct. As Schildkraut (2014) points out, a consensus is lacking regarding the appropriate concepts that operationalize and measure the concept of American identity. Some research has examined American identity by assessing the extent to which individuals believe that this identity is an important part of how they see themselves. Others have operationalized it by looking at whether or not people consider themselves to be typical Americans or if they believe thinking of one self

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as American is an important part of American identity (Huddy and Khatib, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009; Jacobs and Theiss-Morse, 2013). Recent work, however, suggests that a sense of belonging is its own unique psychological construct, albeit related to American identity, but one that has predictive power that is distinct (Ocampo, 2018).

Despite evidence that these two are separate constructs, it expected that a strong desire to identify as an American is positively associated with perceptions of belonging and membership to U.S. society. Otherwise, as social identity theory suggests, if individuals have negative perceptions of belonging in the U.S. they would choose to identify with other available identities (i.e. Latino or national origin identities) in order to preserve a positive self-image (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 2004; Garcia Rios, 2015). In this paper, I examine this link more closely and investigate the relationship between believing American identity is an important part of the self and feelings of belonging to U.S. society in an effort to better understand the sociopolitical incorporation process of Latinos.

Prior research shows that some Latinos indicate having a strong sense of belonging to U.S. society as they perceive that the U.S. is their home (Fraga et al., 2010). There is also evidence that suggests that some Latinos feel ambivalent about their sense of belonging to America. Even though Latinos feel accepted, their sense of ambivalence was captured by a sense of being "neither from here nor from there" especially among the first generation. Prior work also suggests that some Latinos do not feel like they belong in U.S. society and this sentiment is prevalent among Latinos who had been recent arrivals to the United States, who were Spanish speakers and who lived in newer immigrant destinations (Fraga et al., 2010). These important findings suggest that generation, nativity and familiarity with the U.S. are strong determinants of a sense of belonging. Given that most of these findings stem from qualitative and observational data further inquiry into whether or not specific political messaging and cues can shift Latinos' perceptions of belonging is warranted.

# 3 Operationalizing the Concept of Belonging

As previously mentioned, the concept of belonging to U.S. society as examined here is defined two components, an internal and an external one. Both of these components, when captured, measure the extent to which Latinos feel or do not feel as belonging members to U.S. society. To operationalize the concept of belonging, I rely on proxies from social psychology as well as the expectations from the framework previously laid out. More specifically, I rely on the original need to belong scale as proposed by (Leary et al., 2013) as well as work in social identity that examines an individual's perception of their standing or worth as a member of a group (Tyler and Smith, 1999), individual sense of inclusion within a group (Ellemers et al., 2002, 2004; Spears et al., 2005), and perceptions of fair and respectful treatment within a group context (De Cremer and Blader, 2006; Spears et al., 2006; Huo et al., 2010).

Given that the these existent questions, at times, did not specify what group or category individuals were assessing their sense of belonging to, I added the words *U.S. society* to cue that this was the group that respondents should be thinking about when evaluating their membership and status. In other words, the items from the original need to belong scale and group membership in social identity were adjusted to appropriately account for membership to the macro-level group or entity, in this case U.S. society. To determine the appropriateness of these measures, I also relied on the work by Hochschild and Lang (2011) which has examined what the concept of membership and belonging in ten wealthy Democratic countries including the United States (Hochschild and Lang, 2011) as well as the work of Huo et al. (2018).

Scholars have operationalized respect in the group value model in a variety of different ways. Some have defined it as perceived liking by members and authority figures in a group (Branscombe et al., 2002; Ellemers et al., 2004; Spears et al., 2005). Others have conceptualized it as a measure of treatment quality, one that is fair and respectful (De Cremer & Blader, 2006; Simon & Sturmer, 2003, 2005; Smith et al., 2003; Tyler, Degoey,

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& Smith, 1996). While a few others have examined respect as a perception of worth and standing within a group –or perceived status– (Tyler and Smith, 1999).

Relying on these previous proxies, I develop four original questions that measure the aforementioned components (individual and relative) of the concept of belonging. The first question asks to what extent individuals feel like they belong to U.S. society. The second question asks individuals the extent to which they feel like insiders [outsiders] in U.S. society. These two capture the internal or individual component. The following items ask respondents the extent to which they believe that they are valued and respected by others in U.S. society. And the fourth item evaluates the extent to which individuals believe they are excluded or included by others in U.S. society. These last two items tap into the relative component. The complete wording of the items can be found in Appendix A[1]. It should be noted that prior studies have measured belonging by relying proxies such as: whether a state or local context is perceived to be welcoming toward immigrants, identity importance (American, Latino, state resident identity) or perceived discrimination (Schildkraut et al., 2019). The items in this paper present a closer measure of the concept of belonging, as theorized by the earlier framework of social inclusion.

# 4 Correlates of Perceptions of Belonging

In order to examine what factors are associated with perceptions of social inclusion or social exclusion among Latinos, I placed the aforementioned original measures of belonging on the 2016 Collaborative Multi-racial Post election survey. In addition to the belonging items, this survey collected demographic data, questions on political attitudes, political behaviors and policy preferences among a national sample of the U.S. population. The 2016 CMPS was a self-administered survey collected from December 3, 2016 until February 15,

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[1]These items were developed after a series of pilots that I ran to assess the reliability and consistency of the questions. Results from the pilots suggested that these four items were in fact the most consistent and reliable across four pilot surveys. The original 8-item scale was narrowed down to the four items included in this paper.

2017 (Barreto et al., 2018). The survey collected a total of 10,145 responses from Latinos, Asians, Blacks and Whites. For this analysis, I primarily rely on analysis of the Latino subsample. The 2016 CMPS is the first national survey to specifically measure perceptions of belonging or lack of belonging to U.S. society through the aforementioned unique measures of belonging among a representative sample of Latinos, Blacks and Asians. The Latino subsample of the CMPS is comprised of 3,003 respondents, out of which 1,816 were registered voters and 1,187 were not.

The 2016 CMPS asked respondents the belonging questions that, based on results from previous pilots I conducted, were the most appropriate and reliable items to capture the concept of belonging to U.S. society. The *belong* item asked respondents in a 4-point scale to answer the following question: "how strongly do you feel like you belong in the United States?" The *insider* item assessed how much respondents felt that they were insiders [outsiders] in U.S. society. This was measured on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly to not at all. The *respected* item asked respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Most Americans value and respect my individual presence in the United States." This item was also on a 4-point scale. The last item, the *included* item asked "how often do you think that other people try to exclude you [include you] from U.S. society. This 4-point item ranged from always to never.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the items that measure perceptions of belonging among all CMPS respondents. With regards to the belong item, approximately 10% of Latinos in the sample reported that they did not feel like they belonged to U.S. society (either strongly or somewhat) where 25% of respondents reported that they somewhat felt that they belonged and 64% strongly felt that they belonged. Approximately 17% of Latinos in the CMPS reported that they felt excluded by others in the U.S., while a sizable 82% reported that they felt included. A larger share of Latinos expressed that they did not feel like insiders in the U.S. (22%) while 78% reported that they felt like insiders. Lastly, about 54% of Latinos reported that they felt strongly valued and respected by others in

Figure 1: Distribution of belonging items in 2016 CMPS
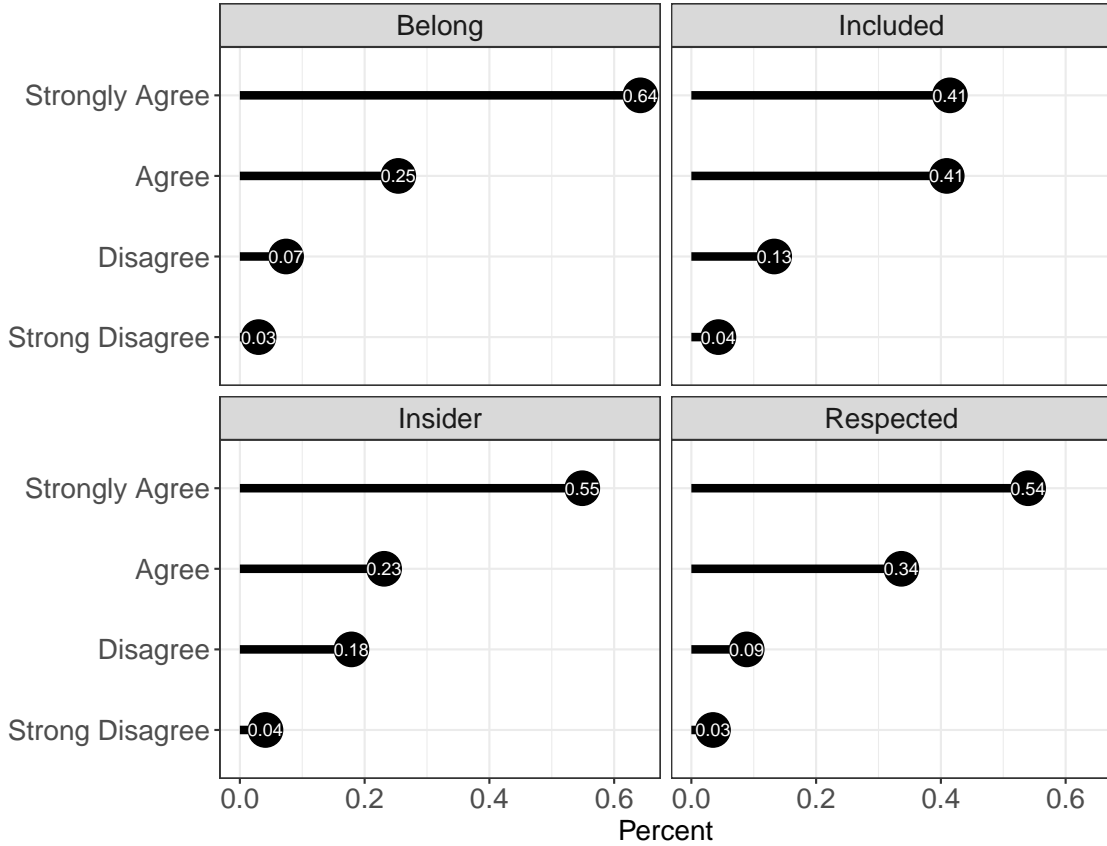


the U.S. while 12% reported that they did not feel this way (either strongly or somewhat). The distribution of the responses for all four items has a left skew, and these findings are somewhat surprising given that anti-immigrant and anti-Latino rhetoric has been at its height when the survey was conducted. At the same time, it also appears that some Latinos possess negative perceptions of social inclusion as indicated by the left tails on all panels. All items are shown here with the response options of agree/disagree but the complete wording of the questions can be found in appendix A.

