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Rejection-(Dis)identification and Ethnic Political Engagement Among First-Generation Latino Immigrants to the United States

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Immigrants to the United States face rejection from other Americans on the basis of their ethnic group membership. Among members of ethnic minority groups who were born in the United States, rejection is tied to higher ethnic identification and less positive attitudes toward the national majority. Relatively little research has examined this relationship among first-generation immigrants (i.e., people who were born in another country but who migrated to the United States) or has considered political engagement on behalf of one's ethnic group as an outcome. In this study we examined the relationship among ethnic-based rejection, ethnic and national identification, and ethnic political engagement among first-generation Latino immigrants in the northeastern United States. We found that first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived ethnic-based rejection were less likely to identify with Americans and less likely to report willingness to engage politically on behalf of their ethnic group in the United States. Perceived rejection was not significantly associated with ethnic identification, which was not related to ethnic political engagement. The study demonstrates that ethnic-based rejection has unique implications for identification and ethnic political engagement among first-generation Latino immigrants.

Keywords: rejection, political engagement, identity, immigrant, Latino

People who belong to ethnic minority groups often perceive that others will reject them or be unwilling to accept them on the basis of their group membership, whether it is because of unfair treatment (i.e., discrimination; Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) or lack of respect (i.e., devaluation; Huo & Molina, 2006). Ethnic-based rejection has long been argued to strengthen ingroup identification and make people feel less connected to the offending party (e.g., Allport, 1954; Branscombe et al., 1999). Only recently have researchers examined its relationship to political engagement on behalf of one's ethnic group, such as activism (Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, van Laar, & Tropp, 2012) or support for political causes (Barlow, Sibley, & Hornsey, 2012). Perceived ethnic-based rejection is indirectly associated with higher ethnic political engagement among ethnic minority group members, through its link to ethnic identification (Barlow et al., 2012; Cronin et al., 2012).

Ethnic-based rejection and political engagement have not been examined together among first-generation immigrants (i.e., people who were born in another country but who migrated to the United States), who now make up 12% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), although a growing body of research has examined each variable separately (e.g., Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Errafiy, 2011; Deaux, Reid, Martin, & Bikmen, 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009; Klandermans, van der Toorn, & van Stekelenburg, 2008; Lalonde & Cameron, 1993; Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008; Wiley, Deaux, & Hagelskamp, 2012). Because many first-generation immigrants are not citizens and have limited access to electoral politics, such as voting, other forms of political engagement—such as signing petitions, expressing their views in the media, or lobbying local government on behalf of their ethnic group—may take on a more important role in their political behavior (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008; Lopez & Marcelo, 2008). These activities—in which people give public expression to their political and social viewpoints—have been labeled *political voice* (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002).

In this study, we examine two potential relationships among ethnic-based rejection, ethnic and national identification, and ethnic political engagement (defined as willingness to give political voice to concerns related to one's ethnic group) among a community sample of first-generation Latino immigrants in the northeastern United States. We test whether ethnic-based rejection is associated with stronger identification with ethnic group and, through it, stronger ethnic political engagement, as has been observed with members of ethnic-minority groups born in the United States (Cronin et al., 2012). At the same time, we test whether ethnic-based rejection is associated with weaker identification with Americans[1] and through it, weaker ethnic political engagement, as has been argued for first-generation immigrant groups (Simon,

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[1] In this article, we use the terms *Americans* and *American* generically, to refer to any member of the U.S. national community. Although there is evidence that the terms tend to be associated with "White Americans" (Devos & Banaji, 2005), even among Latinos in the United States (Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010), we do not intend it to refer to any particular ethnic or racial group.

2011). Thus, our study provides evidence as to whether ethnic-based rejection is indirectly linked to higher or lower ethnic political engagement among first-generation Latino immigrants in the United States, as well as the roles of ethnic and national identification in forging that link.

Rejection and Ethnic Identification

When members of racial and ethnic groups perceive rejection on the basis of their group membership, they identify with that group more strongly, a phenomenon that has been called *rejection-identification* (Branscombe et al., 1999). Evidence for rejection-identification has been observed among African Americans (Branscombe et al., 1999) and Latinos in the United States (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Cronin et al., 2012), Turks in the Netherlands (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007), and both Maori and White New Zealanders (Barlow et al., 2012), although there has been some debate about the causal direction of the relationship (see Leach, Rodriquez Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010, and Cronin et al., 2012, for two different perspectives).

Most research in the rejection-identification tradition has examined psychological well-being as an outcome. Perceiving rejection can have a negative direct effect on psychological well-being. That effect is buffered, however, by a positive indirect effect via ethnic identification, which is associated with greater psychological well-being (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Branscombe et al., 1999; Spencer-Rodgers & Collins, 2006).

