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The politics of Latino publics: Immigration reform, political participation and intention to vote[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Latinos are the largest U.S. minority group and are poised to play an increasingly important role in U.S. society. Public relations practitioners who work in politics should be interested in what motivates young Latinos to participate in politics. This study reports the findings of a national nonprobability survey with young Latinos ($N=434$). The analysis explores how demographic variables, acculturation, political ideology and media use predict perceptions of the importance of immigration reform, reported political participation, and vote likelihood in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Of the dependent variables, findings show that acculturation ($\beta = -0.13$) only predicts perceptions of the importance of immigration reform, suggesting acculturation's effects are issue specific. Interest in politics is the largest influential factor in predicting all of the dependent variables.

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1. Introduction

Hispanics comprise more than 55 million Americans, according to the U.S. Census, and are considered by political campaign staff as an increasingly critical public to U.S. presidential election outcomes. Hispanics, or Latinos, are a diverse group. A 2013 Pew Research report shows that 68% of Hispanics, ages 5 or older, speak only English at home (Krogstad, Lopez, & Rohal, 2015). The conventional wisdom that campaigns must primarily use Spanish to reach U.S. Hispanics is outdated, as the growth in the U.S. Hispanic population is no longer from immigration but from U.S. births. According to *Advertising Age's* Hispanic Fact Pack 2015, fully 52% of Latinos are younger than 30. In combination, these data reveal a shift in demographics and suggest that campaign managers may need to (1) focus on mobilizing younger and more acculturated Latinos, and (2) use different strategies than they have used in the past.

The purpose of this research is to examine how demographics, level of acculturation, political interest, ideology, and media use influence young Hispanics' likelihood to vote in the 2016 presidential election campaign, perceptions of the importance of immigration reform, and political participation. These data should be of interest to public relations practitioners interested in building relationships with this public and engaging them in political activities.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Theory: social identity theory

Public relations publics can be categorized in many ways, and public relations practitioners engage in segmentation of publics (Kim & Krishna, 2013). In politics, segmentation of publics would be to identify potential voters and categorize them by common interests or identity. While discussions of publics often pertain to how publics define a problem, when applied to politics, the question at hand is: For whom should I vote?

When examining Latino voters, social identity theory explains why Latinos may engage in voting or holding specific beliefs about the issue of immigration reform. Social identity theory refers to how individuals choose to categorize themselves among groups in society to gain a sense of self, become part of a group, or to enhance their identity (Capozza & Brown, 2000; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). This, of course, includes the issue of identity abandonment as well. Social identity theory aims to explain how social categorization has implications for intergroup behavior (Capozza & Brown, 2000). Social identity is thought to be mutable, meaning that it varies by context. In the context of voting, social identity could vary based on a sense of one's ethnic identity and political affiliations, as well as other factors (Abrams, 1996). Therefore, the relationship for how Latinos identify as less or more acculturated in U.S. society may affect how they feel about politics. Thus, for public relations professionals, it is important to understand how level of acculturation may influence political attitudes and behaviors. What follows is an overview of select factors that may influence how Latinos vote.

2.2. Latinos and politics

2.2.1. Political interest and political participation

According to a Pew Research Center analysis of data from the 2013 American Community Survey, about three-quarters of Latinos are U.S. citizens, with the highest percentage of U.S. citizens being Puerto Rican, Spanish, Cuban and Mexican (López & Patten, 2015). While the news media and political strategists have talked about the influence of the "Latino Vote," the power of the Latino vote has not been realized as strongly as observers might expect. Some researchers have attributed this lack of influence to the geographic concentration of Latino communities in states that tend to vote Democratic, such as California and New York. They suggest this geographic concentration blunts their impact except in battleground states like Florida (Cave, 2016). Furthermore, Latinos that reside in places like the Midwest, or more rural areas where there is comparatively less concentration, Latinos may have less potential to affect election outcomes. In these areas, Latinos may lack access to news media that would provide information encouraging Latinos to get politically involved (Fowler, Hale, & Olsen, 2009). Moreover, researchers have found that news media in communities with a larger proportion of illegal immigrants were less likely to address Latino political interests. Thus, political participation by Latinos may be tempered by their lack of access to political information, and perhaps, by living in communities where they feel less welcome to participate in community life.

