

# Xenophobic Rhetoric and Its Political Effects on Immigrants and Their Co-Ethnics

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*Though political scientists generally understand the origins of native-born reactions to foreigners, less is known about how anti-immigrant contexts trigger a political response within immigrant groups. I address this question by studying the connection between xenophobic rhetoric and Latino politics. I claim that xenophobic rhetoric raises the salience of ethnic identity and impugns its worth. This identity threat leads high-identifying group members to engage in political efforts that assert their group's positive value, whereas low identifiers shun political opportunities to bolster their group's devaluation. I test these claims with an experiment embedded in a nationally representative opinion survey of Latino adults. In light of xenophobic rhetoric, I find that relative to low identifiers, high-identifying Latinos become less politically trusting, more ethnocentric, and increasingly supportive of policies that emphasize ingroup pride. These results clarify xenophobic rhetoric's role in amplifying the influence of ethnic identity on immigrant politics.*

The influx of immigrants has unsettled communities across the United States, leading many Americans to adopt exclusionary attitudes toward foreigners (Hopkins 2010). In response to this trend, political scientists have developed a firmer sense of the factors behind native opposition to immigration and its situational triggers (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Hopkins 2010; Pantoja 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; see also Sides and Citrin 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004).<sup>1</sup> Yet in our zeal to better understand native reactions to foreigners, we have often overlooked how immigrant groups react to anti-immigrant contexts. This article tackles this question by studying the political effects of xenophobic rhetoric on foreigners and their co-ethnics.

Several studies have detected a positive correlation between anti-immigrant contexts and heightened political engagement within immigrant groups (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Pedraza 2011). Yet two challenges limit

political scientists' knowledge of the specific link between xenophobic rhetoric and immigrant politics. First, uncertainty exists over the concept of xenophobic rhetoric (Adcock and Collier 2001). In particular, questions remain over what makes rhetoric xenophobic per se. For example, is rhetoric drawing attention to immigration by definition xenophobic? Or does xenophobic rhetoric entail something stronger?

Second, the psychological mechanisms behind immigrant reactions to hostile political contexts are unclear. Prior work shows hostile climates can shift the political attitudes and behavior of some immigrant group members (Merolla et al. 2013; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Ramírez and Fraga 2008). Yet this research is prone to the charge of yielding "black box" findings because it does not explain *how* such contexts are psychologically processed by individuals. This inattention to micro-foundations matters. Immigrant group members vary by their strength of identification with co-ethnics (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004), as well

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I gratefully acknowledge Cindy Kam's advice and encouragement throughout this project. For valuable insights and conversations, I also thank Carlos Covarrubias, Vanessa Cruz, Katharine Donato, Marc Hetherington, Vince Hutchings, Ann Lin, Samuel Nieves, Spencer Piston, and Nick Valentino. Finally, for their constructive feedback, I thank Rick Wilson, my reviewers, and participants in the 2012 Comparative Approaches to Immigration and Religious and Ethnic Diversity workshop at Princeton University. Any remaining errors are mine alone. Replication data for analyses presented are available in the AJPS Data Archive on Dataverse (<http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/ajps>).

<sup>1</sup>To these ends, scholars have studied the influence of material interests, national identities, values, and prejudice on public opposition to immigration, plus the role played by cultural and economic threats posed by immigrants.

as their acculturation level (Branton 2007; Jiménez 2010). Yet without more attention to micro-foundations, it is hard to pinpoint *who* within immigrant groups reacts to xenophobic rhetoric, *when* such a response arises, and *why* this reaction assumes a specific character.

Drawing on social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1987), I develop a psychological framework that explains the political effects of xenophobic rhetoric on immigrants and their co-ethnics. I define *xenophobic rhetoric* as political communication that raises the salience of ethnic identity while devaluing its worth (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002). When ethnic identity is threatened this way, I argue that individuals react politically based on how strongly they identify with their ethnic ingroup (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997; Ethier and Deaux 1994). Specifically, high identifiers engage in political efforts that assert their identity's worth by reinforcing ingroup favoritism and intensifying ingroup pride (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Leach et al. 2010). In contrast, low identifiers shun political opportunities to counter their group's devaluation and, at times, dissociate from the ingroup (Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002; Garcia Bedolla 2005).

I test my claims in the realm of Latino politics. As the largest U.S. ethnic group, Latinos have been the focus of immigration discourse across two decades (Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013), with much of this discourse centering on illegal immigrants (Chavez 2001; Pérez 2013; Santa Ana 2002). As a result, the issue of illegal immigration makes ethnic identity salient for many Latinos (Garcia Bedolla 2005). Based on these insights, I embedded an experiment in a nationally representative survey of Latino adults that randomly assigned them to a control group or one of two treatments. In the non-xenophobic treatment, a politician simply draws attention to illegal immigration, thereby raising the salience of Latino identity. In the xenophobic treatment, the politician focuses on the same issue and makes negative allegations about illegal immigrants, thereby raising the salience of Latino identity and impugning its worth.

I find that xenophobic rhetoric induces many Latinos to adopt political stances that bolster their ingroup. In light of xenophobic rhetoric, high-identifying Latinos become less politically trusting (Hetherington 2005), more ethnocentric (Kinder and Kam 2009), and more supportive of policies that exude ingroup pride (e.g., active maintenance of Spanish; Leach et al. 2010). These findings are stronger among less acculturated Latinos and robust to national origin. Taken as a whole, my results suggest the

appeal of identity politics within immigrant communities is a response to perceived affronts to a group one highly esteems.

## Anti-Immigrant Contexts and Immigrant Groups: What We Know and Do Not Know

Scholars have widely studied the link between anti-immigrant contexts and the politics of immigrant groups (Fraga et al. 2010; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004). This literature establishes that many immigrant group members are attentive to the hostile climates that sometimes envelop them, and that such contexts can influence their political attitudes and behaviors (Pantoja and Segura 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Rumbaut 1997). Specifically, studies find that anti-immigrant contexts are associated with greater levels of political knowledge (Pantoja and Segura 2003), heightened political participation (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001; Ramírez 2002; Ramírez and Fraga 2008), and increases in the salience of ethnic identity (Jiménez 2010; Rumbaut 2008). Nevertheless, three blind spots in this scholarship limit our understanding of the specific connection between xenophobic rhetoric and the politics of immigrant communities.

First, although anti-immigrant contexts are correlated with changes in the political attitudes and behaviors of some immigrant group members (Pedraza 2011; Ramírez 2002; Ramírez and Fraga 2008), it is unclear why these contexts trigger a political response. Some scholars suggest the spirit behind anti-immigrant politics threatens immigrant groups, thus eliciting a political reaction among some group members (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001). For example, Pantoja and Segura (2003) argue that Proposition 187—California's 1994 anti-immigrant ballot initiative—was deemed threatening by many Latino immigrants in that state who, subsequently, displayed greater political knowledge and attentiveness. The content of this threat, however, remains vague. For example, do immigrant group members simply react to a sense of public opposition to immigration? Or, do they respond to how the issue of immigration is publicly discussed? The former possibility implies that perceived opposition to immigration is sufficient to affect the politics of immigrant groups. Yet the latter alternative suggests additional stimulus, in the form of rhetoric, might be necessary to shift the politics of immigrant communities.