Recently, the rejection-identification model has been extended to examine political outcomes. Research with Latino students in the United States (Cronin et al., 2012) and Whites and Maori in New Zealand (Barlow et al., 2012) has found that rejection has a positive indirect relationship with ethnic political engagement via ethnic identification. Perceiving ethnic-based rejection is linked to stronger ethnic identification, which is associated with greater ethnic political engagement (see Deaux et al., 2006, Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003, and Wiley et al., 2012, for evidence of the latter relationship among Latinos in the United States).

First-generation Latino immigrants face rejection on the basis of their ethnic group membership, in some cases because they do not belong to the dominant ethnic group in the host country (e.g., Whites in the United States; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009), in others because the native-born population prefers that immigrants assimilate and abandon their ethnic identities (Arends Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003). However, there is some reason to doubt whether ethnic-based rejection would bear as strong a relationship with ethnic identification among first-generation immigrants as among members of ethnic-minority groups who were born in the United States (Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010). First-generation immigrants' develop their ethnic identities in the country of origin, before they ever migrate. In that context, their connection to other members of their ethnic group is based on a common history, culture, and birthplace. It is largely independent of rejection from groups in the United States. This is in contrast to the situation for members of ethnic minority groups who were born in the United States. They establish their ethnic identities in the context of a hierarchy in which their ethnicity sets them apart from other Americans and in which ethnic-based rejection is something that they hold in common from early on (Branscombe et al., 1999). In fact, research supports the argument that the relationship between ethnic-based rejection and ethnic identification may not hold among first-generation immigrants. One study, conducted with first-generation immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Finland, found no relationship between rejection and ethnic identification (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). Another study with first-generation Romanian and Moroccan immigrants to France found no reliable relationship between rejection from the national community and ethnic identification at the level of bivariate correlations and did not include the relationship in their path model (Badea et al., 2011).

Thus, the rejection-identification model gives some reason to believe that ethnic-based rejection from people in the United States will increase ethnic identification and, through it, ethnic political engagement, at least among ethnic minorities born in the United States. No research has examined this possibility among first-generation immigrants, however, and there is some reason to doubt that ethnic-based rejection will be associated with ethnic identification for them.

Rejection and National Identification

Members of racial and ethnic minority groups distance themselves from people who reject them on the basis of their group memberships, a phenomenon that has been labeled *rejection-disidentification* (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). African Americans who perceive race-based rejection from Whites express less positive attitudes toward them (Branscombe et al., 1999). Turkish-Dutch Muslims who perceive ethnic-based rejection from other Dutch people identify less with the nation (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Rejection may increase distance because it is painful (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009) and also because members of racial and ethnic minority groups would prefer to maintain their identities (Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, & Biagas, 2012) and have them respected by others (Huo & Molina, 2006).

First-generation immigrants who are rejected on the basis of their ethnic group are less likely to identify with the host country (Badea et al., 2011; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). They also have less desire to be involved in its culture and form relationships with its people (see Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006, for a review). In fact, national identification mediates the negative relationship between rejection and desired involvement in the host culture among first-generation immigrants from Morocco and Romania to France (Badea et al., 2011) and the relationship between rejection and attitudes toward the national majority among first-generation immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Finland (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009).

Drawing on the idea that people are more likely to engage—even critically—in a community when they feel connected to it (Hirschman, 1970) and respected in it (Tyler & Blader, 2003), Simon (2011) has recently argued that national identification facilitates immigrants' ethnic political engagement in additional to other forms of involvement in the host country. That is, immigrants who feel connected to their host country are not only more likely to want to acquire its culture and view people in it positively, they are also more likely to participate in it politically, even if that participation means voicing concerns and opinions in support of their ethnic group. Research among Turkish and Russian migrants in Germany supports his claim (Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon &

Ruhs, 2008). Taken together with research on ethnic-based rejection among immigrants, this suggests that national identification may indirectly link first-generation Latino immigrants' experiences of rejection in the host country to their ethnic political engagement. When first-generation Latino immigrants perceive that they are rejected because of their ethnic group, they can be expected to identify less with the national group (i.e., Americans) and, through it, be less likely to engage politically in the host country on behalf of their ethnic group. To our knowledge, no research has directly examined this claim nor has any research applied the rejection-disidentification model to first-generation Latino immigrants in the United States.

The Current Study

We examined these ideas with a sample of first-generation Latino immigrants in Trenton, New Jersey. Twenty-three percent of Trenton residents were born outside the United States, and 70% of those first-generation immigrants are Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder, 2010). Latinos began to arrive in Trenton in large numbers in the early 1990s and are heavily concentrated in a former-Italian enclave, Chambersburg (see Adler, 2006, for an extended discussion of Latino migration to the area). A majority of first-generation Latino immigrants in Trenton are from Guatemala (51%).