Others have reasoned that a lower participation among Latinos is due to their younger age. Similarly, as across other racial and ethnic groups, young people are less likely to vote compared to other age groups. For instance, data from the 2012 Current Population Survey shows that Latinos 18 to 29 years old were among the least likely to vote, with a reported 36.9% turnout rate (López & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013). That is lower than the overall 48% of eligible Latinos who voted in 2012 and 66% of African Americans. Latinos who are college graduates and are of Cuban origin are most likely to vote (López & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013).

Political participation has often been associated with additional factors, such as level of acculturation, which is closely tied to language use. Less acculturated Latinos identify as using Spanish more than English, and prefer Spanish-language media (Salzman, 2014). Language is a more easily gathered substitute measure for a rather complex concept that encompasses other dimensions, such as self and social identity, attitudes towards the host culture, the stress related to acculturation, a person's personality and how they think through information (Berry, 1980). Acculturation is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional concept that takes into account not only attitudes towards the culture a person grew up in, but also how the person views the new culture in their situational context (Cabassa, 2003).

2.2.2. Latinos and ideology

Studies suggest that Latinos are more likely to back Democratic candidates, though research shows that the Latino vote can also depend on the individual candidate (Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, & Weisberg, 2008). For instance, in 2012, data reported that 71% of Latinos backed candidate Barack Obama for president versus Mitt Romney (López & Taylor, 2012), yet the gap is not always so large. In 2004, 40% of Latinos voted for George W. Bush while 58% supported John Kerry. Thus, Latinos may vote more for the candidate than for the party. Survey research by Connaughton (2004) revealed that young Texan Latinos found that the pull of ethnic identification and country of origin were stronger than that of party affiliation. However, when young Latinos were asked to identify their party, they were more likely to identify with the Democratic Party or as an Independent, and this party identification was stronger for older than younger Latinos.

Marketing research demonstrates that recently immigrated Latinos differ in values and ideologies when compared to Latinos born and raised in the U.S. or Latinos who are several generations away from immigration. Latinos who consume Spanish-language media and identify more highly with the Hispanic identity have tended to distrust business and trust government more than Latinos who did not (Deshpande, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986). Latinos who consume Spanish-language

media and identify as Latinos are also more likely to hold liberal views on immigration, believe discrimination is a big problem, and feel immigrants help the U.S. economy, but are less likely to support social issues like abortion (Kerevel, 2011). Further, research has shown a connection between Latinos' level of religiosity and opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion. Latinos that rely on English-language media are less supportive of helping undocumented immigrants (Kerevel, 2011). In fact, when it comes to immigration, López and Taylor (2012) reported that 2012 exit polls showed that when asked about whether unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. should be offered the opportunity to apply for citizenship or be deported, 18% of Latinos polled said undocumented immigrants should be deported compared to 28% of all Americans polled.

In addition, research on advertising created for Latino consumers, which is meant to target consumer preferences, shows that Spanish-language television portrays Latinos in more traditional gender roles, where the wife is a homemaker and the father is a business professional (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000). Because gender roles in Latin American countries have been found to be more conservative, we might expect gender differences on issues. However, recent analysis of the attitudes of Latino men and women and U.S. men and women (Bejarano, Manzano, & Montoya, 2011) shows that attitudes toward gendered roles have changed substantially over time. Whereas in 1995, Latinos, both men and women, felt that if a job were between a man and a woman, the man should get it, which was no longer the case in 2005, with Latinas and American women being most liberal. Interestingly, by 2005, women and men of both groups felt that women should be political leaders (Bejarano et al., 2011). Taken together, these data suggest that Latinos may have differing views on immigration and economic issues as compared to other social issues, and that perceived gendered differences between Latinos and Americans may be closing.

