



## Do Latinos still support immigrant rights activism? Examining Latino attitudes a decade after the 2006 protest wave

Sophia Jordán Wallace<sup>a\*</sup> and Chris Zepeda-Millán<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Political Science, University of Washington, Seattle, USA; <sup>b</sup>Public Policy and Chicano/a Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

### ABSTRACT

The historic and primarily Latino 2006 immigrant rights protest wave occurred in response to proposed federal anti-immigrant legislation (H.R. 4437). Research on the unprecedented series of demonstrations suggests that the draconian and racialized nature of the bill helps explain why it incited large-scale collective action. Utilising a new survey with a considerable oversample of Latino respondents, the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), this paper investigates the role that collective identities, racialisation, and social networks play in Latino support for contemporary immigrant rights activism. To do so, we incorporate measures such as linked fate, perceptions of anti-immigrant sentiments, knowing undocumented people, and concerns about immigration enforcement policies. The results of our analysis indicate that some of the same factors that influenced Latino engagement in the 2006 mobilisations, such as identity and racialisation, concerns over enforcement, and social networks, continue to impact Latino support for contentious politics on behalf of the foreign-born. We also find evidence that political party and past protest activity, play a significant role in explaining levels of support for activism. Our results have important implications for understanding how anti-immigrant policies and racialized nativism influence Latino support for contentious politics.

### Keywords

Immigrant rights; social movements; public opinion; Latino politics

### Introduction

The 2006 immigrant rights protest wave was the largest episode of Latino collective action in U.S. history. Five million foreign- and U.S.-born Latinos and their allies took part in the demonstrations in response to the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives' passage of the draconian H.R. 4437, more popularly known as the 'Sensenbrenner Bill.' The proposed legislation would have effectively criminalised undocumented immigrants, their families, and anyone who associated with them (DeSipio and de la Garza 2015, 16). The bill sparked a contentious and highly racialized debate that incited Latinos to take to the streets nationwide in defence of their families and their communities (Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez 2010; Zepeda-Millán 2014).

**CONTACT** Sophia Jordán Wallace  sophiajw@uw.edu

\*Authors' names are listed in alphabetical order, both authors contributed equally to this manuscript.

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Across the country, Latinos were united in their support for rallies, which sought to stop the bill and called for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. According to a survey of Latinos conducted by the *Pew Research Center* a few weeks after the protest wave, a strong majority (58%) of respondents believed Latinos were now ‘working together to achieve a common goal.’ While more than half (54%) of those polled reported seeing an increase in discrimination as a result of the immigration policy debate taking place, almost two-thirds (63%) of Latinos felt ‘the pro-immigrant marches this year signal the beginning of a new and lasting social movement.’<sup>1</sup> Moreover, although contentious politics among Latinos has traditionally been regionally and ethnic specific (e.g. the Chicano Movement in the U.S. Southwest, or Puerto Rican activism in New York and Chicago), the 2006 marches garnered widespread support amongst Latinos across national origin groups (Barreto et al. 2009, 756).<sup>2</sup> For instance, when asked whether or not they agreed that ‘The marches showed that Latinos – immigrant or not – are united and won’t put up with discrimination any longer,’ 78% of Mexican, 73% of Puerto Rican, 81% of Dominican, 74% of Cuban, 68% of Central American, and 75% of South American Latinos answered affirmatively (Barreto et al. 2009, 756). Clearly, during the 2006 demonstrations, many Latinos embraced immigrant rights activism in the face of a punitive anti-immigrant policy proposal (Pedraza, Segura, and Bowler 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2016).

Scholars have argued that many Latinos supported these episodes of large-scale collective actions because the nativist legislative threat (H.R. 4437) that targeted their racialized collective identities would have directly impacted people who they personally knew (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2017). Thus, in this paper we are interested in whether ten years after the historic protest wave – with an overt nativist in the Oval Office and an anti-immigrant Republican Party in control of both chambers of Congress – the aforementioned factors continue to influence Latinos’ backing of contentious politics on behalf of immigrants.