With respect to identification, we chose to focus on first-generation immigrants' feelings of connection to their ethnic group and to Americans, a construct that has been labeled *in-group ties* (Cameron, 2004), attachment (Phinney, 1992), and solidarity (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004, and Leach et al., 2008, for reviews).[2] We did so because this component of identification has been linked to group-serving behaviors (Ashmore et al., 2004; Leach et al., 2008), of which ethnic political engagement is one; because an increased connection to other group members captures the sense of identification described by early explanations of rejection-identification (e.g., Allport, 1954, pp. 148–150; Branscombe et al., 1999, p. 137); and because people feel a stronger connection to groups that accept them (Ashmore et al., 2004; Tyler & Blader, 2003).

The hypothesized model can be seen in Figure 1. On the basis of the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), we would expect that first-generation Latino immigrants who perceive that other Americans will not accept them because of their ethnic group will identify more strongly with it (Hypothesis 1a). In addition, first-generation Latino immigrants who identify more strongly with their ethnic group will also report a greater likelihood of engaging politically on its behalf (Hypothesis 1b). Thus, perceiving ethnic-based rejection will be indirectly linked to greater ethnic political engagement on the basis of its association with ethnic identification (Hypothesis 1c). While there is strong evidence in support of these hypotheses among members of racial and ethnic minority groups who were born in the United States, the supportive evidence among first-generation immigrants is weaker.

On the basis of the rejection-disidentification model (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009), we propose that first-generation Latino immigrants who perceive that other Americans will not accept them because of their ethnic group will identify with them less (Hypothesis 2a). However, when first-generation Latino immigrants identify more strongly with Americans they will report a greater likelihood of engaging politically on behalf of their ethnic group (Hypothesis 2b). Thus, ethnic-based rejection will be indirectly linked to lower ethnic political engagement on the basis of its association with American identification (Hypothesis 2c). We believe that the evidence in support of these hypotheses is strong.

This study has the potential to add to a growing body of research on ethnic-based rejection, ethnic and national identification, and ethnic political engagement in general (Barlow et al., 2012; Cronin et al., 2012) and among first-generation immigrants in particular (Deaux et al., 2006; Klandermans et al., 2008; Lalonde & Cameron, 1993; Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008; Wiley et al., 2012). There is some evidence that the antecedents of ethnic identification and political engagement are different among first-generation Latinos than among those who were born in the United States or who arrived at a young age. For example, a previous study among Dominicans and Mexicans in New York City found that those who were born in the United States to immigrant parents or who arrived at a young age and who perceived systematic barriers to their ability to improve their position in society on the basis of hard work (i.e., low meritocracy) were more likely to identify with their ethnic group and, through it, more likely to support political action on its behalf (Wiley et al., 2012). First-generation immigrants, in contrast, were less likely to support such action when they perceived that society was not meritocratic; furthermore, meritocracy was unrelated to ethnic identification. The present study has potential to shed additional light on those results by examining the roles of rejection and American identification among first-generation Latino immigrants. It is possible that first-generation Latino immigrants' ethnic political engagement is related to their feelings of connection to Americans, which is diminished to the extent that Americans reject them because of their ethnic group.

Method

Participants

We recruited 84 self-identified first-generation Latino immigrants from citizenship, computer, and English-as-a-second-language classes, as well as a women's discussion group, at a religiously affiliated immigrant services organization in a Latino community in Trenton, New Jersey. They filled out our questionnaire at the end of each class or group and we paid them $10 for their time. We dropped 4 participants from analyses because more than a quarter of their responses were missing from the questionnaire.

Of the remaining 80 immigrants, 77 completed the questionnaire in Spanish and 3 in English. The majority of participants were born in Guatemala ($n = 45$); others were born in the Dominican Republic ($n = 13$), Puerto Rico ($n = 8$), Mexico ($n = 6$), Colombia ($n = 2$), Peru ($n = 2$), Honduras ($n = 2$), Ecuador ($n = 1$), and Chile ($n = 1$). Forty-seven participants were women and 31

[2] For the sake of simplicity, we refer to it as identification throughout the article.