These studies raise questions about how Latinos' stances on economic issues and social issues may influence their political views and intentions to vote. It seems that Latinos have become more liberal on social issues over time, as have many Americans, and this is more true for female than male Latinos. It also seems that Latinos as a whole are more liberal in their economic views than they are conservative.

2.2.3. *Latinos and information sources*

Researchers have associated the political participation of Latinos to the information sources Latinos use. Overall, as may be expected, Latinos who prefer Spanish-language sources get more Latino-oriented information than those who read only English-language news. For instance, Fowler, Hale and Olsen (2009) studied the content of local and national Spanish-language and English-language TV news. They found that nearly one-third of stories in Spanish-language broadcast news contained stories related to Latino political interests, while only 2 percent of stories in English-language TV did.

Spanish-language news media provide Latinos more news catering to their interests (Rodríguez, 1999). As a result, research shows that consumers of Spanish-language media believe that retaining their culture is important and that they identify more strongly with Latino culture (Ríos & Gaines, 1998). Spanish-language news consumers also have a more positive view of immigrants than do Latinos who get their news from English-language sources (Kerevel, 2011). Use of Spanish-language media and age is also associated, as research finds that young Latinos are more easily reached through bilingual materials than are Spanish-only Latinos (Valdés, 2000).

While Spanish-language media do contain more Latino-oriented news items than do English-language media, the nature of that news may not provide Latinos a way to participate in the U.S. political system or provide strong community-level information (Vargas & dePyssler, 1999). For instance, researchers have found that in some Spanish-language media, the political information has to do with international politics rather than local politics (Fernandes & Shumow, 2016; Fowler, Hale, & Olsen, 2009), and that there are differences between local and national Spanish-language TV news programs (Hale, Olsen, & Fowler, 2008). An analysis of four Spanish-language tabloid newspapers in Miami (Fernandes & Shumow, 2016) revealed that overall 83% of news stories focused on international stories, and that when it came to election coverage, 64% of newspaper stories were about "home country" elections. While the Spanish-language news media certainly provided more comprehensive international news of Latin America than did English-language media, it appears that they might not do as well in presenting information about U.S. national or local political issues relevant to Latinos. Research has found that Spanish-language national and local TV news provide little coverage related to voting issues and even less attention to local elections (Hale, Olsen, & Fowler, 2008).

Johnson (2000) has argued that the goal of Spanish-language media in the U.S., particularly consumer media, is to use identity to sell goods to Latino audiences through advertising rather than to elicit political participation from Latino groups. Thus, she argues that Latino media may do more to help Latinos instill pride in and preserve their cultural identities through shared consumerism, rather than serve as a means to achieve political participation or social power. Other researchers have similarly suggested that some Latino media serve middle class audiences (Rodríguez, 1999) and in developing a panethnic identity of what it means to be "Hispanic" or "Latino" in the U.S. (Martínez, 2004). Thus, an important goal of Spanish-language or ethnic media is to create news audiences with a need for information that supports their interests and ethnic identities rather than to encourage collective civic action.

As is true with English-language media, not all Spanish-language media are the same. Researchers have pointed out that the Spanish-language news outlets differ in their quality, focus and approach to presenting news. Researchers examining network political coverage in Spanish-language TV found that the type of coverage depended partly on the population density of Latinos from a specific ethnic group, so that media in Los Angeles reported stories on Mexican Americans while New York offered viewers stories about Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Fowler, Hale, & Olsen, 2009). This country-of-origin

focus has also been identified in Spanish-language newspapers (Fernandes & Shumow, 2016). This means that the region of the country from where Latinos get their news coverage may have an effect on their views.

In summary, Spanish-language news media do provide Latinos more news content relevant to Latino issues. This news media may also help Latinos retain their culture and ties to their home country. Whether Spanish-language media provide Latinos with the information necessary to become important political actors in U.S. culture is uncertain, and may differ widely by news outlet and region of the country.