Second, while prior work suggests anti-immigrant contexts increase the salience of ethnic identity within immigrant groups (Jiménez 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Rumbaut 1997, 2008), scholars possess a weak command over how ethnic identity psychologically translates to politics in these conditions (Lee 2008). Some work suggests ethnic identity becomes salient when society is hostile toward immigrants (Aleinikoff and Rumbaut 2008; Cropper 2011; Jiménez 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; see also Armenta and Hunt 2009; Cronin et al. 2012). Yet these studies often focus on immigrant youth or other convenience samples, which raises doubts about the generalizability of their results across entire immigrant populations. Other research drawing on representative opinion surveys finds the political influence of ethnicity in anti-immigrant contexts is limited to the foreign-born (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). However, these studies infer ethnic identity through group membership, which conflates classification to an ethnic group with the strength of ethnic identity. As a result, the degree to which ethnicity shapes politics remains uncertain (Huddy 2001; Lee 2008).

Finally, extant work is relatively silent on the *nature* of political response within immigrant communities in light of anti-immigrant contexts. Prior studies have mainly focused on changes in voting patterns and political knowledge among immigrant group members (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). Yet by spotlighting these outcomes, we are left with a weaker understanding about how anti-immigrant contexts affect the character of political engagement. For example, if ethnic identity shapes immigrant politics in the wake of anti-immigrant contexts, then it is plausible that some individuals become more politically engaged even as they become more focused on their ethnic group and its well-being. Of course, affirming one's ingroup does not necessarily entail antipathy toward outgroups (Brewer 1999; Kinder and Kam 2009; Leach et al. 2008). But as several scholars have shown, political galvanization along narrower ethnic lines can limit political engagement in terms of more encompassing and shared forms of identity (e.g., partisanship; see Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Transue 2007).

In sum, extant scholarship hints at a possible link between xenophobic rhetoric and the politics of immigrant groups. Yet detection of this relationship requires clarifying (1) the nature of the threat xenophobic rhetoric poses to immigrant groups, (2) the relationship between xenophobic rhetoric and ethnic identity, and (3) the type of political response xenophobic rhetoric produces. In the next section, I develop a psychological framework that addresses these points.

## Immigrants' Political Reaction to Xenophobic Rhetoric: A Social Identity Approach

I aim to illuminate the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and ethnic identity. To this end, I draw on social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel and Turner 1979) and its offshoot, self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987). Together, these frameworks offer a parsimonious rendering of the psychology behind the influence of group identity on individual behavior in the wake of perceived threats to a group.<sup>2</sup>

SIT teaches that individuals are motivated to uphold a positive self-image (Tajfel and Turner 1979). One way people accomplish this is by preserving the positive distinctiveness of groups they belong to, that is, by ensuring one's ingroup(s) compares favorably against an outgroup(s). Yet positive distinctiveness is not an inherent group trait. Rather, "it is the social context, rather than specific group features, that determines the evaluative flavor of any given group membership" (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002, 165). As a result, threats to a group's worth elicit specific reactions from group members—reactions that depend on one's level of identification with a group (Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears 1995; Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002; Ellemers, Barreto, and Spears 1999; Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997; Ethier and Deaux 1994; Leach et al. 2010; Spears, Doosje, and Ellemers 1997, 1999).

Specifically, high identifiers are more invested in a group because it is crucial to their self-image. Thus, they typically respond to group devaluation by engaging in collective efforts that bolster their group's positive distinctiveness (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997). As Leach et al. (2010, 548) observe, "the response to evidence that 'others devalue us' [is] to assert that 'I value us.'" This is consistent with Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey's (1999) rejection-identification model, which shows that affirmation of one's group in light of social devaluation enables high-identifying group members to preserve the positive self-image so many individuals deem important (see also Armenta and Hunt 2009; Cronin et al. 2012). Low identifiers, however, are not as committed to a group because it is less central to their self-image. Hence, they often refrain from bolstering their group's impugned status and, where possible, dissociate themselves from a

<sup>2</sup>In my overview of social identity theory and self-categorization theory, I emphasize the synergy between both lines of work. This does not mean there are no differences between them (Huddy 2001).

devalued group (Doosje, Spears, and Ellemers 2002; García Bedolla 2005; Spears, Doosje, Ellemers 1997).

Although group devaluation often provokes greater ingroup favoritism and ingroup pride, bolstering one's ingroup does not necessarily involve denigrating outgroups (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997; Leach et al. 2010; Tajfel et al. 1971). Ingroup affirmation is compatible with an array of attitudes toward outgroups, including indifference (Brewer 1999). Thus, rather than a generalized positive relation between ingroup love and outgroup hate, the latter often depends on the content of an identity and whether a strong norm exists for outgroup denigration (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002).

Based on these insights, I claim that xenophobic rhetoric raises the salience of ethnic identity within immigrant groups while threatening its positive distinctiveness (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002; García Bedolla 2005; Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002). In response to this identity threat, I hypothesize (H1a) that highly identified group members will display political stances that assert their group's worth by reinforcing ingroup favoritism and heightening ingroup pride (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997; Leach et al. 2010). In contrast, I expect (H1b) that low identifiers will forgo political opportunities to counter their group's devaluation and, if possible, dissociate from the ingroup (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002; García Bedolla 2005; Spears, Doosje, and Ellemers 1997). These hypotheses acknowledge the difference between group salience and group identity (Huddy 2001). As Taeku Lee explains, "the mere existence of categories does not guarantee that . . . individuals . . . will identify with them" (2008, 467). The key to these hypotheses, then, is a person's level of identification with an ethnic group that is impugned by xenophobic rhetoric.

I test these hypotheses with three dependent variables: (1) *political trust*, (2) *ethnocentrism*, and (3) *pro-group politics*. This approach is consistent with Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe (2004), who explain that the attitudinal and behavioral implications that flow from an activated identity are both multifaceted and reflective of the opportunity structure in a given intergroup setting—in this case, politics. Accordingly, political trust is "the degree to which people perceive the government is producing outcomes consistent with their expectations" (Hetherington 2005, 9). As such, political trust is essential to the health of democratic polities like the United States because it fosters *cooperation* between diverse constituencies and interests (Brewer 1999; Hetherington 2005; Mara 2001). Americans, however, often express low levels of political trust. Thus, many people view political institutions and officials pessimistically, thereby limiting

political cooperation (Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2000; Citrin 1974; Miller 1974).

Members of racial/ethnic groups are especially given to political distrust, and this orientation strengthens if they sense discrimination from the dominant society (Michelson 2003; Nunnally 2012; Tate 2003). This occurs because perceived intolerance toward one's group signals government's inability to ensure equal status between racial/ethnic communities. Thus, insofar as group devaluation promotes ingroup favoritism, xenophobic rhetoric will induce high-identifying Latinos to become less politically trusting than low identifiers, as intergroup boundaries are sharpened and greater attention is shifted toward the ingroup (Brewer 1999).

Xenophobic rhetoric should also provoke greater ethnocentrism, "a predisposition to divide human society into in-groups and out-groups" (Kam and Kinder 2007; Kinder and Kam 2009, 8). As Kinder and Kam (2009, 31) explain: "To those given to ethnocentrism, in-groups are communities of virtue, trust, and cooperation, safe and superior havens. Out-groups . . . are not." Ethnocentrism strongly influences political attitudes and is often activated by political discourse that discusses issues in group-centric terms (Kinder and Kam 2009). Hence, if group devaluation heightens ingroup pride, then xenophobic rhetoric should prompt high-identifying Latinos to display greater ethnocentrism relative to low identifiers.