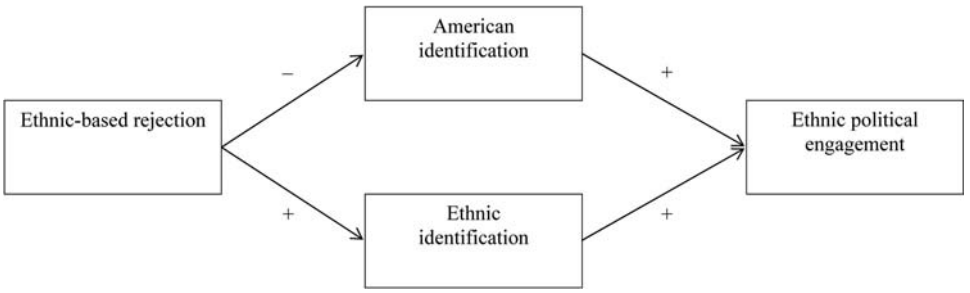


Figure 1. The hypothesized model.

were men.[3] Two chose not to report their gender. Nearly half of participants reported not completing high school ($n = 39$), 24 had a high school diploma, 6 had a 2-year college degree, 5 had a 4-year college degree, and 2 had completed some postgraduate work. Four participants did not report the highest level of education that they had completed. Participants' mean age was 35.46 years ($SD = 12.36$), although 8 participants opted not to report their age. Only 64 participants reported their age of arrival in the United States, which was 21.77 years ($SD = 12.64$), on average. From the 58 participants who reported both their current age and their age of arrival in the United States, we were able to calculate the average amount of time they had been in the United States, which was 14.76 years ($SD = 12.25$) and which ranged from less than a year to 52 years.

Measures

All items were assessed on 9-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise noted. Where it was relevant, measures and instructions were tailored to refer to immigrants' own ethnic group (Guatemalan, Dominican, etc.).

Ethnic-based rejection. Ethnic-based rejection has frequently been assessed with one-item instruments (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Barlow et al., 2012; Cronin et al., 2012) or two-item instruments (e.g., Badea et al., 2011; Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003). In some cases, items have included words such as *rejection* or *acceptance* (e.g., "People from other races would be likely to reject me on the basis of my race"; Barlow et al., 2012; see also Badea et al., 2011). In other cases, rejection has been operationalized as "discrimination" (e.g., "I experience discrimination because of my ethnicity"; Armenta & Hunt, 2009; see also Cronin et al., 2012; Schmitt et al., 2003).

Building on these items, we developed a three-item measure of ethnic-based rejection to focus specifically on rejection and lack of acceptance by Americans on the basis of immigrants' specific ethnic group membership. The items were as follows: "Other Americans won't accept me because they think I'm too [ethnic group]"; "Because I am [ethnic group], I don't think that Americans will ever fully accept me"; and "I feel rejected by Americans because I am [ethnic group]." The first two items had been used previously in a separate sample of Latino immigrants in New York City (Wiley, 2012). In that study, the items were found to be correlated ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). We adapted the third item from Badea et al.'s (2011) study of first-generation immigrants to France.

The reliability for responses to the scale was good ($\alpha = .89$), and the interitem correlations (rs = .66–.79, ps < .001) were similar to what has been reported for previous measures of ethnic-based rejection (e.g., Badea et al., 2011; Bourguignon et al., 2006; Schmitt et al., 2003). Furthermore, these and similar items have been associated with ethnic and national (dis)identification in the past (e.g., Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Badea et al., 2011; Barlow et al., 2012; Cronin et al., 2012; Wiley, 2012).

American and ethnic identification. We measured participants' American and ethnic identification with two items from Leach et al.'s (2008) three-item solidarity subscale of the hierarchical multicomponent model of ingroup identification (HMMII). The items were adapted following Leach et al.'s (2008) instructions; we used the stems and inserted our target groups (e.g., American and Guatemalan/Dominican/etc.). The items were "I feel connected to Americans/[ethnic group]" and "I feel a bond with other Americans/[ethnic group]."[4] The two American identification items were correlated ($r = .69$, $p < .001$), as were the two ethnic identification items ($r = .57$, $p < .001$).

Although the measure has not been previously used to assess American and ethnic identification among first-generation Latino immigrants specifically, a three-item version of the subscale has been found to be reliable in student (αs = .88–.90; Leach et al., 2008) and organizational ($\alpha = .79$; Smith, Amiot, Callan, Terry, & Smith, 2012) samples across several different identities (i.e., national, student, and organizational). It is also correlated with other measures of identification, such as centrality (e.g., "Being American/[ethnic group] is an important part of how I see myself"; rs = .49–.66) and satisfaction (e.g., "I am glad to be an American/[ethnic group]"; rs = .59–.78) and loads with them on a common dimension of group-level self-investment (Leach et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2012).

[3] We analyzed both means and correlations for sex differences and did not find any. Therefore, we do not report them in the article.

[4] We also included the third item from the original subscale (i.e., "I feel solidarity with other Americans/[ethnic group]") in the survey. However, an exploratory factor analysis revealed that the American version of the item cross-loaded on the ethnic identification factor. Thus, we removed it from the scale. We also removed the ethnic version of the item to keep the measures parallel. Supplementary path analyses in which the third American and ethnic identification items were included in their respective scales are available from Shaun Wiley by request. The pattern of results remained essentially unchanged from what is reported in the present article.