Less information is available specifically about how Latino issues are covered in English-language news media, or in how Latinos use English-language news media. One study examining the content of five daily newspapers in cities with large Latino populations found that references to Latinos and politics rarely appeared in the newspapers' headlines and such stories were rarely placed on the front page (Subervi-Vélez and Lozano, 2008).

Of course just like all Spanish-language media are not the same, there has been burgeoning research in the realm of political news that has shown that Americans self-select their choices for political news based on their political ideology and party affiliation. In a nationally representative sample of Americans, Iyengar and Hahn (2009) exposed participants to news stories with news brand labels (CNN, NPR or FOX News) or no labels, and even though the stories were exactly the same, self-identified conservatives were more likely to choose stories from FOX News, while liberals and Democrats were more likely to choose stories from CNN or NPR. The authors found conservatives' preferences for Fox News stories were stronger for political news compared with other news topics (i.e., travel). Partisanship and selective exposure to Fox News has also been found to be associated with a strong feeling that there is a liberal media bias (Hoffner & Rehkoff, 2011), and the perception that mainstream media are unfair to Republican candidates.

Based on a review of the literature on social identity and Latinos in politics, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: How will demographic variables, acculturation, ideology, political interest and media use predict *likelihood to vote* among young Latinos?

RQ2: How will demographic variables, acculturation, ideology, political interest and media use predict *importance of immigration reform* among young Latinos?

RQ3: How will demographic variables, acculturation, ideology, political interest and media use predict Latinos' *political participation*?

The next section describes the method, analysis and findings.

3. Methodology

The data for this study is from a national online survey of U.S. Latinos ($N = 434$) ages 18 to 85 ($M_{age} = 31$, 73% female). An online consumer panel company fielded the survey from June 23 to June 30, 2015. The completion rate was 49.6%. Participants represent 35 of the 50 states and nearly 85% were born in the U.S. Of participants, 51% identified as Mexican American, 15% as Puerto Rican, 6% as multiethnic Hispanic, 6% as Cuban American, 3.5% Dominican, 3% Colombian, and the rest were divided among other Central, South American and Spanish ethnicities.

3.1. Independent variables

3.1.1. Media use measures

For this study, I adapted [media use measures of Pea, Nass, Meheula et al. \(2012\)](#). I asked participants "How much time on a typical weekday (work day) do you spend with the following media?" Media measured were (a) watching local TV news (13.8% never watched local TV news), (b) reading the newspaper (45.4% never read a newspaper), (c) watching Fox TV cable news (36.9% never watched Fox News), (d) watching CNN TV cable news (40% never watched CNN), (e) watching Spanish-language TV (35.3% never watched Spanish TV), and (f) reading a Spanish-language newspaper (58.8% never read a Spanish-language newspaper). Responses were recorded on a scale of 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than 1 h*), 3 (*between 1–2 h*), 4 (*between 2 and 3 h*), 5 (*between 3 and 4 h*) and 6 (*more than 4 h*).

3.1.2. Political ideology

For this analysis, I employed [Feldman and Johnston's \(2014\)](#) measure of political ideology, which identifies social and economic dimensions of ideology. Items representing the ideology of economic issues included questions about government spending, who should pay for medical insurance, and federal assistance to the poor. Questions related to social issues pertained to abortion law, gay adoption and women's roles in the workplace. For the economic dimension, items scored on 5-point scales, 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), where high scores related to more conservative ideology and low scores more liberal ideology. For social ideology, items were on the same 5-point scales, except for the question about abortion, which was on a 4-point scale and asked for stances from restricting abortion to making it available to all women. For this scale, low scores reflected a more conservative ideology, whereas high scores reflected a more liberal ideology. An exploratory factor analysis of the six items showed the items, indeed, loaded on two distinct factors. Items were then used to create summative scales.

3.1.3. Acculturation

A 10-item scale was used to measure acculturation and contained items from Cuéllar, Arnold, and Maldonado's (1995) Acculturation Scale for Mexican-American-II. Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*almost always*). Example items included: "I think in English," and "I enjoy Spanish TV." The reliability for the scale was $\alpha = 0.83$.