To further examine how perceptions of belonging and membership vary among foreign born and U.S. born Latinos figure 2 displays the distribution of responses to these items among foreign born and U.S. born Latinos. U.S. born Latinos on average are more likely to have greater perceptions of belonging, feelings of being respected, included and feeling like insiders than foreign born Latinos. 51% of foreign born Latinos have the highest perceptions

Figure 2: Distribution of belonging items in 2016 CMPS by nativity
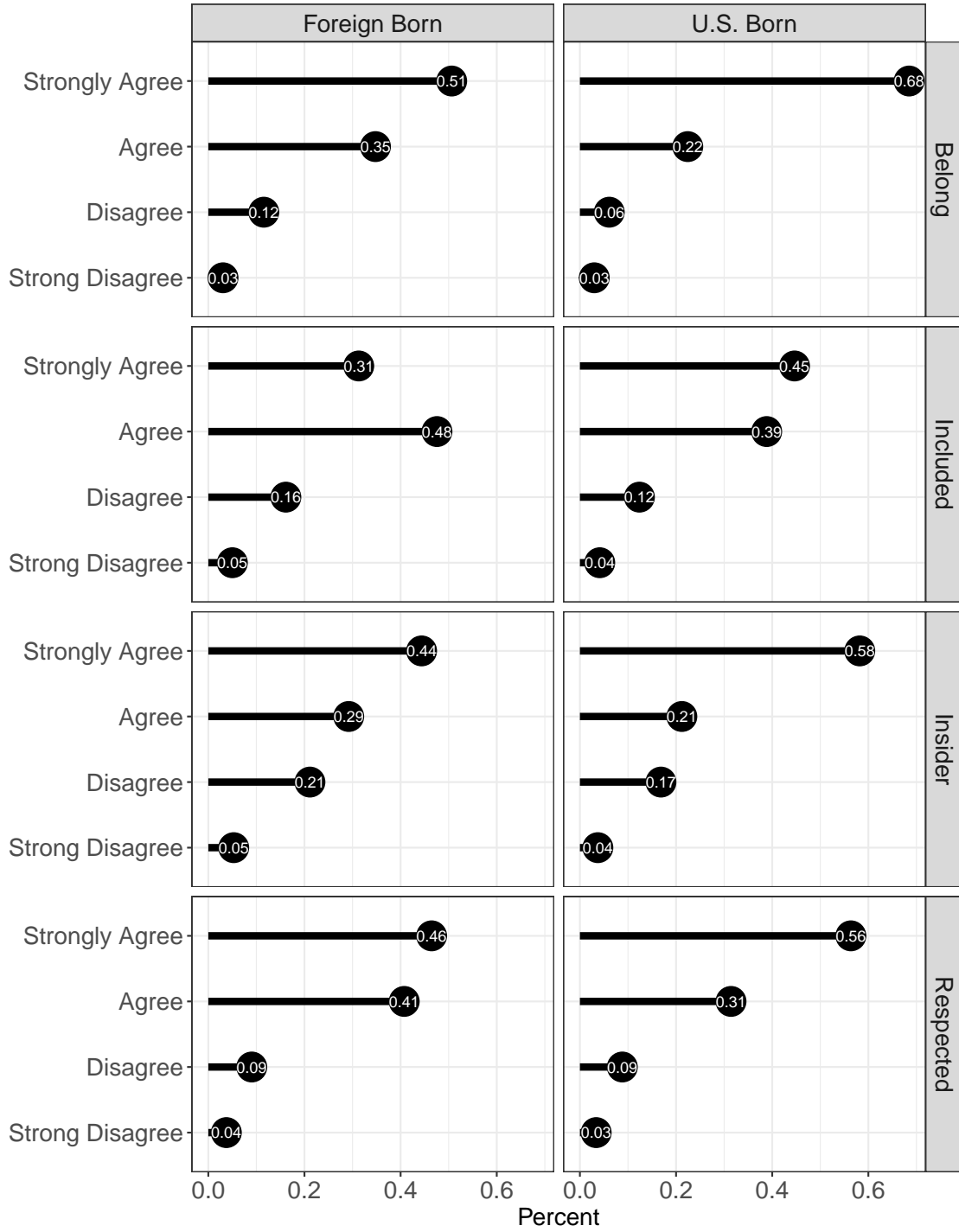
of belonging to U.S. society, while 35% somewhat agree that they belong and 15% report that they either somewhat or strongly believe don't feel like they belong. Compared to U.S. born, 68% strongly agree that they belong, 22% believe that they somewhat belong and 9% believe that they either strongly or somewhat do not belong. These proportions suggest that foreign born Latinos have slightly lower perceptions of belonging to U.S. society than U.S. born Latinos.

Pertaining to the *included* item, about 31% of the foreign born report feeling strongly included by others, while this is much grater for U.S. born Latinos (45%). On the *insider* item, approximately 26% of foreign born Latinos do not see themselves as insiders in the U.S., while 21% of U.S. born Latinos either strongly or somewhat disagree that they are insiders. With regards to the *respected* item, 46% of foreign born Latinos report that they strongly agree that they are respected by other Americans, 41% somewhat agree, and 13% either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that they are respected by other Americans. 56% of U.S. born Latinos in my sample report on average that they strongly agree that they are respected, 31% somewhat agree that they are respected and 12% disagree either somewhat or strongly that they are respected by other Americans.

Given how much hostility is particularly directed towards Mexicans, it is of importance to examine whether or not Latinos of different national origins report differences in their levels of belonging to the U.S. Appendix D includes a set of graphs breaking down the distribution by Latinos from the largest three national origin groups: Cubans (n=160), Puerto Ricans (n=490) and Mexicans (n=1495). Important patterns emerge from these distributions. On average, there are no significant differences between reported levels on the *belong* item. However, a two-sided t-test reveals that Puerto Ricans are statistically much more significant to report that they feel like insiders compared to Mexican respondents $t(2.47) = 821.17, < p$ .05. Cubans are statistically much more more likely to feel respected by others in U.S. society than Puerto Ricans $t(2.08) = 288.91 < p$ .05. Mexicans are statistically significantly less likely to feel that others include them in U.S. society than

Figure 3: Distribution of combined social inclusion items in 2016 CMPS by generation among Latinos
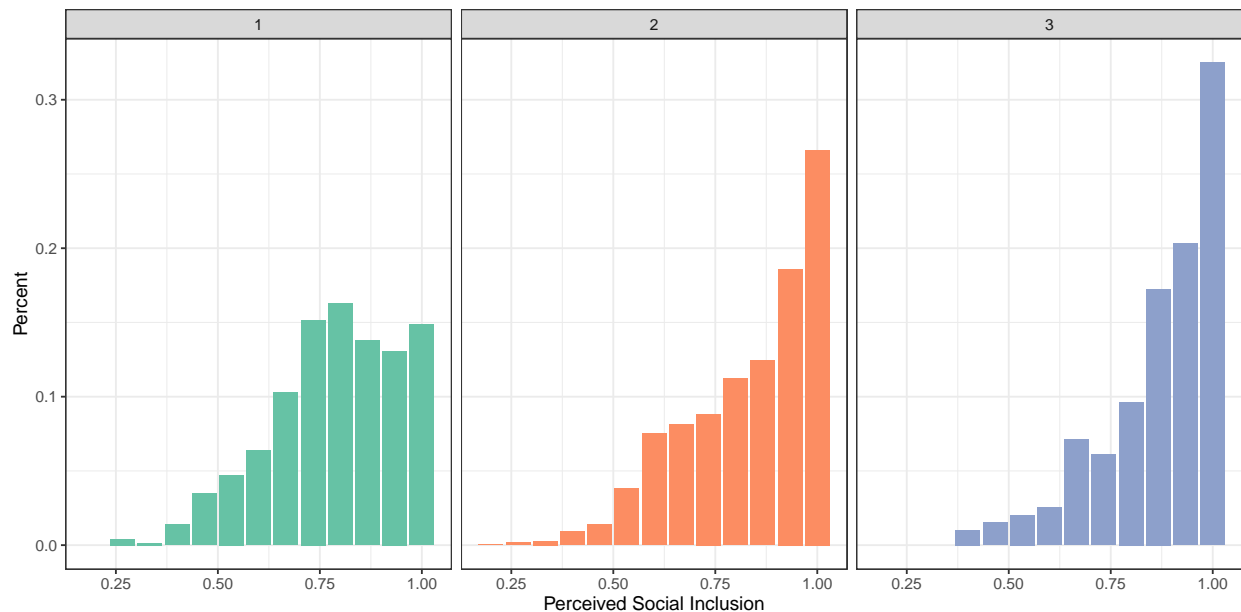


Puerto Ricans t(-2.99) = 851.96, < p .05. However, there were no statistically significant differences by national origin when all of the belonging items were combined into one single measure.