Ethnic political engagement. We measured immigrants' ethnic political engagement with three items drawn from the nine-item political voice subscale of the Civic Engagement Questionnaire (Keeter et al., 2002). Participants were asked, "If you find out about a problem affecting your [ethnic] community, how willing would you be to do each of the following to fix it?" Items were as follows: "Contact an elected official about the problem"; "Contact a newspaper, radio, or TV talk show to express your opinion on an issue"; "Sign an e-mail or written petition." Responses ranged from 1 = *I would never do this* to 9 = *I would do this for sure*. The reliability of the scale was good ($\alpha = .86$).

The original 19-item questionnaire, which contains items related to civic and electoral activity in addition to political voice, has been administered in nationwide telephone and Internet surveys to young people in the United States (Keeter et al., 2002; Lopez et al., 2006), including first-generation immigrants (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008). We chose these three items from the Political Voice subscale because a large survey of middle school and high school students in the northeastern United States found that they loaded together on a single factor and formed a reliable scale at two separate time points (αs = .75 and .79), whereas the other items on the subscale loaded on a variety of different factors (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007).

Measurement model. Before proceeding to the principal analyses, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 18 (Arbuckle, 2009) to test whether ethnic-based discrimination, American identification, ethnic identification, and ethnic political engagement could be distinguished at the level of measurement. We tested the fit of our proposed four-factor solution, in which items representing each of the four variables loaded on their respective factors, and compared it to a plausible three-factor solution, in which items representing American identification and ethnic identification loaded together on a single factor. Good model fit is indicated by a nonsignificant chi-square test, comparative fit index (CFI), and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) higher than .95, a root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) value below .06, and a standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) value below .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005).

Our four-factor solution fit the data reasonably well, $\chi^2(29) = 36.86$, $p = .15$; CFI = .98; GFI = .92; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .06. All items were significantly associated with their respective factors (ps $< .001$). The three-factor solution that collapsed American identification and ethnic identification into a single factor was not a good fit for the data, $\chi^2(32) = 61.54$, $p = .001$; CFI = .92; GFI = .87; RMSEA = .11; SRMR = .10. It fit significantly worse than the proposed four-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(3) = 24.68$, $p < .001$. Thus, there was evidence to support treating all four measures as distinct in subsequent analyses.

Results

As seen in Figure 1, we hypothesized two indirect relationships of ethnic-based rejection on ethnic political engagement: one positive relationship via ethnic identification and one negative relationship via American identification. We had no theoretical rationale to expect a direct relationship between ethnic-based rejection and ethnic political engagement; rather, we expected that the association would exist only via the identification variables. When testing such a distal process, following the "causal steps" approach to mediation (i.e., Baron & Kenny, 1986) is not recommended because it increases the likelihood of Type II error, especially in smaller samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Rather, we followed Preacher and Hayes' (2008) recommendations for testing a multiple mediator model in a path analysis, using AMOS 18 software (Arbuckle, 2009). A path analysis was preferable to multiple regression because (a) it allowed us to examine the overall fit of our model and compare it with a plausible alternative, and (b) it allowed us to account for the covariance between the residuals of the two identification variables (as recommended by Preacher & Hayes, 2008, p. 882). Given the similarity in how these two variables were measured, it was quite likely that their residuals would be associated. On the basis of Kline's (2005, p. 111) recommendation of at least 10 cases for each estimated parameter in a path analysis, our sample size was sufficient to test our relatively simple model.

We specified a model in which ethnic-based rejection was an exogenous predictor of American identification and ethnic identification. We also specified that American identification and ethnic identification would be related to ethnic political engagement, and allowed the residuals of the two identification variables to covary. We utilized bootstrapping methods to evaluate the certainty of the indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Bootstrapping is recommended over parametric tests (i.e., Sobel's test; Sobel, 1986), especially in smaller samples in which the sampling distribution of the indirect effect is unlikely to be normal (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). We calculated the bias corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the indirect effect across 5000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables can be found in Table 1.[5] The hypothesized model fit the data well, $\chi^2(1) = .426$, $p = .514$; CFI = 1.000; GFI = .997; RMSEA = .000; SRMR = .020. We present the standardized parameter estimates for the hypothesized path model in Figure 2. Significant paths are represented with full lines. Nonsignificant paths are represented with dashed lines.