On the one hand, Latinos could be very supportive of immigrant rights activism today because the 2006 rallies had several important positive effects, including helping to stop H.R. 4437 from becoming law, providing the momentum for the successful 2008 Latino citizenship, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) drives, and increased feelings of Latino linked fate (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013). However, despite being one of the primary goals of the 2006 protests, comprehensive immigration reform was not enacted, and both the G. W. Bush and Obama Administrations adopted an ‘enforcement first’ approach that drastically increased deportations, earning the latter president the title of ‘Deporter In-Chief’ (Gonzales 2013; Street, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2015). Hence, notwithstanding some temporary concessions (e.g. DACA), political protests failed to achieve one of the main objectives of the movement – legalising the nation’s eleven million undocumented immigrants.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, eight years of activism to no avail might have caused Latinos to believe that contentious politics over immigration issues is at best ineffective, and at worse counterproductive given the increase in deportations that coincided with immigrant rights protests during Obama’s time in office.

With these two possibilities in mind, we utilise original survey data to study Latino support for immigrant rights activism during the advent of the nativist Trump Administration. As noted in the introduction to this volume (Bloemraad and Voss 2019), our findings indicate that some of the same factors – i.e. identity, racialisation, and social networks – remain strong predictors of Latino backing of immigrant rights activism. More

specifically, our findings show that when Latinos believe that anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments, when they know people without papers or who are potentially impacted by anti-immigrant policies, and when they feel that their individual fates are linked to those of the larger Latino community, they are more likely to be in favour of contentious politics on behalf of the foreign-born. Hence, our findings suggest that over a decade after the unprecedented 2006 protest wave, racialized policy threats continue to augment the degree to which Latinos back immigrant rights activism.

## Theoretical background

### *Social movements and public opinion*

Relative to the examination of the formation and framing of social movements, the relationship between activism and public opinion has received insufficient attention in the literature (Burstein 1999; McAdam and Su 2002; Vrablikova 2013). This is especially the case when we consider general public support for contentious actions. Studies of activism that do consider people's attitudes have highlighted how protests impact policy outcomes via public opinion (Costain and Majstorovic 1994; Giugni 2004; Lieberfeld 2009), how social movement organisations and demonstrations impact the attitudes of the public and political elites (Lee 2002), how activism influences people's thoughts on specific issues (Everitt 1998; Lee 2002; Banaszak and Ondercin 2016), and the effects of mass mobilisations on identities (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013), feelings of group solidarity (Barreto et al. 2009; Jones-Correa, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán 2016), or political efficacy and trust in government (Pedraza, Segura, and Bowler 2011; Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2014). In this article, we argue that to understand the dynamics of large-scale collective action, scholars must also examine the factors that increase public approval for contentious politics since supportive public opinion is a critical precondition to organising sizeable and successful protests (Vrablikova 2013, 1023).

Surprisingly, as Andrews, Beyerlein, and Farnum (2016, 1) point out, even though a chief goal of activists is to gain public sympathy, a key question yet to be thoroughly investigated by social movement scholars is, 'Why do some citizens but not others approve when activists use protest tactics?' In other words, given the array of traditional modes of political expression available (i.e. voting, signing petitions, lobbying, making campaign contributions), what (if any) factors drive public support for activism? This question is an important one to explore because public support for activism can give activists a sense of the reservoir of potential movement allies and participants (Klandermans 1984; Oegema and Klandermans 1994).

Scholars have continuously found social networks and collective identities to play key roles in social movement actions (Stryker, Owens, and White 2000; Diani and McAdam 2003). For our purposes, we are particularly interested in the factors that impact Latino support for immigrant rights activism given the current nativist and anti-Latino climate in the United States. While, to our knowledge, there is very little social scientific research that explicitly focuses on Latino public opinion about political activism, we believe that research on the Latino racialisation of U.S. immigration, linked fate, concerns over punitive immigration enforcement, and social networks may provide some valuable clues that can help us begin to understand this phenomenon.