3.1.4. Political interest

A single item was used to measure political interest. I asked participants, "How interested are you in politics?" Participants responded selecting one of the following on a 5-point scale: (1) *not at all interested*, (2) *a little interested*, (3) *somewhat interested*, (4) *definitely interested*, and (5) *extremely interested*.

In addition to conceptual variables, respondents were asked demographic questions. They were asked to identify their age, gender, level of education, and the state where they currently reside. Based on U.S. Census regions, participants were categorized as living in the *South*, *Northeast*, *Midwest* or *West*. To enter the regions in the multiple regression equation, the South served as comparison category when the variable was dummy coded.

3.2. Dependent variables

The main dependent variables in this study were vote likelihood, importance of immigration, and political participation.

3.2.1. Vote likelihood

A single item measured this variable. It asked, "How likely is it that you will vote in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election?" Respondents answered on a 7-point scale, from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). The mean = 5.39 ($SD = 1.92$).

3.2.2. Importance of immigration

A single item measured this variable. It asked, "How important of an issue do you think immigration reform is?" Respondents answered on an 8-point scale, from 0 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*). The mean = 4.33 ($SD = 1.35$).

3.2.3. Political participation

This item asked participants if they had engaged in 10 political activities within the last 12 months. Activities included "subscribing to a candidate's social media feed or blog" to "written or sent an email to a politician." Respondents were given one point for each activity they engaged in. The mean was 1.10 ($SD = 1.22$). Because this variable was positively skewed, a log10 transformation was used so the variable would meet the requirement of normality in multiple regression.

4. Findings

Analysis of the main dependent variables shows that 73.5% of participants said that they were registered to vote, and 52% said that they were definitely or extremely interested in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. However, only 26.8% said they were interested in politics. When it comes to political participation, nearly one in five young Latinos said they have interacted with a campaign via social media, but only six percent reported they had donated to a campaign. One in 10 reported that they had sent an email to a politician. Correlational analysis shows that those who are more acculturated have less interest in politics than those who are less acculturated ($r = -0.17, p = 0.001, n = 433$). Additional analysis of demographics shows that men were more interested in politics ($r = -0.13, p = 0.01, n = 428$), as were those with a higher level of education ($r = 0.21, p < 0.001, n = 430$).

Further analysis using hierarchical multiple regression was used to answer our research questions and tease out the relative influence of these variables with others, such as ideology, identified by researchers as influencing voting intentions to determine the relative influence of acculturation and use of Spanish-language and English-language media.

First, for RQ1, an analysis was run of the independent variables predicting Latinos' likelihood to vote in the 2016 presidential election. The results are presented in Table 1. The final analysis (Step 4) accounts for 29% of the variance in vote likelihood. After entering demographics and sociocultural variables, none of the media variables predicted vote likelihood. The strongest demographic predictor of young Latinos voting is possessing a higher level of education ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.01$). As for regional differences, Latinos in the Northeast were more likely to intend to vote than Latinos in the South. The two largest predictors of vote likelihood in terms of variance explained were political interest ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$) and having higher social liberalism ($\beta = 0.17, p < 0.001$). The variables explained 29% of the variance in voting intention.

The second analysis, to answer RQ2, looks at the effect of the same variables on the second dependent variable: perceptions of the importance of immigration reform (see Table 2). None of the demographic factors were important predictors, although education approached significance. Among the sociocultural variables, acculturation ($\beta = -0.13, p < 0.05$) was predictive of believing immigration reform is important. Specifically, less acculturated Latinos perceived immigration reform as an important issue. Along with acculturation, those who were less economically conservative ($\beta = -0.11, p < 0.05$), yet more socially liberal ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.05$), believed immigration reform was important. Being interested in politics was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$) of perceiving immigration reform as an important issue. The variables explained 18% of the variance in perceiving immigration reform as an important issue.