There was little support for the rejection-identification model. In contrast to Hypothesis 1a, first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived greater ethnic-based rejection from Americans were not significantly more likely to identify with their ethnic group. In contrast to Hypothesis 1b, those who identified more with their ethnic group did not reliably report that they were more likely to engage politically on its behalf. As there were no significant associations between ethnic-based rejection and ethnic identification or ethnic identification and ethnic political engagement, the results did not meet the necessary preconditions for an indirect effect between perceived ethnic-based rejection and ethnic political engagement (Hypothesis 1c).

We found more support for the rejection-disidentification model. In support of Hypothesis 2a, first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived greater ethnic-based rejection from Americans identified with Americans significantly less. In support of

[5] We had also included a two-item measure of bicultural identification from Simon and Ruhs (2008). Because it was unrelated to both ethnic-based rejection and ethnic political engagement in the bivariate correlations and a path analysis, we do not include it in the results.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Ethnic-based rejection	5.14	2.58	—		
2. American identification	6.60	1.92	−.30**	—	
3. Ethnic identification	8.03	1.27	.07	.37***	—
4. Ethnic political engagement	6.32	2.18	−.04	.41***	.24*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2b, those who identified more with Americans reported that they were also significantly more likely to engage politically on behalf of their ethnic group. In support of Hypothesis 2c, the negative indirect association between perceived ethnic-based rejection and ethnic political engagement was reliable ($b = -.090$; bias-corrected; 95% CI −.193 to −.002).

Because we found little support for the rejection-identification hypotheses, we tested a trimmed model that removed the paths from ethnic-based rejection to ethnic identification and from ethnic identification to ethnic political engagement. The model also fit the data very well, $\chi^2(1) = .657$, $p = .418$; CFI = 1.00; GFI = .995; RMSEA = .000; SRMR = .030. All other significant relationships remained and the negative indirect association from ethnic-based rejection to ethnic political engagement via American identification was still reliable ($b = -.104$; bias-corrected; 95% CI −.208 to −.038).

Finally, we tested a plausible alternative model in which identification with Americans and with one's ethnic group were indirectly linked to ethnic political engagement via perceived ethnic-based rejection. This model was a very poor fit for the data, $\chi^2(2) = 15.81$, $p < .001$; CFI = .57; GFI = .92; RMSEA = .30; SRMR = .15. Furthermore, there was no direct relationship between ethnic-based rejection and ethnic political engagement ($b = -.04$, $SE = .10$, $p = .70$).

Discussion

In the present study, we examined the relationships among ethnic-based rejection, ethnic and national identification, and ethnic political engagement in a sample of first-generation Latino immigrants recruited from a small city in the northeastern United States. We tested whether first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived that other Americans rejected them because of their ethnic-group membership would identify more strongly with that group and whether those who identified more strongly with their ethnic group, in turn, would be more willing to engage politically on its behalf. At the same time, we tested whether first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived ethnic-based rejection from Americans would identify less strongly with them and whether those who identified less strongly with Americans, in turn, would be less willing to engage politically on behalf of their ethnic group in the United States. Thus, we tested whether perceiving that Americans rejected them would be indirectly linked with more ethnic political engagement among first-generation Latino immigrants, via stronger feelings of connection to their ethnic group, or less, via weaker feelings of connection to Americans.

We found little evidence that ethnic-based rejection from Americans was positively related to ethnic political engagement via ethnic identification. First-generation Latino immigrants who perceived ethnic-based rejection from Americans did not reliably identify more strongly with their ethnic group, nor were first-generation Latino immigrants who did identify strongly with their ethnic group reliably more willing to engage politically on its behalf. On the other hand, we found stronger evidence that ethnic-based rejection was negatively related to ethnic political engagement via American identity. First-generation Latino immigrants who perceived rejection from Americans identified with them less. Those who identified less with Americans, in turn, were less willing to engage politically in the United States on behalf of their ethnic group. In summary, ethnic-based rejection was indirectly associated with less ethnic political engagement in our community sample of first-generation Latino immigrants.