### *Immigration, racialization, and social networks*

Several scholars have demonstrated that one of the primary ways Latinos in the United States are racialized is through nativist immigration policies (De Genova 2004; Ngai 2005). Because the alleged undesirable characteristics of immigrants of colour are often extended to U.S.-born citizens of colour (Johnson 2004; Bloch 2014), some researchers argue that negative portrayals of undocumented Latino immigrants lead to Latinos in general – American- and foreign-born – to be viewed by the larger U.S. public as potential ‘illegal alien threats’ (Chavez 2008; Rocco 2014). One consequence of this racist stereotyping is that, ‘Despite the fact that most Latinos are not undocumented and that not all of the undocumented are Latino,’ in many respects, to be Latino has become ‘synonymous with being undocumented and to be undocumented is synonymous with being Latino’ (Gonzales 2014, 166; see also Masuoka and Junn 2013, 82). As Abrajano and Hajnal (2015) conclude, while in theory ‘categories like undocumented immigrant, legal immigrant, and Latino are all distinct from each other,’ in the ‘practice of US politics, these concepts often blur together’ (17). But while these studies help us comprehend the relationship between immigration and Latino racialisation, they say very little about how this phenomenon impacts Latinos’ opinions about protests. Here the literatures on group consciousness and political participation are informative.

Group consciousness is a form of in-group identification that is politicised ‘by a set of ideological beliefs about one’s group’s social standing, as well a view that collective action is the best means by which the group can improve its status and realize its interests’ (McClain et al. 2009, 476). The concept of ‘linked fate’ draws from this understanding of group consciousness, but is different in that it ‘explicitly links perceptions of self-interest to perceptions of racial group interests’ (Dawson 1994, 76). Dawson (1994, 77) explains that linked fate captures a situation in which racial group interests serve as ‘a useful proxy for self-interest.’ Research on Latino group consciousness and linked fate reveals that these sentiments are more pronounced when Latinos perceive group discrimination and especially when they are being targeted by nativist public policies (Sanchez 2006a; Massey and Sánchez 2010; Valdez 2011; Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez 2017).

These findings are critical to note because, despite the fact that Latinos are amongst the least likely groups to take part in contentious politics (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995, 234–235; Martinez 2005, 140), both quantitative and qualitative studies have demonstrated that increased levels of linked-fate and group consciousness, as well as racialized nativist legislative threats, can prod Latinos into participating in political activism (Stokes 2003; García Bedolla 2005; Sanchez 2006b; Martinez 2008; Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Zepeda-Millán 2017). As Rumbaut (2008) contends, anti-immigrant policies can have the ‘unintended consequences’ of accentuating group differences and hardening ethnic boundaries, leading to the promotion of ‘ethnic group solidarity and political mobilisation’ (3). However, although these studies have important implications for understanding Latinos’ willingness to participate in political activism, we still know very little about whether the general Latino public is sympathetic towards these types of actions, and, if so, what factors drive these sentiments.

Beyond racialisation, group consciousness or linked fate, we also need to take into account the actual social networks that directly tie individuals together. Social networks are key to recruiting individuals to take part in contentious politics (Diani and

McAdam 2003). Is support for activism on behalf of a certain group greater among people who know someone who is part of that group? Research has shown that immigration is a highly personal and salient issue to Latinos in part because of how it affects their families, neighbours, friends, and communities (Wallace 2012; Sanchez et al. 2015). In fact, these types of personal social networks played a key role in motivating and mobilising many Latinos to participate in the historic 2006 protest wave (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Zepeda-Millán 2016). Thus, because the vast majority of Latinos in the U.S. are either foreign-born themselves or 'are children, spouses, in-laws, and neighbours of immigrants' (Pedraza, Segura, and Bowler 2011, 2), we expect that individuals who know someone who is undocumented or fear that anti-immigrant policies may impact someone they know personally, will be more likely to support immigrant rights activism.

In sum, while the literature on the Latino racialisation of immigration helps us understand the links between Latino identity and the issue of immigration, it says relatively little about how this phenomenon impacts Latinos' opinions about political activism in defence of the foreign-born. Correspondingly, research on linked-fate and political participation suggests that anti-immigrant policies can increase the likelihood that some Latinos will engage in activism, but says almost nothing about how the general Latino public views these types of political actions. Lastly, research on the 2006 marches shows that social networks played key roles in facilitating participation in the series of demonstrations, but we don't know whether knowing people who are undocumented or concern about punitive immigration policies directed at people within one's social network continues to motivate support for immigrant rights activism today. We thus posit that Latinos who feel negatively racialized by anti-immigrant sentiments, who display higher levels of linked-fate, or who know someone who is undocumented or worried about impacted by punitive immigration enforcement measures, will also be more supportive of immigrant rights activism.