In the analysis that follows, I combine all of them items into a combined belonging or social inclusion scale. This measure had a Cronbach's $\alpha$=.71 and Omega of $\omega$=.78. The distribution of the combined scale by generation is show in figure 3. As this figure displays, there is a left skew in the distribution of the combined scale among the second and third generation suggesting greater concentration toward the higher end of the scale and higher reported levels of belonging as a function of generation for the combined items.

To analyze how other predictors and demographic characteristics are associated with varying perceptions of belonging to U.S. society, I rely on other measures included in the survey. As existent research suggests, discrimination can have negative consequences as it can make people feel sad, depressed, powerless, have lower self-esteem and have a negative self-image (Branscombe et al., 1999; Almeida et al., 2009; Schmitt et al., 2002). Therefore, I posit that experiencing personal discrimination and perceiving that one has been discrimi-

nated against should be negatively associated with perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. To examine the relationship between perceived personal discrimination and perceptions of belonging, I use an item that asked respondents if they had been ever treated unfairly or personally experienced discrimination because of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, being an immigrant or due to their religious heritage of having an accent. This item is a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent perceived to ever have been discriminated against and 0 otherwise. In the 2016 CMPS, over half of Latino respondents (52%) reported that they had been personally discriminated in the past.

I also test for the possibility that acknowledging group discrimination towards Latinos is associated with perceptions of belonging. To test for this, the item *group discrimination* measures the extent to which respondents believed that discrimination against Latinos was preventing Latinos in general from succeeding in the U.S. This item was a 5-category item where 1 meant that respondents felt like it was not a problem at all and 5 signified that respondents believed it was the primary problem. I also included items to test for the role of identity on perceptions of belonging. I included items for *American identity* and *Latino identity*.[2] These two items measured how much respondents felt that being either Latino or American was an important part of how they saw themselves. These were 4-category items ranging from 1, not at all important to 4, very important. To account for whether or not feeling that one's fate was connected to that of others in the in-group influenced the extent to which Latinos varied in their perceptions of belonging I included a measure of *linked fate*. Originally, this item was a a binary item, but I combined it with a followup question about how much individuals felt that their fate was going to depend on others in their in-group. The final *linked fate* item had 4 categories ranging from none 1, none at all to 4, a lot. Appendix C shows a plot of the correlation matrix across the four belonging items, linked fate, American identity and other items. As the plot indicates, there are weak correlations among

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[2]Although the CMPS also includes an item on country of origin identity strength, this item is highly correlated with the pan-ethnic identity item so it was not included in the analysis so as to avoid multicollinearity.

the majority of the items. Only some items, such as *belong* and *respected* show a moderate positive correlation of .53. The correlation plot also reveals that despite being substantively similar items (and even used interchangeably in the literature), American identity and the four belonging items, as well as the personal and discrimination items are in fact not strongly correlated. This also suggests that the belonging items I present here are capturing a distinct construct from these other items.

Research on acculturation suggests that greater levels of acculturation and integration in the host society are associated with positive outcomes such as higher self-esteem and better mental health (Miranda and Umhoefer, 1998). As mentioned above, it is plausible that this variable also positively influences a sense of belonging among Latinos. As Fraga et al. (2010) point out uncertainty among Latinos with regards to belonging is most present among first generation immigrants. It is likely that this is driven by their levels of unfamiliarity with the U.S., as well as lack of connectedness or attachment to U.S. society. In order to examine the role of acculturation on perceptions of belonging to U.S. society, I rely on two proxies used in existent scholarship to help me capture familiarity with the U.S. or acculturation (Michelson, 2003). The first is *Spanish language* dominance, which is a dummy variable of whether or not the respondent took the survey in Spanish. The second acculturation item *years in the U.S.* measures the length of time that the respondent has lived in the United States. To examine the influence of skin color on perception of belonging among Latinos, I rely on the traditional item that measures skin tone which allows respondent to self categorize their skin tone using the skin color scale ranging from 1, the darkest to 10, the lightest. This is the same scale utilized in surveys such as the American National Election Study (ANES), originally developed by Douglas S. Massey and Jennifer A. Martin (Massey et al., 2003).

To account for the role of partisanship in influencing Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society, I use dummy variables for whether or not respondents are Democrat, Independent or Republican (Republican is the baseline category). I also account for partisan-

ship using a 5-point ideology scale ranging from very conservative to very liberal. I include measures of income and education. To measure the respondents' income, the survey asked individuals for their total combined household income before taxes the previous year. There were 12 categories that respondents could choose from ranging from 1, less than $20,000 to 12, $200,000 or more. Education was measured by a 6-category item where 1 meant that respondents had obtained only grade 1 through grade 8 schooling and the category of 6 meant that respondents had received a post-graduate education.

I also accounted for various demographic characteristics and other control variables. The variable of age captured how old respondents were at the time of the survey. A dummy variable was included for whether or not the respondent was female and if they had been born outside of the United States. The analysis also accounts for the three largest national origin groups among Latinos: Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican, where the excluded category is Latinos of other national origins. Table 6 in appendix E provides all summary statistics for all variables in the survey.

To more systematically examine the relationship between aforementioned predictors and Latinos' perceptions of social belonging, I use ordered logit models given the ordered categorical nature of the dependent variable. Table 1 presents three models. The first model shows the relationship between the covariates and a sense of belonging for all Latinos in the CMPS sample. Models 2 and 3 in table 1 show separate models for subsets of the data by whether or not respondents were foreign born or U.S. born.[3]

First observing the results from model 1 in table 1, we see that reporting having been discriminated in the past is one of the most salient predictors of perceived belonging for all Latinos. This finding coincides with research that demonstrates that as Latinos face discrimination and become aware of their non-white status are less likely to feel American (Golash-Boza, 2006), and as the findings indicate, less likely to feel included or like they

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[3]Although running the analysis by generation would have provided a more nuanced understanding of the factors that shape US born Latinos by generation, once the data was disaggregated further, the sample size became too small to run meaningful analysis.

belong in U.S. society. Similarly, believing that Latinos as a group face a lot of discrimination in the country is associated with reporting lower perceptions of belonging in the U.S. It is not surprising that both personal and group discrimination are negative correlates of feelings of belonging to America. Believing that being American is an important part of the self, as expected, is also a very strong predictor of notions of belonging to U.S. society. But the contrary is the case for believing that being Latino is an important part of one's identity. Latinos who report being high on pan-ethnic identification are less likely to report higher perceptions of belonging to the United States. Similarly, Latinos who believe that their fate is linked to that of other Latinos are less likely to feel like they belong in the U.S. Lastly, respondents who self-report darker skin tones are less likely to report high levels of perceived social inclusion.

Limited acculturation into the U.S. as signaled by Spanish language dominance is strongly and negatively associated with high perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. Latino Democrats are much likely to believe they belong compared to their Republican counterparts. Age, and being a woman also appear to be strongly associated with perceptions of belonging in the U.S. The older Latinos are, the more likely they are to report greater perceptions of social inclusion in the U.S. This seems to suggest that the more time that Latino immigrants and their descendants spend in the U.S. the more they feel at home in the host society. However, Latinas (compared to Latinos) are less likely to feel like they belong in the U.S. Because the results from model 1 aggregate all Latinos, regardless of nativity status, the next set of models examines more in depth differences in the correlates of belonging among immigrant Latinos as well as U.S. born Latinos.

Looking at model 2, which displays the results for the model only among foreign born Latinos, indicates that reporting having experienced personal discrimination is also negatively associated with a strong sense of belonging or social inclusion in the United States. Considering American identity an important part of the self is strongly and positively associated with high perceptions of belonging to U.S. society for first generation Latinos but

having a strong Latino identity is negatively associated with high belonging. In addition to Spanish language dominance, time in the U.S. emerges as a significant predictor of belonging. The longer that Latino immigrants reside in the U.S. the more likely they are to report a greater sense of belonging to U.S.society. For foreign born Latinos, skin color also shows to be strongly and negatively associated with notions of belonging.

Model 3 displays the results only among U.S. born Latinos. Skin color emerges also as a strong predictor of notions of belonging. The darker the skin tone of U.S. born Latinos the less likely they are to report high perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. Age and gender are also associated with perceptions of belonging among U.S. born Latinos. Linked fate, American identity, perceived group discrimination toward Latinos, and experiencing personal discrimination are strongly correlation with notions of belonging. Lastly, ideology is highly predictive of belonging among the U.S. born. The more liberal U.S. born Latinos are, the less likely they are to feel like they belong in the U.S, which is quite the opposite for foreign born Latinos.

Given that the coefficients from these models are directly uninterpretable and it is difficult to assess the substantive effects of these, I calculate changes in predicted probabilities at the highest level of belonging, (since the models are ordered logistic regressions). The predicted probabilities plots are show in figures 4 and 5. These predicted plots display the results for each one of the models from table 1. The plots graph the changes in predicted probability of being in the highest category of belonging as opposed to being in any other category when moving each one of the independent variables from its minimum to its maximum while holding each one of the other covariates at their means. These figures also allow us to better understand the magnitude of the effects of each covariate compared to others.