Finally, in light of xenophobic rhetoric, we should observe stronger support for pro-group politics, that is, policies that heighten ingroup pride. Scholarship on racial/ethnic politics suggests that segments of these communities sometimes respond to perceived hostility to their groups by supporting policies that culturally, economically, and politically celebrate and affirm the in-group (Block 2011; Davis and Brown 2002; García 1997; Márquez and Espino 2010). Generally, however, these types of policies are mildly supported by immigrant groups (Citrin et al. 2007). Thus, to the extent that group devaluation increases ingroup pride, xenophobic rhetoric should induce high identifiers to support pro-group politics more than low identifiers.

Although the interplay between group threat and identity strength is hypothesized to explain people's response to xenophobic rhetoric, this dynamic could be moderated by second-order factors. Here, studies suggest a person's acculturation level might condition responses to identity threat (Branton 2007; García Bedolla 2005; Jiménez 2010; Marín et al. 1987; Pedraza 2011). Within immigrant groups, acculturation refers to one's adherence to society's dominant cultural norms. For instance, acculturated individuals are more likely to use

English—rather than immigrants' mother tongue—in social and professional settings.

Two additional hypotheses present themselves here. First, some work suggests that people who are linguistically and temporally closer to the immigrant experience are likely to have the strongest reaction to xenophobic rhetoric. Since these individuals are more culturally similar to immigrants, they too will acutely feel the sting of xenophobic rhetoric (Binder, Polinard, and Wrinkle 1997; Branton 2007; Polinard, Wrinkle, and de la Garza 1984). Thus, a person's response to xenophobic rhetoric might weaken across higher acculturation levels (H2a). If so, then less acculturated individuals (i.e., foreign-born, less likely to speak English) will react more strongly to xenophobic rhetoric, with this response dissipating as acculturation grows (i.e., U.S.-born, more likely to speak English).

An alternative hypothesis, however, is that reactions to xenophobic rhetoric strengthen across higher acculturation levels (H2b). Several studies find that native-born individuals identify more strongly in pan-ethnic terms (e.g., Latino, Asian) than their foreign-born peers (Fraga et al. 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). As Lien, Conway, and Wong (2004, 61) note: "Whereas adult immigrants may feel the pressure of becoming assimilated Americans, their U.S.-born children tend to develop a stronger sense of ethnic identity and consciousness over time because of personal and situational experiences dealing with racial discrimination." Consequently, greater acculturation levels might intensify reactions to xenophobic rhetoric.

## Research Design

To test my hypotheses, I designed a survey experiment and administered it on a nationally representative sample of Latino adults, ages 18 and over. The survey was conducted online by Knowledge Networks (KN), which maintains a research panel that is representative of the U.S. Latino population. Panel members are recruited via probability-based sampling and furnished with Internet access and computer hardware if needed. KN fielded this study from September 23 to October 3, 2011. The study was administered in English or Spanish. It yielded 1,203 Latino respondents, with a completion rate of 53.7%. The median respondent was 40 years old, with a high school education and a \$40,000 household income. Forty-nine percent of respondents were women. Sixty-seven percent of respondents identified as Democrats and 29% as Republicans. Fifty-eight percent of respondents interviewed in English, and 57% of respondents were of Mexican

ancestry.<sup>3</sup> My analyses weight these data to be nationally representative.

To begin the survey, respondents completed a battery of political and social predispositions, including *Latino identity*, which was gauged with the following 4-point item: "Being Latino is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am." This reverse-worded item, which ran from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, was coded so that higher values indicate stronger Latino identity.<sup>4</sup> Respondents also reported their *national origin identity* (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican) and their *Language use*. *National origin identity* was gauged with a 4-point item, running from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*: "Being [e.g., Puerto Rican] is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am." Responses were coded so that higher values indicate stronger national origin identity.<sup>5</sup> *Language use* was tapped with a 5-point item, "What language do you usually speak at home?" which ran from *only Spanish* to *only English*. Responses were combined with participants' data on their parents' nativity to create the moderator *Acculturation*, an additive scale<sup>6</sup> of two items: (a) whether one usually speaks *only Spanish* (1), *only English* (3), or *both equally* at home (2); and (b) whether one is first generation (i.e., foreign-born; 1), second generation (i.e.,

<sup>3</sup>Table K in the online supporting information reports some basic descriptive statistics for respondents in my survey and those in the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS), which is widely considered the most recent benchmark political survey of Latinos. Despite survey mode differences (the LNS was phone-based), respondents from both surveys resemble each other on many key traits, thus assuaging strong concerns that my KN respondents are atypical in a deleterious way.

<sup>4</sup>Prior work finds this type of item is as effective an identity measure as positively worded items (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), including in Latino samples (Ethier and Deaux 1994). I use a reverse-worded item to limit acquiescence bias. Table H in the supporting information suggests acquiescence bias can affect Latinos' completion of positively worded identity items in an online setting, while demonstrating that the reverse-worded item does not lead respondents to downplay their Latino identity below its actual strength. Nevertheless, random measurement error can still affect this kind of item. If it does, its presence should yield conservatively biased estimates of my observed effects (Brown 2006).

<sup>5</sup>The same reasoning that guided my use of a reverse-worded item for Latino identity also drove my selection of this item for national origin identity.

<sup>6</sup>Acculturation is a complex concept often measured with single items of unknown reliability (Cruz et al. 2008). However, short scales combining indicators of language preference and exposure to the United States (e.g., generational status, proportion of life lived in the United States) often yield more reliable assessments of acculturation (Cruz et al. 2008; Pedraza 2011). To this end, I created the additive scale described in the text. Critically, the polychoric correlation between the two scale items is strong and statistically significant ( $\rho = .82$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, standardizing these items and estimating coefficient alpha further underscores the reliability of this short scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

U.S.-born with foreign-born parents; 2), or third generation (i.e., U.S.-born with U.S.-born parents; 3). Higher *Acculturation* values indicate further distance from the immigrant experience.<sup>7</sup> All variables described run on a 0–1 interval.

In the middle of the survey, respondents completed the actual experiment, which randomly assigned them to one of three conditions: (1) a *control* group, which provided no information to respondents; (2) a *non-xenophobic* condition that exposed respondents to political rhetoric drawing attention to illegal immigration; and (3) a *xenophobic* condition that exposed respondents to political rhetoric focusing attention on illegal immigration, while making negative charges against illegal immigrants. Because the issue of illegal immigration is known to make Latino identity salient for many Latinos (Garcia Bedolla 2005), the non-xenophobic condition is designed to simply cue Latino identity.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the xenophobic condition raises the salience of Latino identity while impugning its positive distinctiveness by making negative charges against illegal immigrants. This combination of identity salience and threat is theorized to elicit differential political reactions among low- and high-identifying Latinos. Moreover, by including a non-xenophobic and xenophobic condition, I can test whether raising the salience of Latino identity is sufficient to provoke a political reaction among Latinos, or whether identity salience must be coupled with identity devaluation to trigger this response. The wording for the non-xenophobic and xenophobic treatments is provided below, with the italicized language denoting the added language in the xenophobic condition:

Before moving on to the next set of questions, I want you to read a comment made recently by a politician in our nation's capital. A prominent member of Congress made the following statement to reporters the other day: "The issue of illegal immigration needs to be addressed by this Congress. *Illegal immigrants are taking away American jobs, threatening American culture, and endangering America's national security. We need to secure our borders immediately.*"

<sup>7</sup>The polychoric correlation between my acculturation scale and Latino identity is weak and unreliable ( $\rho = .06$ , ns).