## Methods and data

Much of the existing work on Latinos and the immigrant rights movement tends to focus on Latinos as political actors within the movement (Milkman and Terriquez 2012; Nicholls 2013; Terriquez 2015), the development and dynamics of the 2006 protest wave (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2017), or on how exposure to the 2006 demonstrations impacted Latino attitudes (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013; Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2014; Jones-Correa, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán 2016). We know less about whether the dynamics and opinions studied in 2006 hold true a decade later. Using the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), our analysis focuses on contemporary Latino support towards immigrant rights activism.

The CMPS was designed to include a sample of approximately 3,000 Latino respondents, in addition to 3,000 African-American, 3,000 Asian, and 1,000 White respondents (Barreto et al. 2017). The CMPS's principle investigators allowed teams of researchers to design and field questions on the instrument. It was fielded from December 2016 through mid-February 2017 by Latino Decisions in conjunction with Pacific Market Research. It was conducted online and Latino respondents took the instrument exclusively in Spanish or English.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis examines a series of questions we constructed to be

fielded on the Latino sample of 3,003 respondents.<sup>5</sup> The survey also included a battery of various common socio-demographic variables, including gender, political party affiliation, national origin group, income, and education.<sup>6</sup>

Our primary dependent variable is support for immigrant rights activism. To analyse support, our survey item asked respondents: ‘How strongly do you support or oppose immigrant rights activism?’ Respondents could then select one of the following answer choices: ‘Strongly Support,’ ‘Somewhat Support,’ ‘Neither Support or Oppose,’ ‘Somewhat Oppose,’ ‘Strongly Oppose.’ We created a modified 3-point measure that collapses together the two degrees of support and opposition respectively.<sup>7</sup> This variable serves as our main dependent variable and directly measures Latino support for immigrant rights activism. Our expectation is that respondents are familiar with the phrase ‘immigrant rights activism’ because Spanish-language media has been shown to be more sympathetic to the plights of immigrants (Abrajano and Singh 2009; López-Sanders and Brown 2019) and frequently covers activism related to immigration issues (Felix, Gonzalez, and Ramirez 2008; Aparicio 2006; Ramírez 2013). Our expectation is that respondents will understand immigrant rights activism to mean forms of protests such as rallies, marches, and demonstrations.<sup>8</sup> As such, we feel confident that our survey is capturing respondents’ opinions about ‘immigrant rights activism’ in particular and not simply their attitudes about immigration or protests in general.<sup>9</sup>

We employ four main explanatory variables to investigate the relationship between various forms of Latino collective identity, as discussed above, as well as social network influences for attitudes about immigrant rights activism. The first one is a commonly used question assessing linked fate. The item asks, ‘Do you think what happens generally to Latino/Hispanic people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?’ Prior research has demonstrated that Latinos often feel a high degree of linked fate with one another, which can greatly influence their political attitudes (Sanchez 2006a; Fraga et al. 2010; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; Fraga et al. 2011). Thus, we hypothesise that Latinos with a higher sense of linked fate with other Latinos will be significantly more likely to support immigrant rights activism because they likely view such activism as beneficial to the Latino community as a whole.

Beyond linked fate, we also hypothesise that attitudes toward immigrant rights activism may be influenced through racialized collective identities. One of the primary ways that Latinos in the United States are racialized is through discriminatory immigration policies. Accordingly, we ask respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments.’ This item directly taps into perceptions of whether broader societal attitudes that are against immigrants inherently involve negative feelings towards Latinos as well (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). We believe this question is capturing a sense of perceived racialisation and expect that those who agree with the statement will be more likely to support contentious politics on behalf of the foreign-born.

