

## Ignored Racism

Although Latinos are now the largest nonmajority group in the United States, existing research on White attitudes toward Latinos has focused almost exclusively on attitudes toward immigration. This book changes that. It argues that such accounts fundamentally underestimate the political power of Whites' animus toward Latinos and thus miss how conflict extends well beyond immigration to issues such as voting rights, criminal punishment, policing, and which candidates to support. Providing historical and cultural context and drawing on rich survey and experimental evidence, the authors show that Latino racism-ethnicism is a coherent belief system about Latinos that is conceptually and empirically distinct from other forms of out-group hostility and from partisanship and ideology. Moreover, animus toward Latinos has become a powerful force in contemporary American politics, shaping White public opinion in elections and across a number of important issue areas – and resulting in policies that harm Latinos disproportionately.

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*White Animus toward Latinos*

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*Mark would like to dedicate this book to his family: Kim,  
Scarlet B., and Albie. They have made sacrifices to support all  
of his endeavors, but especially this one.  
Dave dedicates this book to his mother.*

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## Preface

This research is more timely than we first expected. When we started this project, in 2014, we expected that Whites' animus toward Latinos played an important role in shaping a lot of their opinions about politics and policy. But we expected that most of the findings would suggest that it would be unexplored and important undercurrents of politics. Obviously, the tides have shifted. As we are writing this in July of 2019, a dominant story is President Donald Trump's tweets and comments about "The Squad" – four women of color in the House of Representatives. His tweets suggesting they should go back to their countries and a chant of "send her back" at one of his rallies has once again made race and ethnicity a central piece of the Trump presidency. Alongside this more generalized racism, we are witnessing policies specifically targeting Latino communities. This includes the separation of families at the border, children kept in cages, an increasing number of migrant deaths, a rise in anti-immigrant vigilante groups, and more recently the unlawful incarceration of US citizens of Latina/o heritage by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Whites' attitudes about Latinos may have been an undercurrent in 2014, but now they are clearly a tidal force.

We did not anticipate this change. In 2014, the main puzzle we started trying to address was whether certain expressions of anti-Latino or anti-immigrant sentiment were rooted in racial and ethnic animus, and whether this specific type of animus shaped both immigration policy preferences and vote choice. In putting together a module for the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), one of us (Ramirez) decided to try a new measure of Whites' animus toward Latinos to test how it would predict immigration attitudes and support for candidates

running on anti-immigration platforms. In particular, the goal was to move beyond existing measures and approaches rooted in theories of how Whites perceive Blacks to understanding how Whites perceive Latinos. Much of the extant research, we believed, emphasized social distance and contact, but did not have as much of a focus on the actual content of what Whites thought and felt about Latinos.

Our starting point was to consider the unique legacy of history and culture of Latinos in America and how Whites have racialized Latinos into a distinctive non-White group. What we found was that animus toward Latinos in the past largely mirrors the expression of animus toward Latinos today in a way that mixes animosity toward the group with dislike toward certain ascribed behaviors. In some ways, it is much like how the shift from old-fashioned or biological racism to racial resentment changed the ways in which racism directed toward African Americans is expressed among Whites. What separates it from racial resentment targeted at African Americans is how it is grounded in the historical perceptions of Latinos rather than a shift in norms of equality. Whites' negative attitudes about Latinos are grounded in concerns about language, culture, immigration, criminality, and country of origin. And they always have been. We thought that a new measure of Whites' animus toward Latinos that captured this could help explain some important phenomena in American politics.

Given this intuition, we started trying to develop the measure we use in the rest of this book. We decided to refer to the concept as Latina/o racism-ethnicism (abbreviated as LRE). Conceptually, LRE recognizes that Whites are likely to conflate race and ethnicity with race-neutral behaviors when thinking about Latinos. As such, LRE contains items that refer to the legacy of immigration, linguistic differences, and specific beliefs Whites may hold about Latinos. Our first approach was to use a convenience sample to try to examine the measurement properties of our LRE scale and compare it to several of the competing measures in the literature. The results were clear: LRE is empirically distinct from ethnocentrism, racial resentment, stereotypes of Latinos, cultural preferences, partisanship, and ideology. We were on to something.

The 2014 CCES gave us the opportunity to see how this new measure of LRE predicted two obvious dependent variables: immigration attitudes and vote choice. The specific results are presented in Chapters 4 and 7, respectively. Not to spoil the information provided in those chapters, but LRE helps to explain both Whites' preferences on immigration policy



and their vote choice in the 2014 congressional elections. At the time, we expected this to be a single article that introduced the concept of LRE and showed its effects. Because we were both busy with other projects, we did not get around to writing the article. We did decide to replicate some of the measurement results and address some initial concerns with our approach in an additional survey in 2015, but again got sidetracked from writing an article.

Donald Trump's campaign in 2016 jump-started our efforts. Trump's rhetoric and policies made it evident that Whites' attitudes about Latinos was going to be a central concern of the 2016 campaign. We again put a (partial) LRE scale on the 2016 CCES. More importantly, the campaign made it clear that how Whites' animus toward Latinos shaped politics was a bigger question than we initially intended to explore. President Trump tied his rhetoric about Latinos to more than just immigration. He reinforced the existing tropes connecting Latinos with crime and with election fraud. As we were finishing the final details of this manuscript, for instance, he told a group of young conservatives,

And when they're saying all of this stuff, and then those illegals get out and vote, because they vote anyway. Don't kid yourself. Those numbers in California and numerous other states, they're rigged. They've got people voting that shouldn't be voting. They vote many times, not just twice, not just three times. It's like a circle. They come back, they put a new hat on. They come back, they put a new shirt on. And in many cases, they don't even do that. You know what's going on. It's a rigged deal.<sup>1</sup>

These types of cues lead us to conclude that we needed a fuller and richer exploration of how LRE shapes Whites' attitudes about politics.

We set out to do this through a series of experiments. In particular, we focused on how LRE shapes Whites' attitudes about immigration, crime, restrictions on voting, and elections. Overall, the results are clear. LRE plays a foundational role in how Whites think about much of American politics. The differences between Whites who are high in LRE and those who are low in LRE shape how they think about politics and policy. They influence how they respond to information about the world. There is also some evidence that candidates for office respond to these preferences in their campaign appeals.

We do not have the data to test how much of these effects are due to the emergence of Donald Trump as a candidate or the ways in which he

<sup>1</sup> Philip Bump, The Selective Socialism of Donald Trump, *Washington Post*, July 23, 2019.

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*Preface*

uses race and ethnicity in his rhetoric. We know that his candidacy and presidency have changed how we think and it probably has heightened the role of LRE in public opinion. Unfortunately, it also probably means that race and ethnicity will continue to shape Whites' attitudes for the foreseeable future.

## Acknowledgments

This book is the product of many efforts. We utilize concepts, theories, and methodologies that have been constructed across multiple disciplines to document and explain an often ignored form of racism directed toward Latinos. We are foremost grateful to those scholars who have built the foundation for our exploration of this topic.

We are heavily indebted to Rodolfo Espino. The project started with multiple conversations with him about the need to better conceptualize and measure White Animus toward Latinos and the need to move away from strategies that were developed with African Americans in mind. We are grateful for both his friendship and intellectual contribution to this book.

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The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University provided a seed grant that funded the 2018 Qualtrics survey and the conjoint experiment reported in Chapter 6. Additionally, some of the work for this book was supported by the Whitaker-Lindgren Faculty Fellowship in Political Science at Iowa State University. The support of Mary Whitaker-Lindgren and Douglas Lindgren were instrumental in the final stages of this book.

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