<sup>8</sup>Beyond Garcia Bedolla (2005), other scholars have shown that the association between Latinos and illegal immigration is regularly transmitted by news media. For example, in other research, I show that news reports on Latino illegal immigration outweigh reports on Latino legal immigration by a ratio of about 90% to 10% (Pérez 2013). This pattern is part of a larger trend in contemporary U.S. immigration news coverage, which often focuses on Latino rather than non-Latino groups (Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013).

As can be seen, the fundamental difference between the non-xenophobic and xenophobic condition is the latter's emphasis on making negative allegations about illegal immigrants.<sup>9</sup>

Posttreatment, respondents answered items gauging political trust, ethnocentrism, and pro-group politics. Political trust was gauged with the following item: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?"

To tap ethnocentrism, respondents completed standard feeling thermometer ratings of Latinos, whites, and blacks, in randomized order. I created ethnocentrism scores by taking one's rating of Latinos and subtracting from it one's average rating of whites and blacks (Kinder and Kam 2009). Higher scores here reflect more positive ratings of Latinos relative to non-Latinos. In this way, my ethnocentrism measure can be said to capture an affective sense of ingroup pride.

Finally, pro-group politics is an additive index of three items (*strongly disagree/agree*): (1) Latinos should always vote for Latino candidates when they run, (2) Latino children should study and maintain the Spanish language, and (3) Latinos should shop in Latino stores whenever possible.<sup>10</sup> I construe these as indicators of a political manifestation of ingroup pride. Consistent with this interpretation, the correlation between this scale and my measure of ethnocentrism is a positive  $r = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, higher values on this scale reflect greater support for pro-group politics. All aforementioned variables run on a 0–1 interval.

## Results

I expect the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and ethnic identity to induce differential reactions among high- and low-identifying members of an immigrant group. Thus, for all three dependent variables, I estimate

<sup>9</sup>Respondents completed several questions after the identity item before partaking in the actual experiment, including measures of collective self-esteem (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), a national origin identity item, and, lastly, self-reported language spoken at home. The polychoric correlation between language spoken at home and the Latino identity item is trivially small and statistically insignificant:  $\rho = .02$ , s.e. = .03,  $p < ns$ .

<sup>10</sup>These were adapted from Dawson (2001). A confirmatory factor analysis reveals they tap pro-group politics ( $CFI = .999$ ;  $TLI = .996$ ;  $RMSEA = .017$ ). Here, the mean loading is .53, with the lowest loading (.22) yielded by the item "shop in Latino stores," which reversed the order of the response scale to limit acquiescence bias.

fully interactive regression models that capture the effect of xenophobic rhetoric across different levels of Latino identity. The simplicity of these models derives from my experimental design. Random assignment to the three conditions means the treatments are uncorrelated with respondents' attitudes and dispositions. Hence, there is less need to control for spurious relationships, as is common in regression analyses of observational data (Mutz 2011; Shadish et al. 2002).<sup>11</sup> In the current study, inclusion of ethnic identity as a covariate is theoretically driven. Indeed, omitting it would yield a misspecified model since ethnic identity is theorized to moderate my treatment effects (Druckman and Kam 2011, 45; Kam and Franzese 2007, 13–19). Ancillary analyses also reveal my treatments are not moderated by partisan identity, which further strengthens the case for my parsimonious modeling strategy.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1 reports the raw results from my experimental analysis. There we see that across all three regressions, Latino identity is unrelated to the relevant dependent variable in the control condition (gray-shaded row). This suggests that in the absence of immigration rhetoric (non-xenophobic or xenophobic), there is no link between Latino identity and political trust, ethnocentrism, or pro-group politics. Moreover, across all three regressions, the coefficient for the interaction between xenophobic rhetoric and Latino identity displays the correct sign and is statistically significant in two out of the three analyses. For instance, at higher levels of Latino identity, xenophobic rhetoric decreases political trust and boosts ethnocentrism among Latinos. This dynamic also increases support for pro-group politics, but the coefficient for the interaction between xenophobic rhetoric and Latino identity is statistically insignificant ( $p < .16$ , one-tailed). However, an F-test reveals that one can reject the null that xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity, and their interaction are unrelated to pro-group politics,  $F = 2.83$ ,  $\text{Prob}(F_{3,1093}) > 2.83 = .04$  (Kam and Franzese 2007), which implies that the anticipated relationship between xenophobic rhetoric and Latino identity holds to some degree. I further explore this possibility below.

<sup>11</sup>Consistent with my anticipation of heterogeneous treatment effects, Table L (supporting information) suggests all three experimental conditions were effectively randomized, whereas Table M (supporting information) reveals that the distribution of my key moderators—Latino identity and acculturation—is identical across all three conditions.

<sup>12</sup>Specifically, I predicted each dependent variable as a function of the treatments, one's strength of partisanship, and the relevant interactions between these variables. The interactions between partisanship and each type of rhetoric are statistically insignificant across all three equations (Table A, supporting information).

Given these initial results, I delve more deeply into the findings for each dependent variable to assess the degree to which xenophobic rhetoric triggers a political response among Latinos. I begin with political trust. The ordered probit results in the first column of Table 1 suggest that the interaction between xenophobic rhetoric and levels of Latino identity produces the anticipated reduction in political trust (−.525). Recall that political trust is a trichotomous measure, with trusting “some of the time” as the lowest category. The results in Table 1 thus imply that in light of xenophobic rhetoric, high identifiers become less politically trusting.

To better illuminate this result, I translate the raw coefficients in Table 1 into probabilities reflecting the likelihood of trusting “most of the time.” Figure 1 shows that in light of xenophobic rhetoric, the probability of trusting the government “most of the time” declines across higher levels of Latino identity. Among low identifiers in the xenophobic condition, the likelihood of trusting the government “most of the time” is .261. Among high identifiers, the probability of displaying this attitude drops to .180. This gap in political trust is statistically significant and contrasts with the pattern displayed by low and high identifiers in the non-xenophobic condition, where no reliable gap in trust emerges between these types of individuals.

Turning next to ethnocentrism, about 47% of Latino respondents display scores that reflect more positive evaluations of Latinos relative to non-Latinos, which is consistent with the mild but prevalent levels of ethnocentrism generally found among U.S. whites, blacks, and Latinos (Kinder and Kam 2009).<sup>13</sup> Xenophobic rhetoric, however, shapes the degree to which low- and high-identifying Latinos express ethnocentrism. For example, in light of xenophobic rhetoric, ethnocentrism reliably weakens, as evidenced by the coefficient for xenophobic rhetoric (−.054, s.e. = .020). Given the interactive nature of the model, this drop in ethnocentrism is confined to those individuals with the lowest level of Latino identity. This means low-identifying Latinos exposed to xenophobic rhetoric dissociate themselves from their group by rating Latinos less favorably relative to non-Latinos.

The precise opposite pattern is obtained among high-identifying Latinos, who, in light of xenophobic

<sup>13</sup>Using a feeling thermometer measure of ethnocentrism across the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 National Election Studies, Kinder and Kam (2009) find that 58% of Latinos are ethnocentric, which is 11% more than what I find. This discrepancy is explained by the fact that until 2008, the National Election Studies strictly polled English-speaking Latinos. My survey, however, polled English- and Spanish-speaking Latinos, which yields more heterogeneous Latino attitudes, including ethnocentrism.