To assess the role of social networks, our models also incorporate two measures. The first is a measure of whether respondents know someone who is undocumented. Given that undocumented people are the primary targets of public discourse on immigration and immigration enforcement (Santa Ana 2002; Chavez 2008), this measure allows us to assess whether individuals in the respondent’s social network may be at risk. Because respondents may be concerned about people they know being vulnerable to immigration

enforcement measures, they may view activism as a way to secure more rights and protections for undocumented members of their social networks. Thus, we posit that individuals who know people without papers will be more likely to support activism that seeks to advance the rights of immigrants. To measure the impact of concerns over punitive immigration enforcement specifically, we utilise a variable that asks respondents how worried they are about whether people they know will be detained or deported. We use this measure as a proxy to gauge direct feelings of anxiety and concern about immigration enforcement that may be detrimental to individuals in their lives. Research has shown that immigration is a highly personal and salient issue to Latinos in part because of how it affects their families, neighbours, friends, and communities (Wallace 2012; Sanchez et al. 2015). We expect that individuals who express high levels of concern about potential immigration enforcement in their social network will also be more likely to support immigrant rights activism.

Finally, while our main interest is in collective identities and the impact of social networks, we also include a host of political control variables. To assess the role of past participation in protests, we include a variable that asks whether respondents have participated in a protest, march, or rally in the last 12 months. Unfortunately, the question does not ask what the protest or march was about, substantively. The survey does not contain any questions specific to immigrant rights marches or participation in the 2006 marches. Given the time frame of the last 12 months, the percentage of respondents who are likely to respond affirmatively is likely to be low as protests are a relatively infrequent events. Among Latino respondents, nearly 12% of respondents reported participating in a march or rally in the last 12 months, which is quite high given the low levels of participation in protests among the general U.S. public (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). We include this variable because we believe that individuals who have engaged in activism may be more likely to support activism. Due to the Republican Party's restrictive and punitive position on immigration and Republican attitudes on immigration (Wroe 2008; Wong 2017), including at times Latino Republicans, we include a measure for whether respondents identify as Republican. We predict that Republican respondents will be less likely to support immigrant rights activism.

We also employed a set of control variables related to demographics of respondents. Prior research shows that attitudes on immigration vary by gender, education, and income. Our models use controls for each with a 12-point scaled income variable, a variable for whether respondents identify as male, and a six-point scaled variable for education which ranges on a six-point scale from completing grades 1–8, some High School, High school grad or GED, Some college, 4-year degree, or Post-graduate education. To control for age, we also utilise a variable for the respondent's age. Additionally, we utilise a national origin variable that uses respondents' answers to a general ancestry question in order to create binary variables for whether respondents were of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Dominican ancestry. These groups were selected since they are the largest national origin groups within the U.S. Latino population (García Bedolla 2014).<sup>10</sup> Finally, to explore differences between Latino respondents who were born in the United States, who have citizenship by birth, and those who are foreign-born, we include a binary variable for whether a respondent was born in the U.S. Given that anti-immigration policies may directly impact US-born Latinos less, we expect that

there might be variation in attitudes by immigrant generation. We turn now to examine the results of the statistical models on support for immigrant rights activism.

## Results

We conducted ordered logistic regression due to the ordinal nature of the dependent variable (Long and Freese 2014). To fully specify the models and take into account any differences in this sample from the general adult Latino population in the United States, our models incorporate sample weights that were constructed based on the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data file.<sup>11</sup> To investigate the role of various factors in explaining support for immigrant rights activism, we include a host of variables in our statistical models.

Overall, the raw levels of Latino support for immigrant rights activism are high in comparison to opposition, with 53% of respondents supporting and 11% opposing; the rest of our respondents answering that they neither support or oppose.<sup>12</sup> The level of support among different national origin groups was also high—57% of Mexican, 49% of Puerto Rican, 58% of Dominican, and 53% of Cuban respondents supported immigrant rights activism. Yet, while a majority of respondents favoured activism, we also see variation across those sampled. Thus, beyond raw levels of support, it is critical to examine what factors primarily drive Latino support for immigrant rights activism among respondents. As we outline below, the statistical results of the models indicate that variation in attitudes toward activism are primarily influenced by Latino identity (linked-fate), knowing someone who is undocumented, fearing that someone they know may be impacted by anti-immigrant policies, and past protest activity. The results for Model 1 are presented in Table 1.<sup>13</sup>