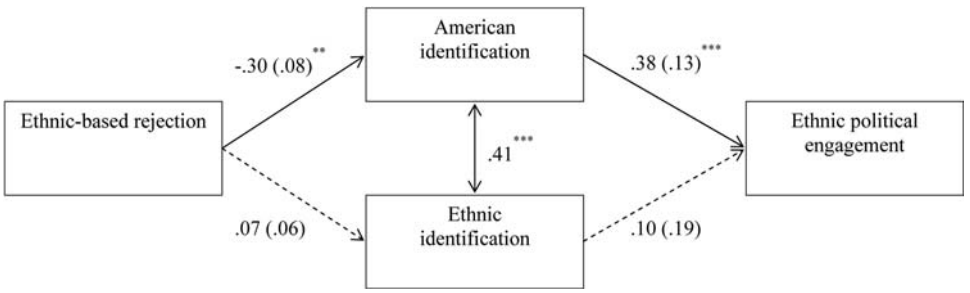


Figure 2. Relationship among ethnic-based rejection, American and ethnic identification, and ethnic political engagement. Standardized parameter estimates are shown with standard errors in parentheses. The correlation between American and ethnic identification reflects the association between their residuals. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The finding that first-generation Latino immigrants who perceive ethnic-based rejection from other Americans identify with them less is consistent with the idea that people tend to distance themselves from the source of rejection (Branscombe et al., 1999). It is also consistent with cross-national research showing that first-generation immigrants identify less with the host country when they perceive that the majority group there rejects them (Badea et al., 2011; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). Existing research has examined the implications of rejection and lower feelings of connection to the host country for well-being (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009) or acculturation (Badea et al., 2011). This study extends those findings by showing that ethnic-based rejection and lower American identity can be linked to political engagement in the host country, as well—even political engagement related to problems facing the ethnic community. Thus, the results offer some support to the claim that at least some forms of engagement in ethnic politics may reflect inclusion in the host country rather than estrangement from it (Simon, 2011) and that, like other forms of group engagement, they can be predicted by rejection (or acceptance) and identification (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

The current study may also help to explain the first-generation results of Wiley et al. (2012). They found that a separate sample of first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived that they could not improve their position in the United States through hard work (i.e., perceived low meritocracy) were less likely to support political action on behalf of their ethnic group. (In contrast, Latinos who were born in the United States to immigrant parents or who arrived at a young age were more likely to identify with their ethnic group and, through it, more willing to support political action on its behalf when they perceived low meritocracy.) It may be that, among first-generation Latino immigrants, perceiving few opportunities for advancement—like perceiving group-based rejection—is associated with lower identification with Americans and, through it, less ethnic political engagement.

The results raise questions about the precise mechanisms that link ethnic-based rejection to American identification and ethnic political engagement. It is not clear, for example, whether first-generation Latino immigrants who perceive rejection distance themselves from Americans because of a desire to maintain ethnic identities and have Americans adapt to them, as the theory of cultural inertia would predict (Zárate et al., 2012), or a desire for status and inclusion, as various other models would predict (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2003). The present political climate in which deportations have been on the rise (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010) and anti-immigrant legislation has gained traction also raises another possibility. First-generation Latino immigrants may distance themselves from other Americans when they perceive ethnic-based rejection for fear that they (if they do not have documents) or someone close to them might be reported to authorities or, worse, deported (Abrego, 2011; Pew Hispanic Center, 2007). Of course, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

Our finding that ethnic-based rejection was not strongly associated with ethnic identity among first-generation Latino immigrants is consistent with other research in Europe (e.g., Badea et al., 2011; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). It would seem inconsistent with rejection-identification, however (Branscombe et al., 1999). We have argued that this may be partly because the foundation of first-generation Latino immigrants' ethnic identities is laid before they ever arrive in the United States, based on a shared history, culture, and language in the country of origin. As a result, it may be linked to factors largely independent of ethnic-based rejection from Americans. This is in contrast to members of ethnic-minority groups who are born in the United States. They establish their ethnic identities in the context of discrimination and ethnic-based rejection. Future research should continue to explore whether immigrant status represents a boundary condition for the relationship between ethnic-based rejection and ethnic identity.

While ethnic-based rejection from other Americans was not found to be related to first-generation Latino immigrants' ethnic identification, it may influence their identification as immigrants. It has been argued that ethnic-based rejection increases identification with people who share a similar experience (Branscombe et al., 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). For first-generation immigrants, this may be other immigrants in the United States more so than other members of the ethnic group, many of whom are in the country of origin. The results of a national sample of Latinos support this idea. They show that many first-generation immigrants attribute ethnic-based discrimination to their immigrant status and not their ethnic-group membership (Fragga et al., 2006). Furthermore, experimental research with international students has shown that perceived rejection from people in the host university was unrelated to international students' identification with their country of origin; it did increase their identification as international students, however (Schmitt et al., 2003).

We also found little support for the hypothesis that ethnic identification would be positively linked to ethnic political engagement among first-generation Latino immigrants. This is somewhat surprising, given that research among Latinos who were born in the United States (Cronin et al., 2012; Wiley et al., 2012) and among Turkish and Russian immigrants in Germany (Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008) has shown that ethnic identity is related to activism. However, a previous study conducted with Mexicans and Dominicans in New York City similarly found no relationship between ethnic identification and support for political action on behalf of one's ethnic group among first-generation Latino immigrants (Wiley et al., 2012), though the two variables were linked among those who were born in the United States or who arrived at a young age.