Figure 4 shows the change in the predicted probability of being in the highest category of belonging for all Latinos as a function of each one of the independent variables listed, while holding all other covariates in model 1 from table 1. For all Latinos, moving from reporting not ever experiencing discrimination to reporting having experienced personal

Table 1: Predictors of Belonging Among CMPS Respondents

| | Dependent variable: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Belonging | |
| | All Latinos | Foreign born | U.S. born |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| **Discrimination & Identity** | | | |
| Pers. Discrim. | −0.597*** | −0.799*** | −0.482*** |
| | (0.076) | (0.118) | (0.102) |
| Grp. Driscirm. | −0.163*** | −0.016 | −0.236*** |
| | (0.037) | (0.055) | (0.053) |
| Latino ID. | −0.155** | −0.235** | −0.101 |
| | (0.052) | (0.090) | (0.065) |
| American ID. | 0.928*** | 0.879*** | 0.977*** |
| | (0.057) | (0.081) | (0.082) |
| Linked Fate | −0.144*** | −0.048 | −0.232*** |
| | (0.033) | (0.050) | (0.045) |
| Skin Color | −0.132*** | −0.128** | −0.167*** |
| | (0.028) | (0.044) | (0.037) |
| **Acculturation** | | | |
| Spanish Interview | −1.298*** | −0.917*** | −1.106*** |
| | (0.114) | (0.155) | (0.254) |
| Years in the U.S. | −0.002 | 0.028*** | |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | |
| **Partisanship** | | | |
| Ideology | −0.050 | 0.139* | −0.165*** |
| | (0.036) | (0.055) | (0.049) |
| Democrat | 0.235* | 0.340* | 0.229 |
| | (0.102) | (0.162) | (0.136) |
| Independent | 0.169 | 0.253 | 0.119 |
| | (0.108) | (0.172) | (0.142) |
| **Socioeconomic Status** | | | |
| Income | 0.002 | 0.035 | −0.009 |
| | (0.014) | (0.023) | (0.019) |
| Education | 0.011 | 0.016 | −0.015 |
| | (0.034) | (0.049) | (0.050) |
| Homeowner | −0.034 | 0.133 | −0.227 |
| | (0.091) | (0.140) | (0.123) |
| **Demographics & Controls** | | | |
| Age | 0.017*** | −0.012 | 0.020*** |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.004) |
| Femle | −0.206** | −0.334** | −0.120 |
| | (0.073) | (0.114) | (0.098) |
| Married | 0.060 | 0.246* | 0.021 |
| | (0.081) | (0.118) | (0.118) |
| Foreign born | −0.215 | | |
| | (0.129) | | |
| Mexican | 0.118 | −0.249 | 0.349*** |
| | (0.089) | (0.136) | (0.102) |
| Cuban | 0.091 | 0.384 | 0.024 |
| | (0.196) | (0.256) | (0.315) |
| Puerto Rican | −0.013 | | −0.048 |
| | (0.154) | | (0.164) |
| Observations | 2,566 | 1,119 | 1,447 |
| Log Likelihood | -4,918.781 | -2,199.330 | -2,622.745 |

*Note: Ordered logistic models.* 24 *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

discrimination is associated with a 9 percentage point decrease in the predicted probability of being in the highest level of belonging and overall perceived social inclusion. Reporting that American identity is one of the most important parts of one's self is among the strongest predictors of perceived belonging to U.S. society. When moving from not regarding American identity as important to regarding it as very important part of one's identity is associated with a 28% increase in the predicted probability of being in the highest category of belonging. Similarly, we can compare the relationship between acculturation and belonging. Taking the survey in Spanish compared to taking it in English is associated with a 18% point decrease in being in the highest category of belonging to the U.S. Similar to the magnitude of the effect of American ID, skin color is associated with belonging. When going from the lightest to the darkest skin color reported by Latino respondents is associated with a 20% decrease in the probability of being in the highest category of belonging.

The left hand side panel of figure 4 allows us to examine the effects from model 2 in table 1 between the independent variables and perceptions of belonging among foreign born Latinos. Latino immigrants who experience discrimination as opposed to those who do not report having experienced it are 12% points much less likely to report the highest level of belonging to U.S. society. For foreign born Latinos moving from not believing that an American identity is important to believing that it is very important to the self is associated with 15% change in reporting being in the highest category of belonging. Latino immigrants who took the survey in Spanish were 8% points less likely to report high levels of social inclusion. Latinas born abroad were 3% less likely to report being in the highest category of belonging. When going from being very conservative to being very liberal among foreign born Latinos is associated with a 6% change in the predicted probability of being in the highest category of belonging. Lastly, the change in the predicted probability of reporting the highest belonging level is 5% when going from the lightest skin tone to the darkest among the foreign born.

The right hand side panel of figure 4 displays predicted probabilities calculated from

the effects shown in model 3 in table 1. U.S. born Latinos who experience personal discrimination as opposed to those who do not experience it are 6% points less likely like to report the highest level of belonging. The change in the predicted probability when going from the lowest level of American identity to its highest level among U.S. born Latinos is associated with 39% change in the predicted probability of reporting the highest level of belonging (much higher than for foreign born Latinos). Having the darkest skin tone as opposed to the lightest among U.S. born Latinos is associated with a 34% decrease in the probability that they report the highest level of belonging. When moving from reporting no perceived group discrimination to reporting that Latinos are greatly discriminated in the U.S. as a group is associated with a 16% decrease in the probability of reporting high belonging. Linked fate has a similar effect. There is a 13% change in the predicted probability of reporting high belonging when going from having no linked fate to reporting that it greatly matters. For the U.S. born the effect of ideology is opposite than it is for foreign born. When going from being conservative to being liberal is associated with a 8% change in the probably of having a very high sense of belonging to the U.S.

Overall, the findings indicate that lived experiences and demographic characteristics are very much associated with Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. For all Latinos, having experienced discrimination and the importance of an American identity are some of the most salient predictors of social inclusion. Once Latinos adapt an American identity and see it as an important part of the self, they are much more likely to feel like they belong in the U.S. This also is true for Latinos who age in America and build a life in a society that they now call their home. However, despite how much these two factors, on average, result in greater levels of belonging and inclusion for all Latinos, distinct factors shape perceived inclusion for the foreign born and U.S. born. These include the consequential role of skin color, especially for the U.S. born, ideology, gender, and acculturation, especially for immigrants. Two important patterns emerge from the above results. The first is that closeness and awareness of the status that Latinos as a pan-ethnic group have in U.S. society

Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities of Perceiving Highest Level of Belonging among all Latinos
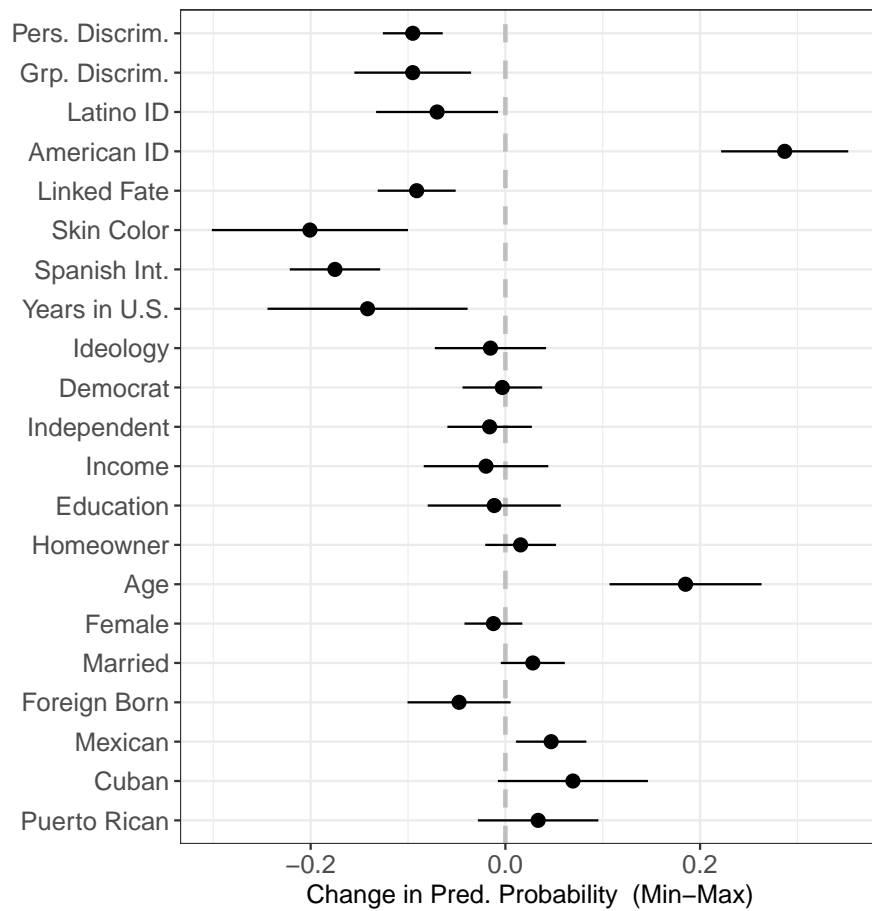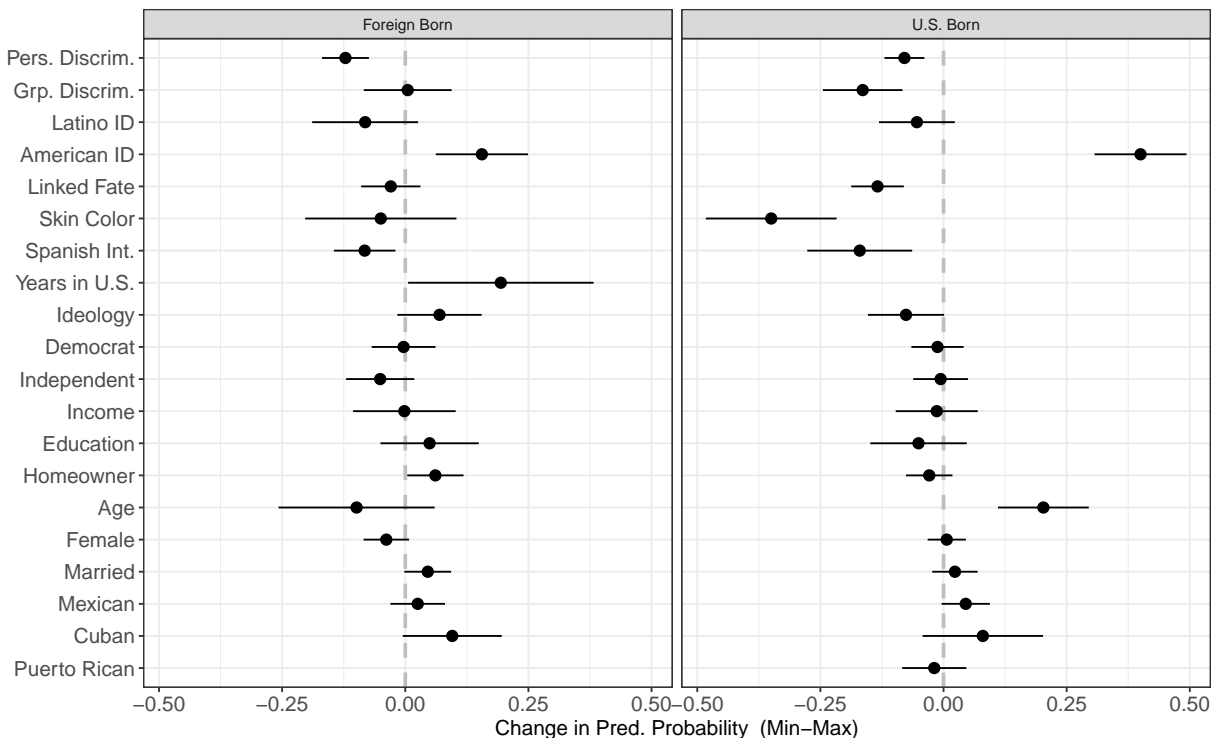
Figure 5: Predicted Probabilities of Perceiving Highest Level of Belonging among Foreign Born and U.S. Born Latinos