**TABLE 1** Ethnic Identity Moderates the Effect of Xenophobic Rhetoric on Latino Politics

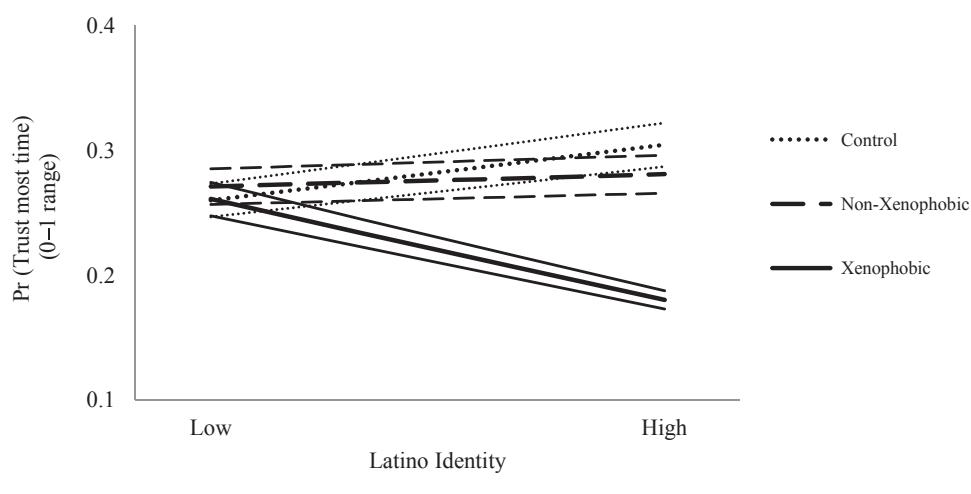
	Political Trust	Ethnocentrism	Pro-group Politics
Xenophobic rhetoric	.004 (.195)	-.054* (.020)	.007 (.034)
Non-xenophobic rhetoric	.045 (.189)	-.034 (.022)	.034 (.033)
Latino identity	.185 (.206)	-.032 (.022)	.021 (.037)
Xenophobic $\times$ Latino	-.525* (.299)	.099* (.032)	.053 (.052)
Non-xenophobic $\times$ Latino	-.144 (.292)	.081* (.032)	-.041 (.053)
Constant	— <sup>a</sup>	.538* (.016)	.473* (.024)
R <sup>2</sup>	.007 <sup>b</sup>	.025	.011
N	1083	1099	1099

Note: Coefficients with robust standard errors are from an ordered probit model (for *political trust*) and OLS regressions (for *ethnocentrism* and *pro-group politics*). All variables, save for *political trust*, have a 0–1 interval.

<sup>a</sup>No constant is reported because model is ordered probit.

<sup>b</sup>This statistic is a pseudo R<sup>2</sup>, since model is ordered probit.

\*p < .05, one-tailed.

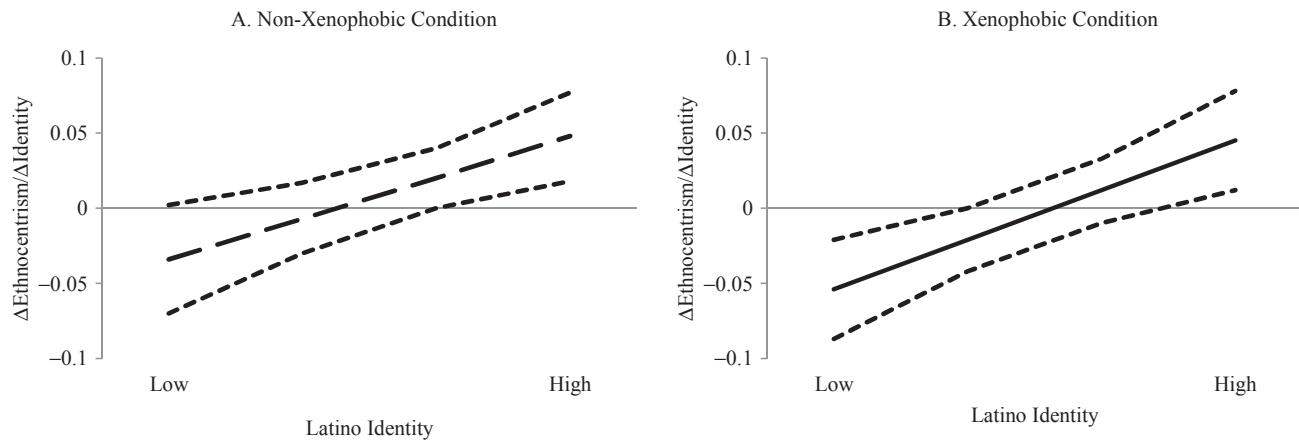
**FIGURE 1** Effect of Immigration Rhetoric on Probability of "Trust Most of the Time" by Latino Identity (with 90% Confidence Intervals)

rhetoric, assert their group's value by rating Latinos more favorably relative to non-Latinos. Indeed, as one's strength of Latino identity increases, so does one's level of ethnocentrism when exposed to xenophobic rhetoric, a trend captured by the significant coefficient for the interaction term Xenophobic  $\times$  Latino (.099, s.e. = .032). In this way, xenophobic rhetoric induces a reliable break in ethnocentrism between low and high identifiers.

The interplay between xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity, and ethnocentrism is graphed in Figure 2

(Panel B). There we see that xenophobic rhetoric reliably induces greater ethnocentrism among high identifiers ( $\Delta$ Ethnocentrism/ $\Delta$ Xenophobic = .045, 90% CI = [.012, .078]) and weaker ethnocentrism among low identifiers ( $\Delta$ Ethnocentrism/ $\Delta$ Xenophobic = -.054, 90% CI = [-.087, -.021]). Panel A displays the same relationship for non-xenophobic rhetoric. It reveals that non-xenophobic rhetoric boosts ethnocentrism among high identifiers to a similar degree as xenophobic rhetoric ( $\Delta$ Ethnocentrism/ $\Delta$ Non-xenophobic = .048, 90% CI =

**FIGURE 2 Marginal Effect of Immigration Rhetoric on Ethnocentrism by Latino Identity (with 90% Confidence Intervals)**



[.018, .077] vs.  $\Delta\text{Ethnocentrism}/\Delta\text{Xenophobic} = .045$ , 90% CI = [.012, .078]). Yet non-xenophobic rhetoric does not reliably decrease ethnocentrism among low identifiers ( $\Delta\text{Ethnocentrism}/\Delta\text{Non-xenophobic} = -.034$ , 90% CI = [-.070, .002] vs.  $\Delta\text{Ethnocentrism}/\Delta\text{Xenophobic} = -.054$ , 90% CI = [-.087, -.021]).

To be sure, the effect size for those scoring lowest in Latino identity in the non-xenophobic condition is not far off its corresponding estimate in the xenophobic condition, thereby making these effects appear quite similar. Yet closer inspection of Figure 2 reveals that non-xenophobic rhetoric actually has no reliable effect across the entire lower range of Latino identity, a pattern that changes in the xenophobic condition. Hence, while producing effects that resemble each other, especially among high-identifying Latinos, only xenophobic rhetoric—which makes negative allegations about illegal immigrants—yields a crisp break in response among low and high identifiers. I reprise this point in the conclusion by discussing how future work might further sharpen the distinction between xenophobic and non-xenophobic rhetoric.

Turning to pro-group politics, I unearth some evidence in favor of the hypothesized dynamic. The dependent variable here is a scale of pro-group politics, which includes the active maintenance of Spanish among Latino children. In the absence of xenophobic and non-xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity is unrelated to pro-group politics. However, exposure to xenophobic rhetoric appears to boost support for pro-group politics among high-identifying Latinos. This effect is displayed in Panel B in Figure 3.