Table 1
 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Latinos' Likelihood to Vote.

| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | | Step 4 | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------|---------------------|-------------|------|---------------------|-------------|------|---------------------|-------------|------|---------------------|
| | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | B | B | SE B | β |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.09 [†] | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.01 | 0.01 | .08 [†] | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.07 |
| Gender | −0.19 | 0.22 | −0.04 | −0.21 | 0.22 | −0.05 | −0.09 | 0.20 | −0.02 | −0.14 | 0.21 | −0.03 |
| Education | 0.29 | 0.08 | 0.20 ^{***} | 0.29 | 0.08 | 0.20 ^{***} | 0.17 | 0.07 | 0.12 [†] | 0.20 | 0.07 | 0.14 ^{**} |
| West vs. South | | | | 0.41 | 0.22 | 0.10 [†] | 0.35 | 0.20 | 0.09 [†] | 0.28 | 0.20 | 0.07 |
| Midwest vs. South | | | | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.05 | 0.15 | 0.34 | 0.02 | 0.17 | 0.35 | 0.02 |
| Northeast vs. South | | | | 0.72 | 0.28 | 0.14 [†] | 0.66 | 0.25 | 0.12 ^{**} | 0.64 | 0.26 | 0.12 [†] |
| Acculturation | | | | | | | 0.02 | 0.12 | 0.01 | −0.03 | 0.15 | −0.01 |
| Economic Liberalism vs. Conservatism | | | | | | | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.01 |
| Social Conservatism vs. Liberalism | | | | | | | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.15 ^{**} | 0.15 | 0.04 | 0.17 ^{***} |
| Political Interest | | | | | | | 0.72 | 0.08 | 0.41 ^{***} | 0.69 | 0.09 | 0.39 ^{***} |
| Newspapers | | | | | | | | | | −0.07 | 0.11 | −0.05 |
| Local TV news | | | | | | | | | | 0.15 | 0.10 | 0.09 |
| Spanish-language TV news | | | | | | | | | | −0.02 | 0.11 | −0.01 |
| Spanish-language newspapers | | | | | | | | | | −0.15 | 0.15 | −0.09 |
| Fox Cable News | | | | | | | | | | 0.20 | 0.12 | −0.14 |
| CNN Cable News | | | | | | | | | | −0.04 | 0.14 | −0.03 |
| R ² (Adj R ²) | 0.06 (0.05) | | | 0.08 (0.07) | | | 0.27 (0.25) | | | 0.29 (0.25) | | |

n = 387.
[†] p < 0.10.
^{*} p < 0.05.
^{**} p < 0.01.
^{***} p < 0.001.

Table 2
 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Latinos' Perceptions of the Importance of Immigration Reform.

| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | | Step 4 | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------|--------------------|------------|------|--------------------|-------------|------|---------------------|------------|------|---------------------|
| | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | B | B | SE B | β |
| Age | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.09 [†] | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.08 | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.09 [†] | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.08 |
| Gender | 0.00 | 0.15 | 0.00 | −0.01 | 0.15 | −0.00 | −0.03 | 0.15 | −0.01 | −0.00 | 0.15 | 0.00 |
| Education | 0.11 | 0.05 | 0.12 [†] | 0.13 | 0.05 | −0.13 [†] | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.08 | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.09 [†] |
| West vs. South | | | | 0.14 | 0.15 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.14 | 0.02 | 0.10 | 0.14 | 0.04 |
| Midwest vs. South | | | | −0.21 | 0.26 | −0.04 | −0.36 | 0.24 | −0.08 | −0.31 | 0.25 | −0.06 |
| Northeast vs. South | | | | −0.25 | 0.19 | −0.07 | −0.31 | 0.18 | −0.09 [†] | −0.25 | 0.18 | −0.07 |
| Acculturation | | | | | | | −0.26 | 0.09 | −0.14 ^{**} | −0.24 | 0.11 | −0.13 [†] |
| Economic Liberalism vs. Conservatism | | | | | | | −0.06 | 0.02 | −0.14 ^{**} | −0.05 | 0.02 | −0.11 ^{**} |
| Social Conservatism vs. Liberalism | | | | | | | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.13 [†] | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.11 ^{**} |
| Political Interest | | | | | | | 0.30 | 0.06 | 0.25 ^{***} | 0.35 | 0.06 | 0.30 ^{***} |
| Newspapers | | | | | | | | | | −0.13 | 0.08 | −0.13 |
| Local TV news | | | | | | | | | | −0.00 | 0.07 | −0.00 |
| Spanish-language TV news | | | | | | | | | | 0.07 | 0.08 | 0.08 |
| Spanish-language newspapers | | | | | | | | | | 0.03 | 0.10 | 0.03 |
| Fox Cable News | | | | | | | | | | −0.07 | 0.09 | −0.07 |
| CNN Cable News | | | | | | | | | | −0.04 | 0.10 | −0.04 |
| R ² (Adj R ²) | 0.02 (0.01) | | | 0.03(0.01) | | | 0.15 (0.13) | | | 0.18(0.14) | | |