is associated with lower perceptions of inclusion. This is mostly true for both immigrants and their children, but it is more pronounced for the second and third generation. The second pattern that emerges is that while acculturation and familiarity with U.S. society over time and as Latinos age does lead to higher psychological perceptions of belonging, Latinos social inclusion into the U.S. is stymied by structural racism as well as by acts of discrimination that they experience on an every-day basis.

# 5 Shaping Perceptions of Belonging

As the results above indicate various life circumstances and experiences shape Latinos' perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. In particular, having experienced personal discrimination strongly and negatively influences Latinos' sense of belonging. However, given that the prior analysis is from observational data only, we can only assess the extent to which

the independent variables are correlated with varying levels of perceptions of belonging. To have a more clear understanding of the causal relationship between perceiving negative as well as positive messages, and Latinos' sense of belonging, I conducted an experiment embedded within a survey. The goal of this experiment was to establish whether or not welcoming or hostile messages could influence Latinos' feelings of belonging to U.S. society.

To test for the possibility of the effect of positive and negative messages on Latinos' perceptions of belonging, I designed and administered a unique experiment embedded in a national survey of Latino adults. This survey was fielded by the firm ResearchNow - Survey Sampling International (SSI) from October 3 – 15, 2017 (n=689). The respondents were recruited via the firm's opt-in panel to participate in a "2017 National Survey on Public Opinion" study. The summary statistics of the sample can be found Appendix E in table 7. Only respondents who were of Latino ancestry or background were allowed to take part in the study.

All respondents were asked a set of screening and demographic questions prior to being randomly assigned to four experimental conditions. Table 2 summarizes the treatments that respondents were assigned to. Respondents were assigned to either a control, a welcoming, a hostile or a non-ethnic condition. The experiment was designed in the form on a fictitious news story, using original HTML code from the New York Times website. Respondents were told that this news story had recently appeared in the New York Times. Although the story was fictitious it relied on quotes by elected officials and language by others who have been involved in recent conversations with the proposal and bill to create a National Latino History museum.[4] Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the

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[4]In the most recent iteration, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen R-FL and Rep. Robert Menendez, D-NJ introduced a bill in June of 2017 to create a National Latino History Museum along the National Mall. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/effort-build-american-latino-museum-national-mall-gets-push-bipartisan-n772786 But prior to this, several other legislators had introduced similar bills in Congress. Former President Obama had also appointed Members to a Commission to study the potential of a creation of a National Latino History Museum. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-appoints-members-commission-study-potential-creation-a-national-mus. In 2020, Congress voted to formally establish the National Museum of the American Latino into the Smithsonian Institution.

four conditions. In the control condition, respondents were given an article that contained a story about a new technology buy from Google. In the positive or welcoming condition, respondents were presented a story where two bipartisan Members of Congress, male and female, and the broader American public showed strong support for funding the National Smithsonian Latino History Museum. In the negative, or hostile condition, respondents were given the same exact article except that all language was changed to be negative or hostile. As opposed to supporting the National Smithsonian Latino History Museum, this article showed strong opposition by American legislators and the broad American public. The last condition, the non-ethnic one, was worded in the same way as the positive condition with the exception that the museum to be built was not specific to the Latino community but instead it was an American history museum. The articles that respondents saw are show in the appendix G in figures 8, 9, 10, 11.

Table 2: Summary of the Experiment Design

| Name | Description |
|---|---|
| Control | Respondents read an article about new Google technology |
| Positive | Respondents read an article about support and funding for Smithsonian National Latino History Museum |
| Negative | Respondents read an article about opposition and no funding for Smithsonian National Latino History Museum |
| Non-ethnic | Respondents read an article about support and funding for Smithsonian American Latino History Museum |

Immediately after the experiment respondents were asked the same belonging questions that were asked on the 2016 CMPS. The *belong* item asked respondents the extent to which they believed they belonged to the United States. This was a 4-point item. The *respected* item asked respondents to agree on a 4-point scale with whether or not they felt that other Americans valued and respected their presence in the United States. The *included*

item asked individuals how often they perceived that others in the U.S. were trying to exclude them (reverse coded). The last item, the *insider* one, assessed how much respondents believed they were outsiders in the U.S. (reverse coded). As the descriptive statistics indicate, the distribution and variation of these items closely resembles those of the 2016 CMPS withs similar means and standard deviations. Similar to the CMPS analysis, these items were combined into a single measure of overall perceptions of social inclusion. The survey also included manipulation checks to assess whether or not the respondents were paying close attention and had in fact been treated.

The balance tests, or tests of significance across the treatment groups, shown in appendix F suggest that the covariates were mostly equally distributed among all treatment groups. Given that there is no statistical difference by design between the treatment groups, any difference observed in perceptions of belonging can be attributed to the treatments themselves. In order to directly analyze the effect of being assigned to each one of the treatments on reported levels of belonging I run a parsimonious model assessing perceptions of belonging. Table 3 shows the results when we regress assignment to each treatment condition on perceptions of social inclusion. Here the control condition is the reference category. Experimental results without controls are displayed in Appendix I.

The OLS results indicate that respondents who were assigned to the hostile treatment condition reported lower levels of belonging. Being assigned to the positive or non-ethnic condition did not yield any significant effects. To better understand the magnitude of these effects, I plot the predicted level of belonging based on treatment condition. Figure 6 displays these results. Respondents assigned to the oppose condition report statistically significant lower levels of social inclusion than respondents who were assigned to the control condition. The reported levels of those assigned to the negative condition were even much lower than among those assigned to the positive condition as well. Interestingly, respondents in the non-ethnic condition did not report statistically distinguishably different levels of belonging from the control. The results here indicate that Latinos' report lower perceptions of inclusion,

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but analysis not shown suggests that the dimensions of the social inclusion scale that are impacted are the *respected* and *included* items, as these two are the outcomes that do in fact move the most in the negative direction. Moreover, when examining heterogenous treatment effects among Latinos who have a strong attachment to their pan-ethnic community are the most affected by the hostile messaging. Figure J indicates that high Latino identifiers who are assigned to the opposition or hostile condition report much lower levels of perceived belonging to U.S. society than those assigned to the control, as well as low Latino identifiers assigned to the control condition.

Table 3: Effect of Treatment on Perceptions of Belonging: OLS Regression Results

|  | Perceived Belonging |
|---|---|
| Positive | 0.056 |
|  | (0.230) |
| Negative | −0.522* |
|  | (0.228) |
| Non-Ethnic | −0.241 |
|  | (0.239) |
| Age | 0.041*** |
|  | (0.006) |
| Foreign Born | −1.344*** |
|  | (0.207) |
| Education | −0.156* |
|  | (0.078) |
| Female | 0.038 |
|  | (0.191) |
| Constant | 12.276*** |
|  | (0.452) |
| Observations | 678 |
| $R^2$ | 0.110 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.101 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.166 (df = 670) |
| F Statistic | 11.873*** (df = 7; 670) |
| *Note:* | *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001 |