Across the two highest levels of ethnic identity, Latinos react to xenophobic rhetoric by becoming .042 (s.e. =

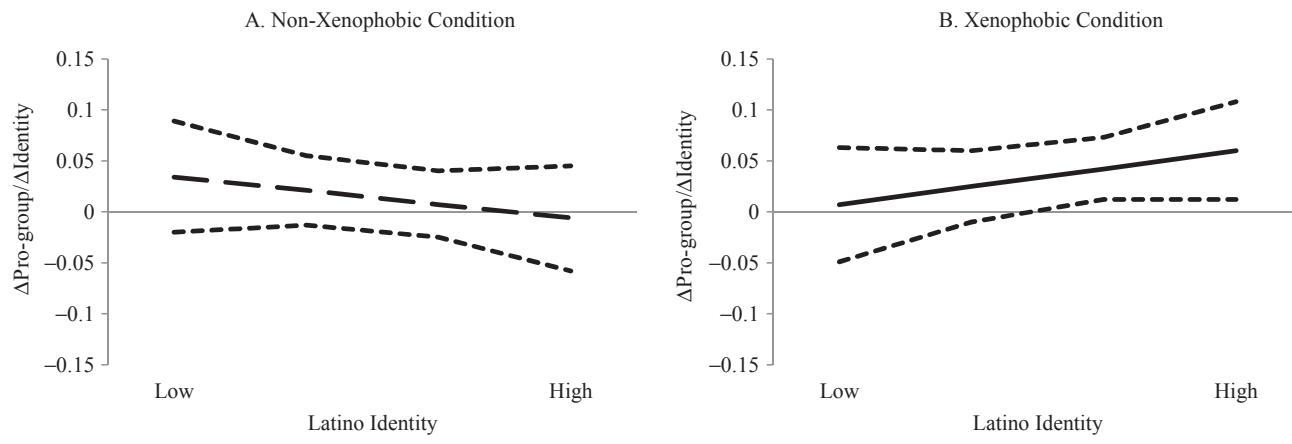
.019) and .060 (s.e. = .029) more supportive of pro-group politics, respectively. These shifts are reliably different from zero. Moreover, they entail a discernible shift toward majority support for pro-group politics. The constant for this regression suggests that when identity and rhetoric are at their minimum (i.e., 0), support for pro-group politics is below the midpoint of this scale (.473). Yet exposure to xenophobic rhetoric enlarges this circle of supporters into a clear majority by recruiting the support of high identifiers. In contrast, this galvanizing effect does not emerge in the non-xenophobic condition, as evidenced by Panel A in Figure 3.

In sum, the results across these three domains suggest that xenophobic rhetoric generally triggers distinct political reactions among low and high identifiers, with the latter expressing political stances that assert their group's worth by buttressing ingroup favoritism and heightening ingroup pride.<sup>14</sup> Critically, this pattern is robust to replacement of Latino identity with national origin identity, which suggests this dynamic holds for Mexican and non-Mexican Latinos.<sup>15</sup> Equally important, additional analysis suggests the response of high identifiers

<sup>14</sup>These effects appear to arise from the content and tone of the xenophobic treatment, and not that manipulation's slightly longer length. Accordingly, Table I (supporting information) shows that neither treatment is related to survey completion times. Moreover, Table J reveals that relative to the control, exposure to non-xenophobic rhetoric reliably increases ethnocentrism and marginally reduces trust in government among high-identifying Latinos, which suggests respondents did attend to the non-xenophobic treatment.

<sup>15</sup>For example, it is plausible that these effects are driven by Mexican Latinos, since most unauthorized immigrants in the United States are Mexican (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2011). Thus, I reestimated the models in Table 1 by replacing Latino identity with national origin identity. The polychoric correlation between my national

**FIGURE 3 Marginal Effect of Immigration Rhetoric on Pro-Group Politics by Latino Identity (with 90% Confidence Intervals)**



to xenophobic rhetoric is decoupled from animosity toward non-Latinos, which indicates that Latinos' bolstering of their ingroup does not produce chauvinism toward outgroups.<sup>16</sup>

### The Effects of Acculturation

I next examine whether acculturation moderates the link between xenophobic rhetoric and identity. I contrast two hypotheses here. The first is that the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and identity is stronger among less acculturated Latinos (Hypothesis 2a). Since these individuals are linguistically and temporally closer to the immigrant experience, they will be more sensitive to xenophobic rhetoric. Alternatively, the link between xenophobic rhetoric and identity might be stronger among more acculturated Latinos (Hypothesis 2b). Since acculturation heightens sensitivity to racial discrimination, it might intensify the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and identity. To detangle these possibilities, I focus on political trust and ethnocentrism: the two dependent variables where a reliable interaction between xenophobic rhetoric

origin and Latino identity items is a robust .56,  $p < .01$ . A similar correlation emerges between like items in the 2006 Latino National Survey (.52,  $p < .01$ ; see Table C, supporting information). These patterns suggest these items might be tapping a shared sense of group identity. Consistent with this view, my Latino and national origin identity items share several correlates (Table D, supporting information). Unsurprisingly, then, the results in Table 1 are reproduced if national origin identity is substituted for Latino identity (Table E and Figure F, supporting information). Finally, further analysis shows that Mexicans react no differently to xenophobic rhetoric than non-Mexicans (Table G, supporting information).

<sup>16</sup> See Table B (supporting information). These results are consistent with Kinder and Kam (2009).

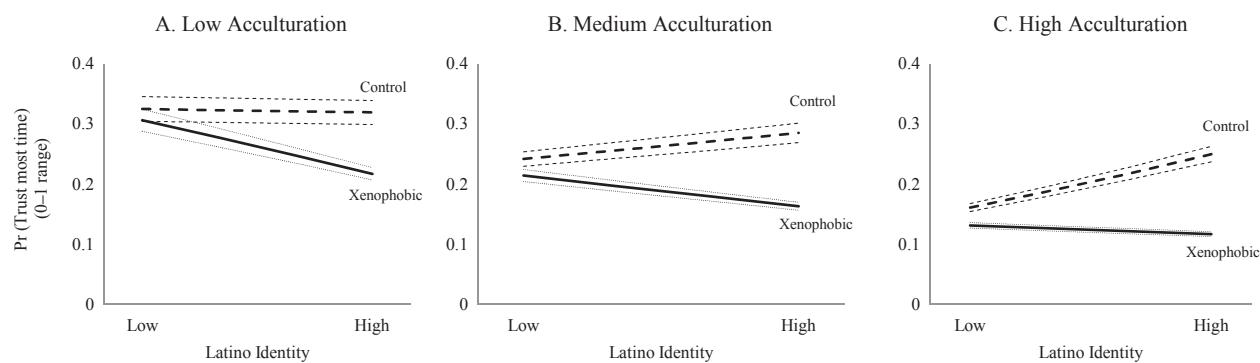
and identity emerged. Thus, I modify the relevant models in Table 1 by adding an interactive term between xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity, and acculturation (Kam and Franzese 2007).

My initial analysis of political trust (Table 1) showed that only xenophobic rhetoric triggered a reaction among low- and high-identifying Latinos, with the latter becoming more distrustful of government (Figure 1). Here I test acculturation's moderating influence by collapsing the non-xenophobic condition into the control group and comparing it to the xenophobic condition.<sup>17</sup> Figure 4 displays the probability of trusting "most of the time" by Latino identity and acculturation for these two conditions.