n = 397.
[†] p < 0.10.
^{*} p < 0.05.
^{**} p < 0.01.
^{***} p < 0.001.

The final analysis examines RQ3 and the effect of the same 16 variables on predicting political participation (see Table 3). The data show that being male ($\beta = -0.16, p < 0.001$) was associated with participating in a greater number of political activities. Also, political interest ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001$) and CNN cable news viewing approached significance ($\beta = 0.19, p = 0.054$). The variables explained 20% of the variance in political participation.

5. Discussion

The findings here demonstrate that individual and sociocultural variables influence Latinos' voting likelihood, perceptions of the importance of immigration reform and political participation. Through the lens of social identity theory, identity related to the acculturation status of participants, appears to only come into play when predicting Latinos' perceptions of the importance of immigration reform. That is, identifying as less acculturated predicted that Latinos would place a bigger importance on immigration reform. Furthermore, this was also influenced by ideology. Those who were more socially and economically liberal thought immigration reform was important. A Latino's social identity as related to status in the accultur-

Table 3
 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Latinos' Political Participation.

| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | | Step 3 | | | Step 4 | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------|----------|-------------|------|----------|-------------|------|---------|-------------|------|----------|
| | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | B | B | SE B | β |
| Age | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 | -0.02 | 0.00 | 0.00 | -0.02 |
| Gender | -0.08 | 0.02 | -0.18*** | -0.08 | 0.02 | -0.18*** | -0.07 | 0.02 | -0.14** | -0.07 | 0.02 | -0.16*** |
| Education | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.13† | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.14** | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.08 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.06 |
| West vs. South | | | | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.04 |
| Midwest vs. South | | | | -0.04 | 0.04 | -0.05 | -0.05 | 0.04 | -0.07 | -0.06 | 0.04 | -0.08 |
| Northeast vs. South | | | | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.02 |
| Acculturation | | | | | | | -0.01 | 0.01 | -0.04 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.03 |
| Economic Liberalism vs. Conservatism | | | | | | | -0.00 | 0.00 | -0.01 | -0.00 | 0.00 | -0.04 |
| Social Conservatism vs. Liberalism | | | | | | | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.07 |
| Political Interest | | | | | | | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.32*** | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0.25*** |
| Newspapers | | | | | | | | | | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.12 |
| Local TV news | | | | | | | | | | -0.01 | 0.01 | -0.03 |
| Spanish-language TV news | | | | | | | | | | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.10 |
| Spanish-language newspapers | | | | | | | | | | -0.01 | 0.02 | -0.08 |
| Fox Cable News | | | | | | | | | | -0.01 | 0.01 | -0.04 |
| CNN Cable News | | | | | | | | | | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.19† |
| R ² (Adj R ²) | 0.05 (0.04) | | | 0.05 (0.04) | | | 0.16 (0.14) | | | 0.20 (0.17) | | |

† $p < 0.10$.
 * $p < 0.05$.
 ** $p < 0.01$.
 *** $p < 0.001$. $n = 397$.