Figure 6: Experiment Results: Predicted Level of Belonging per Treatment Condition
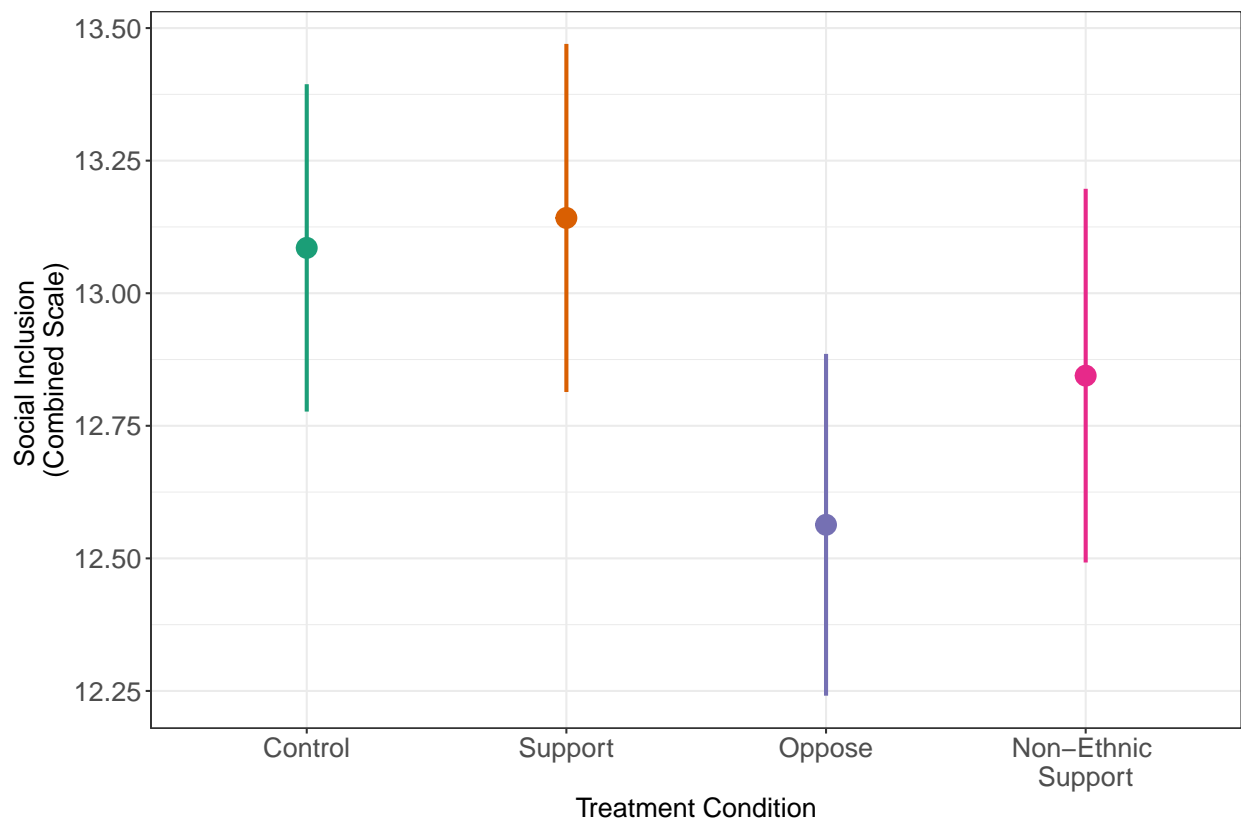
# 6 Conclusion

Investigating what shapes Latinos' sense of belonging or lack of belonging to U.S. society is critically important for understanding how Latinos regard their status and standing in the ethnoracial hierarchy. Moreover, examining specifically what shapes notions of psychological belonging to U.S. society matters greatly for understanding the sociopolitical incorporation process of communities made-up of a large immigrant population. The findings in this paper reveal that a number of factors shape Latinos' perceptions of belonging to the U.S. Latinos sense of social inclusion is dependent upon not only on demographic characteristics and acculturation factors but it is directly influenced by day-to-day experiences of discrimination and hostility. As the results highlight discrimination of various forms continues to be a barrier for the inclusion and incorporation of Latino immigrants and their descendants.

As Latinos become more familiarized with the U.S. culturally and socially, they are more likely to develop psychological perceptions of belonging to U.S. society. After all, as other have argued, a sense of belonging is tied to notions of feeling at home (Antonsich, 2010). Latinos who establish their lives in the United States, remain in the U.S. for a long time and settle roots in the U.S. by having children are likely to develop attachments to U.S. society over time (Fraga et al., 2010). This is also reflected in the results that highlight the importance of American identity, and that indicate that espousing this identity is strongly tied to Latinos' sense of social inclusion. As Latinos adopt an American identity they are more likely to feel like they belong to the U.S. However, as other research shows, Latinos are reticent to adopt an American identity (Golash-Boza, 2006) and even U.S. born Latinos do not see themselves as fully American in many instances (Flores-González, 2017). This means that as long as Latinos do not see American identity as an instrumental identity in their portfolio that they can call upon or rely on, their psychological sense of belonging is likely to remain low (Garcia Rios, 2015). This is also likely to be true if Latinos more closely identify with their pan-ethnic community, if they recognize that systemic injustice hurts the

larger Latino community, and if they actually have close links to the group. Therefore, the identities that Latino immigrants and their children choose or see as important are indicative of whether or not they also feel psychologically included or excluded from U.S. society.

This paper has studied how experiencing hostility and discrimination are related to internalized notions of lack of belonging and can shift Latinos' sense of belonging. The findings here are especially important as we are in a time when hostility and racism continue to be a reality for Latinos in America, regardless of generation, socioeconomic status, gender, among other factors. Discrimination and hostility against Latinos and immigrants is nothing new and it is certainly not the case that it is on a path of decline. As the data suggests, half of Latino respondents on the CMPS reported having been discriminated against in the past. And as the findings indicate, Latinos are not immune to the detrimental impact of discrimination on perceptions of social inclusion. And this is true regardless of whether or not it is personally experiencing discrimination or discrimination that targets the groups as a whole. Furthermore, the role of colorism as exhibited by the negative impact of skin tone on both U.S. born and foreign born Latinos' sense of belonging is indicative that discrimination not only acts at an individual level but also at a more structural level to depress Latinos perceived sense of belonging and inclusion in the U.S.

The findings in this paper have important implications for the study of sociopolitical incorporation. As recent work suggests the source of discrimination matters for motivating or depressing civic and political engagement for members of marginalized communities (Oskooii, 2016). Discrimination that comes from societal sources, compared to political ones, can actually lead to disengagement and a retraction for civic and political life. Nonetheless, political discrimination, as evidenced by numerous other scholars (Pantoja et al., 2001; Gutierrez et al., 2019) has the potential of mobilizing Latinos and other marginalized communities members. The evidence in this paper suggests that one plausible explanation or mechanism for why societal discrimination leads to disengagement is because discrimination works first by shaping minorities' sense of belonging and subsequently this depresses (or

could heighten) their presence in civic and political life. Future work should more closely investigate this relationship.

This paper also has implications regarding the externalities brought about by social and political institutions on the incorporation process of immigrants and their children. The experimental findings suggest that hostile messages and cues have a causal negative impact on Latinos' perceptions of belonging. Latinos are constantly receiving messaging, many of these hostile in nature. These messages come from their peers, neighbors, educators and politicians. They take place at school, when interacting with government and non-government agencies, at the local, state level and national level. While the cumulative effect of all of these is unclear, what is clear is that signals that are hostile, denigrating and that disparage the Latino community specifically impact Latinos' sense of membership and belonging to U.S. society and causes Latinos to have a decline in perceived belonging to the U.S. This has the potential of stymieing the incorporation process of latinos in U.S. society. More work must continue investigate what if anything can make Latinos develop a greater sense of belonging especially considering how impactful these feelings of belonging are for individual and group outcomes, but also given how racism, at both the structural and individual level, will not cease to exist and will most certainly continue to shape the inclusion and incorporation process of Latino immigrants and their descendants into U.S. society and its polity.

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# Appendices

## A    Wording of Belonging questions

Table 4: 2016 Collaborative Multi-racial Post Election Survey (CMPS)

| Variable | Question wording | Scale |
|---|---|---|
| Belong | How strongly do you feel like you belong in the United States?<br>(1) strongly (2) moderately (3) slightly (4) not at all | 1-4 |
| Insider | How much do you feel like an outsider in the United States?<br>(1) strongly (2) moderately (3) slightly (4) not at all | 1-4 |
| Respected | Most Americans value and respect your presence in the United States.<br>Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree?<br>(1) strongly agree (2) somewhat agree (3) somewhat agree (4) strongly disagree | 1-4 |
| Included | How often do you think that other people try to exclude you from U.S. society?<br>(1) always (2) very often (3) rarely (4) never | 1-4 |

## B    Alpha analysis

Table 5: Reliability Analysis

| raw_alpha | std.alpha | G6(smc) | average_r | S/N | ase | mean | sd | median_r |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.70 | 0.71 | 0.67 | 0.37 | 2.39 | 0.01 | 3.34 | 0.60 | 0.34 |