There we see that Latinos are generally less trusting of government as their acculturation level increases, which confirms prior work (Michelson 2003). Yet high-identifying Latinos become even less trusting in light of xenophobic rhetoric. This effect is stronger among the less acculturated and dissipates across higher levels of acculturation. Specifically, among the least acculturated, the first difference in the probability of trusting "most of the time" between low and high identifiers exposed to xenophobic rhetoric is -.089 (90% CI = [-.097, -.081]). Among those with a medium acculturation level, the first difference drops to -.051 (90% CI = [-.054, -.048]). And,

<sup>17</sup> A Wald test suggests trust does not depend on non-xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity, or their interaction ( $H_0$ : Non-xenophobic = Latino identity = Non-xenophobic  $\times$  Latino identity = 0,  $\chi^2 = .96$ , Prob  $\chi^2(3) > .96 = .81$ ). Hence, I estimate the following model: Trust =  $F(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Xenophobic rhetoric} + \beta_2 \text{Latino identity} + \beta_3 \text{Acculturation} + \beta_4 \text{Xenophobic} \times \text{Latino identity} + \beta_5 \text{Xenophobic} \times \text{Acculturation} + \beta_6 \text{Latino identity} \times \text{Acculturation} + \beta_7 \text{Xenophobic} \times \text{Latino identity} \times \text{Acculturation} + \varepsilon)$ .

**FIGURE 4** Effect of Immigration Rhetoric on Probability of “Trust Most of the Time” by Latino Identity and Acculturation (with 90% Confidence Intervals)



among the most acculturated, the first difference is  $-.014$  (90% CI =  $[-.015, -.013]$ ). Thus, while high-identifying Latinos generally become more distrustful of government in light of xenophobic rhetoric, this effect is stronger among less acculturated Latinos.

I next consider ethnocentrism. My initial analysis (Table 1) showed the interaction between identity and each form of immigration rhetoric was statistically reliable. Hence, I test whether acculturation moderates both first-order interactions.<sup>18</sup> Figure 5 reveals that xenophobic rhetoric induces high-identifying Latinos to become more ethnocentric and low-identifying Latinos less ethnocentric. In light of xenophobic rhetoric, the marginal effect for high identifiers who are less acculturated is a statistically significant  $.072$  (90% CI = [.023, .121]); for low identifiers, the effect is a reliable  $-.076$  (90% CI =  $[-.123, -.029]$ ). In contrast, when exposed to non-xenophobic rhetoric, the marginal effect for high identifiers who are less acculturated is a statistically significant  $.049$  (90% CI = [.008, .090]); yet for low identifiers, the effect is an unreliable  $-.031$  (90% CI =  $[-.083, .020]$ ). Thus, only xenophobic rhetoric provokes high *and* low identifiers who are less acculturated to display differential ethnocentric reactions.

This pattern reemerges among Latinos with a medium acculturation level. In light of xenophobic rhetoric, the marginal effect for high identifiers with a medium acculturation level is a statistically significant

$.036$  (90% CI = [.001, .072]); for low identifiers, the effect is a reliable  $-.046$  (90% CI =  $[-.079, -.012]$ ). In contrast, when exposed to non-xenophobic rhetoric, the marginal effect for high identifiers at a medium acculturation level is a statistically significant  $.030$  (90% CI = [.0002, .059]); yet for low identifiers, the effect is an unreliable  $-.031$  (90% CI =  $[-.068, .007]$ ). Hence, once again, only xenophobic rhetoric stimulates distinct ethnocentric responses among high and low identifiers with a medium level of acculturation.

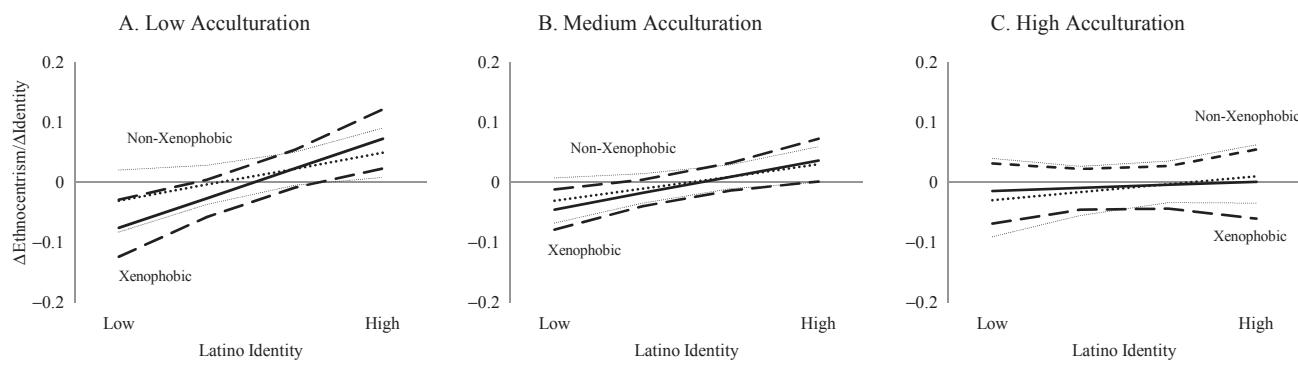
This general pattern changes when we turn to highly acculturated Latinos, where the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and identity is essentially zero. This suggests the ethnocentric thinking elicited by xenophobic rhetoric is stronger among high-identifying Latinos who are less acculturated, which supports Hypothesis 2a. As acculturation grows, the effects of xenophobic rhetoric on ethnocentrism weaken among high- and low-identifying Latinos. Therefore, taken as a whole, the results for political trust and ethnocentrism suggest that when xenophobic rhetoric triggers a political response within an immigrant community, its effects are likely to be stronger among high-identifying individuals who are less acculturated.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Using social identity theory, I have argued that xenophobic rhetoric raises the salience of ethnic identity while devaluing its worth. In light of this identity threat, high identifiers assert their group's value, whereas low identifiers decline opportunities to bolster their group and, at times, distance themselves from it. I tested my claims in the realm of U.S. Latino politics, using a nationally representative survey experiment that manipulated

<sup>18</sup>Specifically, I estimate the following model: Ethnocentrism =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ Non-xenophobic rhetoric +  $\beta_2$ Xenophobic rhetoric +  $\beta_3$ Latino identity +  $\beta_4$ Acculturation +  $\beta_5$ Non-xenophobic  $\times$  Latino identity +  $\beta_6$ Xenophobic  $\times$  Latino identity +  $\beta_7$ Non-xenophobic  $\times$  Acculturation +  $\beta_8$ Xenophobic  $\times$  Acculturation +  $\beta_9$ Latino identity  $\times$  Acculturation +  $\beta_{10}$ Non-xenophobic  $\times$  Latino identity  $\times$  Acculturation +  $\beta_{11}$ Xenophobic  $\times$  Latino identity  $\times$  Acculturation +  $\varepsilon$ .

**FIGURE 5 Marginal Effect of Immigration Rhetoric on Ethnocentrism by Latino Identity and Acculturation (with 90% Confidence Intervals)**



exposure to xenophobic rhetoric. My predictions were generally borne out. In the wake of xenophobic rhetoric, high-identifying Latinos became less politically trusting, more ethnocentric, and more supportive of pro-group politics than their low-identifying peers. Moreover, this interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and Latino identity appears to be stronger among less acculturated Latinos.