On one hand, first-generation Latino immigrants who strongly identify with their ethnic group may not be reliably more willing to engage politically on its behalf because some see their current position as a consequence of their decision to migrate (Abrego, 2011) and they are optimistic about their (or their children's) prospects for economic mobility. Although first-generation Latino immigrants perceive ethnic-based rejection and express less satisfaction with their lives than do native-born Latinos and other racial and ethnic groups (Escobar, 2006), in national telephone surveys they also endorse the belief that children in the United States today will be "better off" than their parents when they grow up, and they are confident that Latino children will "have better jobs and make more money" than they do (Escobar, 2006). Furthermore, in a community sample from New York City, first-generation Dominican and Mexican immigrants were more likely than those born in the United States to immigrant parents or who arrived at a young age to agree that people in the United States view their group in a positive light (Wiley et al., 2012). They were also more likely to

endorse the belief that individuals can improve their position in society through hard work regardless of group membership. Taking some personal responsibility for their experience in the United States may make first-generation Latino immigrants less likely to hold others responsible for their group's shared disadvantage, a precondition for an ethnic identity to predict ethnic political engagement (Simon, 2011; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Furthermore, optimism about the future of individuals within the group may make ethnic political engagement less necessary as a means to improve its position in society.

On the other hand, first-generation Latino immigrants who strongly identify with their ethnic group may not engage politically on its behalf because they are afraid of what might happen to them or people close to them. According to the 2007 National Survey of Latinos, 67% of first-generation immigrants feared that they, a family member, or a friend could be deported (Pew Hispanic Center, 2007). In her interviews with first-generation Latino immigrants, Abrego (2011) found that this fear was associated with reluctance to voice political concerns on behalf of their ethnic group. In fact, feelings of fear were found to suppress willingness to take political action on behalf of one's group in social psychological research with undergraduate students, even when people were angry about injustice (Miller, Cronin, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009). A similar process may inhibit first-generation Latino immigrants' ethnic political engagement, even when they identify strongly with their ethnic group.

Our research has several important limitations. One is that we used a cross-sectional design. The causal sequence that we have proposed is supported by experimental (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001) and longitudinal (Cronin et al., 2012) research, however, and we found no support for an alternative model. Still, experimental research will be required to test it directly.

A second limitation is that we relied on relatively few items to measure each of our constructs. We did so in order to reduce the burden on our community sample of volunteer participants, who had limited time to participate in the study. Future research might examine additional components of American and ethnic identification, such as centrality (i.e., the importance of the group(s) to a person's self-concept) and satisfaction (i.e., a person's positive feelings about their group). Both of these components of identification are strongly related to people's feelings of connection to their group(s) (Leach et al., 2008). Future research should also examine willingness to engage in more collective forms of ethnic politics—such as protests, rallies, and demonstrations—in addition to the more individual forms of ethnic political engagement that we examined in this study. It should also examine actions related to specific issues, such as federal immigration legislation. These activities are important among first-generation immigrants, as indicated by the large-scale immigration protests in the spring of 2006 (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008). Although previous research has found that individual and collective forms of political engagement load on separate factors (e.g., Flanagan et al., 2007; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995), they both involve people's willingness to take action on behalf of a social group (Wright & Tropp, 2002). At least one study conducted in the context of women's feminist action found that they were correlated (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995).

Finally, it remains to be seen whether our results will hold for other immigrant groups in other contexts. Our results are similar to findings among first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Mexico to New York City (Wiley et al., 2012), first-generation immigrants from Morocco and Romania to France (Badea et al., 2011), and first-generation immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Finland (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). However, we would caution future researchers against assuming that they would hold with other groups in other countries without carefully considering the specific group history and context of reception (Deaux, 2006).

Conclusion

Since the mid1990s, the U.S. federal government has expanded the bases for deporting immigrants and limited their ability to appeal (Aleinkoff, Martin, & Motomura, 2001). It has also increased enforcement operations, including raids on immigrant workplaces (Capps, Rosenblum, Rodríguez, & Chishti, 2011). As a result, there has been a steep increase in the number of immigrants who have been deported, the majority of whom are Latino (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010). At the same time, anti-immigrant sentiment has been on the rise, as evidenced by the passage of laws such as SB 1070 in Arizona, which would allow local law enforcement to detain people whom they suspected to be unauthorized immigrants in the course of enforcing some other law. Similar laws have been passed in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. In this political climate, it is not surprising that some first-generation Latino immigrants would perceive rejection from Americans on the basis of their ethnic-group membership. We examined whether, in the face of such rejection, first-generation Latino immigrants in the northeastern United States would turn toward their ethnic group and engage politically on its behalf, or distance themselves from Americans and engage less in ethnic politics in the United States. We found support for the latter, and for the idea that giving voice to political concerns related to one's ethnic group in the United States can be a matter of feeling included by and connected to other Americans.

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