# C   Plot of the Correlation Matrix
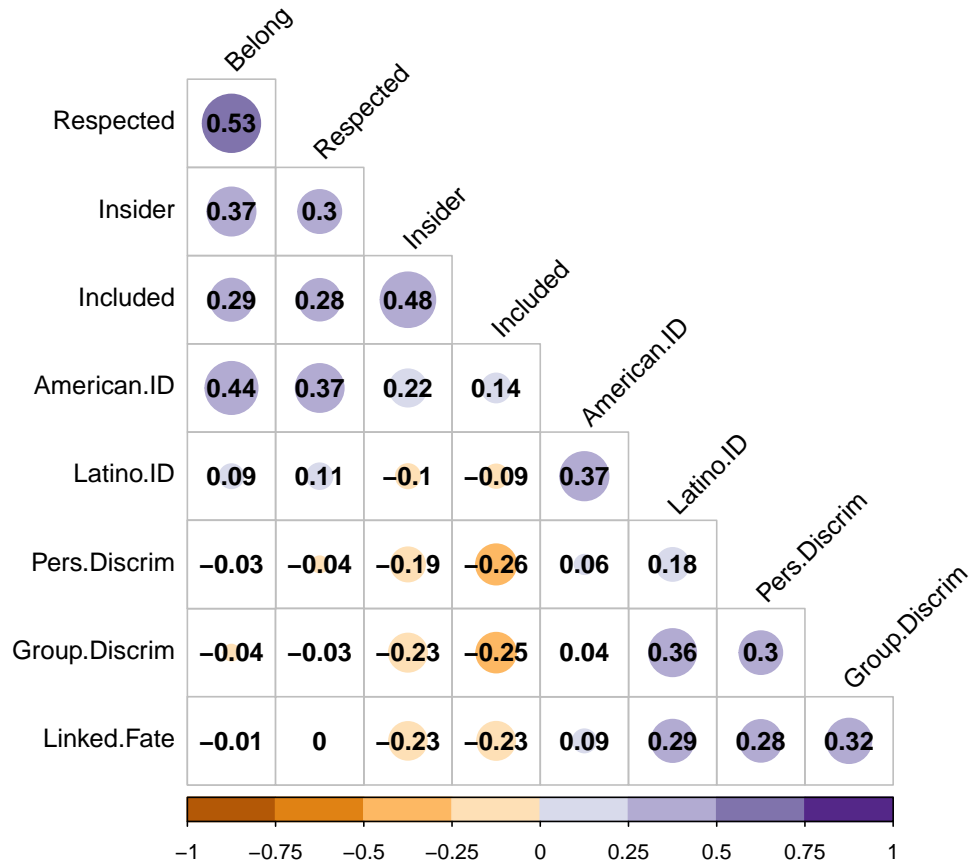


Correlogram of key covariates. Circles and color shade represents significance of correlation coefficient at .01 level.

# D    Distribution of Belonging Items by National Origin
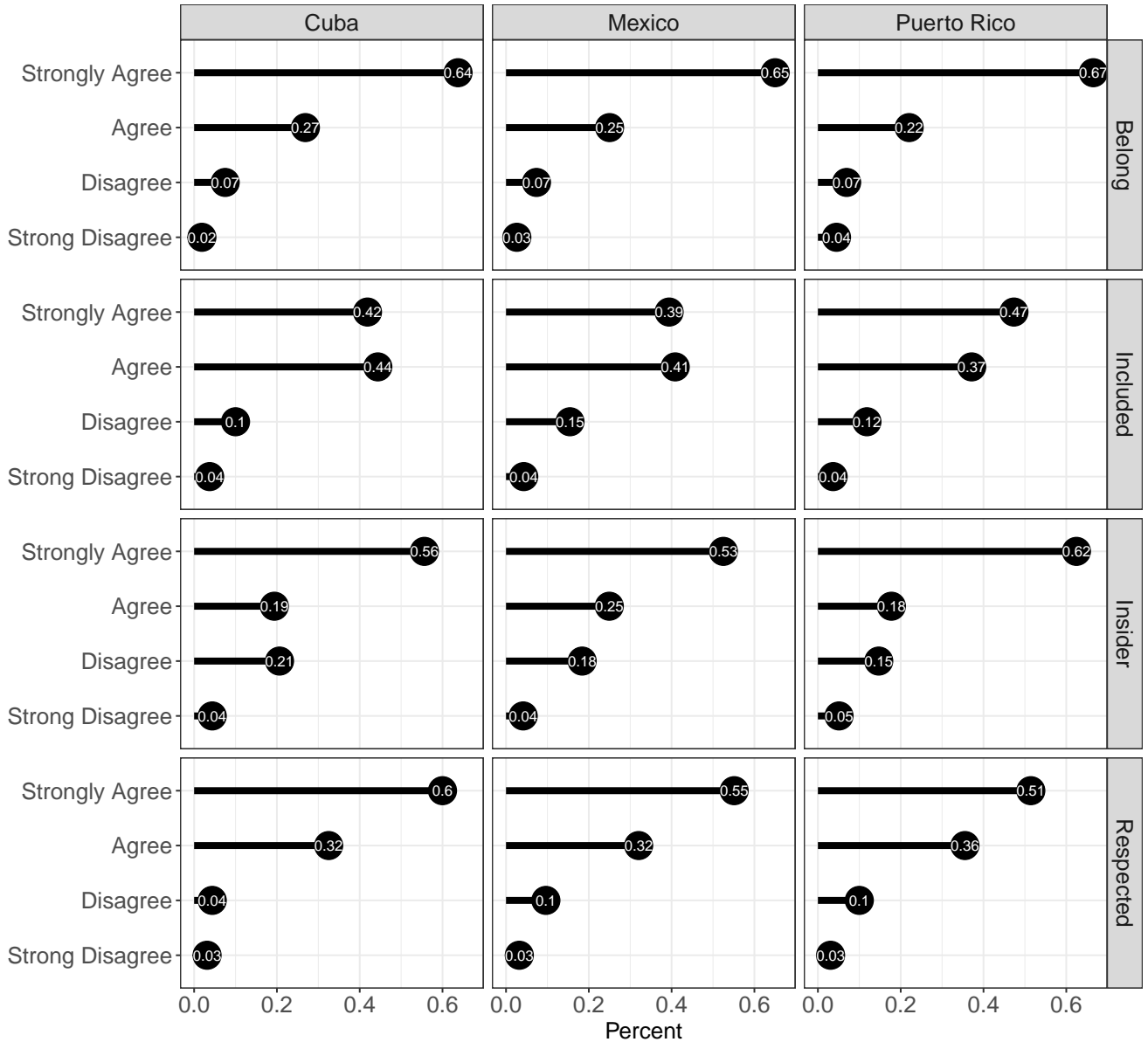
Figure 7: Distribution of belonging items in 2016 CMPS by country of origin

# E    CMPS Summary Statistics

Table 6: 2016 CMPS Summary Statistics

| Statistic | N | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 2,997 | 38.368 | 13.979 | 19 | 97 |
| Income | 3,003 | 4.558 | 3.266 | 1 | 12 |
| Education | 3,003 | 3.978 | 1.148 | 1 | 6 |
| Female | 3,003 | 0.678 | 0.467 | 0 | 1 |
| Married | 3,003 | 0.403 | 0.491 | 0 | 1 |
| Foreign Born | 3,003 | 0.240 | 0.427 | 0 | 1 |
| US Born | 3,003 | 0.760 | 0.427 | 0 | 1 |
| Generation | 3,003 | 1.830 | 0.530 | 1 | 3 |
| Years in the US | 871 | 25.127 | 18.030 | 1 | 76 |
| Spanish Int. | 3,003 | 0.120 | 0.324 | 0 | 1 |
| Catholic | 3,003 | 0.440 | 0.496 | 0 | 1 |
| Protestant | 3,003 | 0.028 | 0.165 | 0 | 1 |
| Born Again | 2,456 | 0.235 | 0.424 | 0 | 1 |
| Religiosity | 2,456 | 3.249 | 1.727 | 1 | 6 |
| Democrat | 3,003 | 0.479 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Republican | 3,003 | 0.161 | 0.367 | 0 | 1 |
| Independent | 3,003 | 0.284 | 0.451 | 0 | 1 |
| Ideology | 2,683 | 3.265 | 1.102 | 1 | 5 |
| Mexican | 3,003 | 0.499 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Cuban | 3,003 | 0.053 | 0.225 | 0 | 1 |
| Puerto Rican | 3,003 | 0.164 | 0.370 | 0 | 1 |
| Central American | 3,003 | 0.060 | 0.238 | 0 | 1 |
| Dominican | 3,003 | 0.036 | 0.185 | 0 | 1 |
| Pers. Discrim. | 3,003 | 0.525 | 0.499 | 0 | 1 |
| Grp. Discrim. | 3,003 | 3.208 | 1.104 | 1 | 5 |
| Linked Fate | 3,003 | 2.279 | 1.186 | 1 | 4 |
| Imm. Linked Fate | 2,742 | 2.435 | 1.030 | 1 | 4 |
| Latino ID. | 3,003 | 3.334 | 0.848 | 1 | 4 |
| American ID. | 3,003 | 3.485 | 0.771 | 1 | 4 |
| Internal Eff. | 3,003 | 2.815 | 1.147 | 1 | 5 |
| External Eff. | 3,003 | 2.501 | 1.025 | 1 | 5 |
| Govt. Trust | 3,003 | 2.095 | 0.739 | 1 | 4 |
| Local Govt. Trust | 3,003 | 2.287 | 0.777 | 1 | 4 |
| Belong | 3,003 | 3.507 | 0.761 | 1 | 4 |
| Respected | 3,003 | 3.381 | 0.789 | 1 | 4 |
| Social Inclusion | 3,003 | 6.888 | 1.357 | 2 | 8 |
| Know Undoc. Person | 2,462 | 0.459 | 0.498 | 0 | 1 |
| No. Know Deported | 685 | 1.601 | 8.020 | 0 | 100 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Worried Abt. Deport | 685 | 1.775 | 1.333 | 1 | 5 |
| Registered | 3,003 | 0.605 | 0.489 | 0 | 1 |
| Protest | 3,003 | 0.119 | 0.324 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 3,003 | 0.368 | 0.482 | 0 | 1 |
| Donate | 3,003 | 0.132 | 0.338 | 0 | 1 |
| Voted | 1,816 | 0.911 | 0.284 | 0 | 1 |
| Volunteer for Cand. | 3,003 | 0.063 | 0.243 | 0 | 1 |
| Solve Neighborhood | 3,003 | 0.173 | 0.378 | 0 | 1 |
| Att. Comm. Mtg. | 3,003 | 0.204 | 0.403 | 0 | 1 |
| Discuss Pol. | 3,003 | 0.831 | 0.375 | 0 | 1 |
| Pol. Interest | 3,003 | 2.809 | 0.927 | 1 | 4 |
| Govt. Contact | 3,003 | 0.155 | 0.362 | 0 | 1 |
| Elected Contact | 3,003 | 0.182 | 0.386 | 0 | 1 |
| Local Elec. Voter Type | 3,003 | 2.228 | 1.191 | 1 | 4 |