While xenophobic rhetoric generally produced the hypothesized effects among high- and low-identifying Latinos, two qualifications are in order. First, non-xenophobic and xenophobic rhetoric both produced greater ethnocentrism among high-identifying Latinos. While it is tempting to infer from this result that xenophobic rhetoric is no different from its non-xenophobic analog, it is important to recall that the significantly weaker level of ethnocentrism expressed by low identifiers was confined to the xenophobic condition. Hence, only xenophobic rhetoric induced a crisp and reliable break in ethnocentrism between high- and low-identifying Latinos.

This pattern appears to arise from the qualitative difference between non-xenophobic and xenophobic rhetoric. The former focused on illegal immigration *without* making negative allegations about illegal immigrants. That is, it made salient Latino identity by focusing on illegal immigration (Garcia Bedolla 2005). Here, low identifiers were not reliably driven to distance themselves from their group. Their response changed only in light of xenophobic rhetoric, which made negative charges against illegal immigrants. There, low identifiers coped with this devaluation by expressing less ethnocentrism. In contrast, high identifiers expressed more ethnocentrism in light of non-xenophobic and xenophobic rhetoric. This comports with prior work, which finds that just raising the salience of a group—like the non-xenophobic condition—is sometimes sufficient for high identifiers to “stick by their group” by, for example, expressing positive

affect toward the ingroup (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997). Future research can help to illuminate the boundary conditions of salience effects like these in politics. In particular, scholars might enhance my verbal manipulation of xenophobic rhetoric with additional context and imagery in an effort to induce an even clearer split between low- and high-identifying Latinos.

Relatedly, scholars might also consider exploring the implications of disidentification in light of xenophobic and non-xenophobic rhetoric. Disidentification is “the active rejection and distancing of a particular group” (Verkuyten and Yıldız 2007, 1456), what Lisa Garcia Bedolla (2005) labels as dissociation in the realm of Latino politics. Whereas low-identifying individuals assign a low importance to a given group identity, disidentified individuals do not wish to be associated with a specific group at all.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, we might observe disidentifiers express even stronger decreases in ethnocentrism than their low-identifying counterparts (Verkuyten and Yıldız 2007), especially if we consider that such dissociation has been observed in qualitative research on Latinos who perceive their ethnic group to be stigmatized (Garcia Bedolla 2005).

Second, while the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and identity emerged in the expected direction across all three dependent variables, this relationship was only marginally significant in the case of pro-group politics. The likely culprit here is measurement error, which would work against finding significant effects. Unlike political trust and ethnocentrism, little work exists to guide the assessment of pro-group politics. I therefore relied on

<sup>19</sup> Although one could argue that my reverse-worded identity item captures disidentification, prior validation studies show this reverse-worded item captures the same latent variable—identity strength—as affirmatively worded analogs (Ethier and Deaux 1994; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992).

a three-item scale to accomplish this. And, while these indicators scaled reasonably well, additional and diverse items might be needed to tap this concept even more precisely. To this end, scholars might consider designing and validating additional items to improve measurement of this concept.

My results add to our knowledge of immigrant politics by delineating the psychology behind the response of immigrant communities to xenophobic rhetoric. In doing so, we have a clearer understanding of who is most likely to respond to xenophobic rhetoric, when, and why. For example, my evidence suggests that xenophobic rhetoric elicits a stronger political response from high-identifying Latinos, rather than all Latinos. Additionally, the reason these Latinos react politically in the way that they do is to assert the worth of a group they value. Here it is important to recall that in the absence of xenophobic rhetoric, Latino identity was unrelated to political trust, ethnocentrism, or pro-group politics. Only when exposed to xenophobic rhetoric did high identifiers affirm their ingroup. In this way, my framework suggests that ethnic identity is politicized by specific political conditions, rather than being politicized by default.

The findings on acculturation also strengthen our grip on the interplay between xenophobic rhetoric and ethnic identity. My results generally indicate that the political effects of xenophobic rhetoric are stronger among less acculturated Latinos, that is, individuals whose orientation toward a host society might be described as implying distance from, or less contact with, the mainstream public (e.g., Ramos et al. 2013). In the case of Latinos, these individuals include foreign-born, Spanish-speaking individuals—the first generation within the Latino community, as it were. But it also includes the second-generation: the American-born offspring of immigrants who bridge the least and most acculturated elements of the Latino community. This is critical, for it suggests that the political effects of xenophobic rhetoric are stronger among some of the very individuals whose political and cultural fate will shape the future politics of the larger immigrant group.

My results also extend and strengthen previous scholarship in concrete ways. For instance, political scientists have invested relatively more effort in understanding the links between context and political involvement within immigrant communities (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001). Sociologists, in contrast, have centered more intensely on understanding the relationships between context and ethnic identity among immigrant groups (Rumbaut 2008). My results help fuse these areas of scholarship by explicitly documenting some mechanisms that relate context, identity, and politics. By

doing so, my findings show how under certain political conditions, ethnic identity can become politicized, thereby inducing changes in the character of politics among immigrants and their co-ethnics. Indeed, whereas prior work has found that hostile climates enhance political participation among some immigrant group members (Pantoja, Ramírez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003), my results suggest xenophobic rhetoric politically engages members of these communities by heightening commitment to one's ethnic group.

Two other implications from my article merit specific attention. The first is that political rhetoric aimed at non-immigrants can produce “collateral damage” among immigrant group members. Though I exposed Latinos to xenophobic rhetoric, such discourse is often used to galvanize non-Latino opposition to immigration (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Nelson and Kinder 1996). My results suggest that even if this rhetoric reaches its target audience, such messages are still out there for non-audience members to consume. This ricochet effect, however unintended, can induce strong political effects among members of the very group highlighted by such rhetoric.

Second, the reaction provoked by xenophobic rhetoric shows how politics can limit the incorporation of immigrant groups into America's political and cultural mainstream. A popular ideal our nation aspires to is having immigrants and their progeny assimilate, such that the relevance of ethnicity weakens for members of these groups (Alba and Nee 2003; Waters 1990). Within many immigrant groups, this process unfolds monotonically over time and across generations. Yet this linear trend toward assimilation is sometimes interrupted and segmented (Portes and Zhou 1993). The findings here illuminate such breaks in trends toward assimilation. In particular, the results in this article underscore the point that the assimilation of immigrant groups can be facilitated through politics—and, it can be made much more difficult just as well.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

**Table A.** Partisanship Does Not Moderate the Experimental Treatments

**Table B.** High Identifying Latinos: Ingroup Favoritism and Outgroup Derogation?

**Table C.** Correlations Between Latino and National Origin Identity Items in My Survey and the 2006 Latino National Survey

**Table D.** Correlates of Latino and National Origin Identity (My Survey)

**Table E.** National Origin Identity Moderates the Effects of Xenophobic Rhetoric on Latino Political Attitudes

**Figure F.** Effect of Xenophobic Rhetoric on Latino Political Attitudes by National Origin and Latino Identity (with 90% confidence intervals)

**Table G.** Do Mexicans React More Intensely to Xenophobic Rhetoric Than Non-Mexicans?

**Table H.** Responses to an Affirmatively Worded Identity Item Among Respondents with Low Identity on a Reverse-Worded Item (Pérez 2013)

**Table I.** Longer Survey Time as a Function of Xenophobic and Non-Xenophobic Rhetoric

**Table J.** The Effects of Non-Xenophobic Rhetoric Relative to the Control Group

**Table K.** Comparison of Basic Demographics Among Latino Respondents: 2006 Latino National Survey versus 2011 Knowledge Networks Survey (Unweighted)

**Table L.** Randomization Checks for Latino Identity, Acculturation, and Other Political and Social Variables

**Table M.** Distributions of Latino Identity and Acculturation by Experimental Conditions