Table 4
 Summary of Pearson's Correlations for Political Interest and Time Spent with News Media.

| Measure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| 1. Political Interest | - | | | | | | |
| 2. Newspapers | 0.248** | - | | | | | |
| 3. Local TV news | 0.253** | 0.622** | - | | | | |
| 4. Spanish-language TV news | 0.235** | 0.499** | 0.520** | - | | | |
| 5. Spanish-language newspapers | 0.281** | 0.707** | 0.586** | 0.733** | - | | |
| 6. Fox cable news | 0.237** | 0.547** | 0.542** | 0.521** | 0.624** | - | |
| 7. CNN cable news | 0.320** | 0.609** | 0.626** | 0.570** | 0.703** | 0.782** | - |

Note. $N = 432-4$.
 * $p < 0.05$, two-tailed.
 ** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

ation process was not a factor in predicting individual intention to vote or to participate in politics. This finding suggests that public relations practitioners who use social identity to persuade Latino voters need to understand that acculturation may only be a differentiator on specific issues. Other issues, such as education, law enforcement, etc., may similarly differentially affect Latinos due to acculturation status and should be explored.

Social identity through acculturation was not found to be predictive of likelihood to vote or engagement in political participation. Rather, level of education, region of the country, social liberalism and political interest were the factors associated with likelihood to vote. Similarly, greater political participation was also associated with greater political interest, as was being male. This suggests that Latinos are similar to Americans as a whole in that possessing an interest in politics is most likely to drive participation of all kinds, including the likelihood to vote. Thus, public relations practitioners really need to work on providing Latinos a reason to be interested in the political process.

Interestingly, there were no effects for news information sources on the dependent variables. This is likely because political interest was entered in the regression model before media use was entered. Previous research of the effects of media use on political participation has shown that it has an indirect influence through political knowledge (Subervi-Vélez & Menayang, 2008), which was not measured in the present study. However, additional analyses of the data (see Table 4) show that political interest is significantly associated with each of the media use variables, signaling the fact that greater political interest is associated with greater media consumption. So, for political public relations professionals, this suggests that while news consumption is not the driver that will necessarily get Latinos to participate or vote in an election, it is a place where Latinos who are politically interested will get informed about politics. Thus, media are a way to reach those Latinos who are already motivated to participate in politics—it's outreach to the political "wonks." The Subervi-Vélez and Menayang (2008) study also suggests that the media can increase Latinos' knowledge that would then spur political participation.

Ethnic media did not have effects above and beyond those associated with political interest. In other words, viewing Latino news media did not explain additional variance. The reason for this could be that of our sample, 35% ($n = 153$) said they never watched Spanish-language TV news, and nearly 60% ($n = 255$) said they never read a Spanish-language newspaper. It could also be that our survey was very early in the primary season, just after the candidates started announcing their candidacies,

and it may be that there was less coverage about the election campaigns in the news. It could be that if the study were closer to the 2016 elections that we would see a greater influence of ethnic media on the perceptions of Latinos.

There are limitations to all studies, and this study is no exception. The data for this study relies on self-report, cross-sectional data from a national nonrandom survey. That means findings cannot be generalized to the U.S. Latino population, but are restricted to looking at the relationships among the variables explored here.

This study is one of the few research studies in public relations that examines the political opinions of Latino publics. In examining self-identity, data indicate that it matters more for the specific issue of immigration than for vote likelihood or political participation. It would be interesting to examine other forms of identity to determine how they may differentiate Latinos on other election issues or platforms. While political interest was the driving force behind political attitudes and intentions, it is worth exploring what factors contribute to interest in politics. Future research should explore the additional avenues best used to reach younger Latino voters and determine which issues would motivate them to go to the voting booth. Surveys of Latinos post-election could also get a more accurate assessment by examining actual votes and could coincide with greater salience of political issues just after the election.

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