# F Experiment Summary Statistics

Table 7: 2017 National Survey on Public Opinion

| Statistic | N | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 689 | 40.569 | 14.580 | 18 | 100 |
| Income | 689 | 5.241 | 3.343 | 1 | 12 |
| Education | 689 | 4.178 | 1.140 | 1 | 6 |
| Female | 689 | 0.704 | 0.457 | 0 | 1 |
| Male | 689 | 0.294 | 0.456 | 0 | 1 |
| Foreign Born | 689 | 0.208 | 0.406 | 0 | 1 |
| U.S. Born | 689 | 0.792 | 0.406 | 0 | 1 |
| Generation | 689 | 2.083 | 0.773 | 1 | 4 |
| Ideology | 689 | 3.170 | 1.105 | 1 | 5 |
| Mexican | 689 | 0.428 | 0.495 | 0 | 1 |
| Democrat | 689 | 0.447 | 0.497 | 0 | 1 |
| Republican | 689 | 0.184 | 0.387 | 0 | 1 |
| Independent | 689 | 0.297 | 0.457 | 0 | 1 |
| Ideology | 689 | 3.170 | 1.105 | 1 | 5 |
| Latino ID. | 689 | 3.440 | 0.773 | 1 | 4 |
| American ID. | 689 | 3.605 | 0.651 | 1 | 4 |
| Country of Origin ID. | 689 | 3.442 | 0.776 | 1 | 4 |
| Belong | 689 | 3.536 | 0.707 | 1 | 4 |
| Respected | 689 | 3.018 | 0.795 | 1 | 4 |
| Soc. Inclusion | 689 | 6.554 | 1.248 | 2 | 8 |
| Internal Eff. | 689 | 1.958 | 0.800 | 1 | 4 |
| External Eff. | 689 | 2.192 | 0.949 | 1 | 4 |
| Gov't. Trust | 689 | 2.113 | 0.762 | 1 | 4 |

# G   Experimental Conditions

Figure 8: Control Treatment



Figure 9: Positive Treatment

Figure 10: Negative Treatment

≡ SECTIONS  𝕿  Q    The New York Times    👤▾  ⚙

**NEWS**

# Members of Congress and the American Public show strong opposition for funding Latino History Museum

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT        f  🐦  ✉  ➤  |  🔖  [405]

*Representatives Harris D-NV and Richardson R-OK do not endorse the idea of recognizing Latino heritage. Recent poll finds majority of white Americans also against the proposal.*

Washington DC – A group of Washington lawmakers has come out in strong opposition of providing federal funding for the National Smithsonian Latino History Museum. A recent national poll indicates that white Americans are also in strong opposition of funding the museum.

The bill to establish a Latino History Museum passed in 2008, however funding for it had been delayed. Over the last month, discussions about allocating federal funding for the museum have taken the national spotlight. In their most recent survey, the PewResearch Center asked Americans if the National Smithsonian Museum of Latino History should be a priority for the federal government to fund. An overwhelming 87% of white Americans disagreed that it should be a priority. When asked, 79% of white Americans agreed that as a nation we have done enough for Latinos, and a larger recognition of their contributions is unnecessary.

Two of the most vocal opponents have been Rep. Jake Harris D-NV and Rep. Emily Richardson R-OK. In a recent interview with Representative Harris, he stated that "the Latino community has not really been a distinctively important part of America." Similarly, Representative Richardson stated that "It's not necessary to waste resources to recognize Latinos. The members of this group are problematic and often times bring more harm than good to our nation."

The Latino museum commission had envisioned a 310,000-square-foot building. As of last summer, the commission had narrowed its list of desired sites to four, all of them on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Given recent strong opposition, it is very unlikely that the museum will be funded or built anytime soon.


Figure 11: Non-Ethnic Treatment

≡ SECTIONS  𝕿  Q    The New York Times    👤▾  ⚙

**NEWS**

# Members of Congress and the American Public show strong support for funding American History Museum

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT        f  🐦  ✉  ➤  |  🔖  [405]

*Representatives Harris D-NV and Richardson R-OK endorse the idea of further recognizing American heritage. Recent poll finds majority of Americans also get behind the proposal.*

Washington DC – A group of Washington lawmakers has come out in strong support of providing federal funding for the National Smithsonian American History Museum. A recent national poll indicates that Americans are also in strong support of funding the museum.

The bill to establish a new contemporary American History Museum passed in 2008, however funding for it had been delayed. Over the last month, discussions about allocating federal funding for the museum have taken the national spotlight. In their most recent survey, the PewResearch Center asked Americans if the National Smithsonian Museum of American History should be a priority for the federal government to fund. An overwhelming 87% of Americans agreed that it should be a priority. When asked, 79% of Americans agreed that as a nation we have not sufficiently recognized the significant contributions of all Americans, and a larger recognition of their extensive contributions is overdue.

Two of the most vocal supporters have been Rep. Jake Harris D-NV and Rep. Emily Richardson R-OK. In a recent interview with Representative Richardson, she stated that "all communities in the U.S. have been an important part of America since before the founding of our great nation. Americans are veterans, artists, athletes, business leaders and active participants in every walk of life." Similarly, Representative Harris stated that, "the American story is one of family, patriotism, hard work, and pride in the country we've all built together. It's time to further recognize the contributions of all Americans and their ongoing efforts to improving our nation."

The American history museum commission envisions a 310,000-square-foot building. As of last summer, the commission had narrowed its list of desired sites to four, all of them on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

# H   Balance Statistics

Table 8: Balance Statistics for Positive (Welcoming) Condition

|              | mean.Tr | mean.Co | T pval | KS pval |
|--------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Age          | 41.440  | 39.960  | 0.310  | 0.410   |
| Education    | 4.180   | 4.180   | 0.960  | 0.990   |
| Income       | 5.120   | 5.420   | 0.360  | 0.270   |
| Foreign Born | 0.240   | 0.200   | 0.320  |         |
| Generation   | 1.990   | 2.110   | 0.120  | 0.250   |
| Latino ID.   | 3.460   | 3.420   | 0.540  | 0.470   |
| American ID. | 3.500   | 3.580   | 0.240  | 0.360   |
| Mexican      | 0.380   | 0.470   | 0.070  |         |
| Ideology     | 3.130   | 3.090   | 0.750  | 0.800   |

Table 9: Balance Statistics for Negative (Hostile) Condition

|              | mean.Tr | mean.Co | T pval | KS pval |
|--------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Age          | 41.520  | 39.960  | 0.280  | 0.490   |
| Education    | 4.220   | 4.180   | 0.750  | 0.590   |
| Income       | 5.510   | 5.420   | 0.780  | 0.930   |
| Foreign Born | 0.180   | 0.200   | 0.560  |         |
| Generation   | 2.210   | 2.110   | 0.200  | 0.230   |
| Latino ID.   | 3.410   | 3.420   | 0.900  | 0.840   |
| American ID. | 3.680   | 3.580   | 0.140  | 0.140   |
| Mexican      | 0.430   | 0.470   | 0.440  |         |
| Ideology     | 3.150   | 3.090   | 0.630  | 0.930   |

Table 10: Balance Statistics for Non-Ethnic Condition

|              | mean.Tr | mean.Co | T pval | KS pval |
|--------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Age          | 40.510  | 39.960  | 0.700  | 0.720   |
| Education    | 4.070   | 4.180   | 0.310  | 0.390   |
| Income       | 5.180   | 5.420   | 0.460  | 0.700   |
| Foreign Born | 0.190   | 0.200   | 0.820  |         |
| Generation   | 2.110   | 2.110   | 0.960  | 0.990   |
| Latino ID.   | 3.450   | 3.420   | 0.650  | 0.420   |
| American ID. | 3.640   | 3.580   | 0.360  | 0.440   |
| Mexican      | 0.400   | 0.470   | 0.160  |         |
| Ideology     | 3.290   | 3.090   | 0.060  | 0.300   |

# I Treatment Effects on Perceived Belonging

Table 11: Treatment Effects on Perceived Belonging, OLS Models

|  | Perceived Belonging | |
| --- | :---: | :---: |
|  | (1) | (2) |
|  | Baseline | With Controls |
| Positive | 0.091 | 0.056 |
|  | (0.241) | (0.230) |
| Negative | −0.399$^{+}$ | −0.522$^{*}$ |
|  | (0.238) | (0.228) |
| Non-Ethnic | −0.148 | −0.241 |
|  | (0.249) | (0.239) |
| Age |  | 0.041$^{***}$ |
|  |  | (0.006) |
| Foreign Born |  | −1.344$^{***}$ |
|  |  | (0.207) |
| Education |  | −0.156$^{*}$ |
|  |  | (0.078) |
| Female |  | 0.038 |
|  |  | (0.191) |
| Constant | 13.021$^{***}$ | 12.276$^{***}$ |
|  | (0.165) | (0.452) |
| Observations | 687 | 678 |
| R$^2$ | 0.007 | 0.110 |
| Adjusted R$^2$ | 0.002 | 0.101 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.280 (df = 683) | 2.166 (df = 670) |
| F Statistic | 1.553 (df = 3; 683) | 11.873$^{***}$ (df = 7; 670) |

*Note:*  $^{+}$p<0.1; $^{*}$p<0.05; $^{**}$p<0.01; $^{***}$p<0.001

# J   Heterogenous Treatment Effects by Latino Identification