### *Latino identity, nativist immigration policies, and social network*

As we hypothesised, Latinos who feel the highest sense of linked fate, who are worried about immigration enforcement measures negatively impacting someone they know, who know undocumented people, or see anti-immigrant sentiments as anti-Latino are all significantly more likely to support immigrant rights activism. Scholars have long demonstrated that linked fate amongst Latinos plays a very significant role in explaining Latino political attitudes. For example, Latinos with higher levels of linked fate are more likely to want more descriptive representation (Wallace 2014a), and are more likely to be politically active (Sanchez 2006b; Masuoka 2008). Our results confirm that group identity, measured by linked fate, also plays a key role in explaining support for immigrant rights activism among Latinos. While only 34.9% of the Latino community is foreign born (Stepler and Brown 2016), there are many Latinos with mixed status families or whose parents and/or grandparents were immigrants. Thus, since immigration is an issue that affects large swaths of the Latino population, high identifiers who believe in linked fate may be more likely to support immigrant rights activism because they believe it would benefit Latinos as a group.

In this context of attacks through nativist legislation and policies, some scholars have argued that negative stereotyping of undocumented immigrants has been generalised to all Latinos (De Genova 2004; Chavez 2008) and has in some ways made being undocumented

**Table 1.** Determinants of support for immigrant rights activism (Ordered Logit).

	(1)
Linked Fate	0.149* (0.0648)
Worried Imm Enforcement	0.252** (0.0579)
Anti-Imm = Anti-Latino	0.694** (0.0778)
Know Undocu. Person	0.511** (0.161)
Protest Participant	0.763** (0.287)
Republican	-0.626** (0.147)
Income	0.00612 (0.0240)
Male	0.212 (0.131)
Age	-0.0000951 (0.00519)
Education	0.103 (0.0648)
Mexican	0.289 <sup>+</sup> (0.169)
Puerto Rican	0.424* (0.194)
Dominican	0.171 (0.357)
Cuban	0.0300 (0.326)
Born in U.S.	-0.529** (0.160)
Observations	2758
Pseudo R-squared	0.176
Log Likelihood	-1975.8
Chi-squared	234.7

Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights included.

<sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Cutpoints not shown.

synonymous with being Latino (Ngai 2005; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Gonzales 2014). Along these lines, we find that Latinos who perceive a link between anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiments are also more likely to support activism on behalf of the foreign-born. These respondents feel the most racialized and are likely aware of how broader attacks on immigrants affect them as Latinos. Consequently, it seems like a logical extension that they would be in favour of extending rights for immigrants through activism.

Scholars studying the 2006 marches have shown that Latinos can be motivated to partake in political activism when they personally know someone who is undocumented or when people in their social network are being targeted by anti-immigrant policies (Ramírez 2013; Zepeda-Millán 2017). Our results indicate that nativist legislative threats also help explain variation in support for immigrant rights activism among Latinos. The findings from our statistical models indicate that people who are the most worried about potential immigration enforcement measures impacting someone they know are also more likely to support immigrant rights activism. In terms of social networks, we also asked whether the respondent knows someone who is undocumented. Knowing people who are potentially in direct danger from immigration enforcement tactics changes the focus from potential perceptions of threat to direct contact with

individuals who may be impacted by such actions. The results in Table 1 provide strong evidence that knowing undocumented people has a positive and significant effect on support for activism on immigration issues. These results can be explained by Latinos likely wanting people in their social network who are undocumented to be protected through the expansion of immigrant rights that could occur via activism.

### *Political control variables*

A number of political factors also affect attitudes toward immigrant rights activism. The results of the models indicate a strong and positive effect of past participation in a protest on Latino support for immigrant rights activism. It is not surprising that those who have recently participated in marches would also be more likely to support contemporary activism in favour of immigrant rights. In line with a long body of research in political science, partisanship also matters. The Republican Party advocates restrictive immigration policies, which are typically opposed by immigrant rights activists (Nicholls 2013; Wallace 2014b; Wong 2017). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that most Republicans would not support activism that seeks to expand immigrant rights. Although it is possible that Latino Republicans may feel differently because of the personal nature of the issue, the role of partisanship amongst Latinos has also consistently explained Latino political attitudes, with Republican Latinos demonstrating different policy positions and attitudes than their Democratic Latino counterparts (Abrajano and Michael Alvarez 2010; Casellas and Wallace 2015). In line with the latter findings, our results indicate that Latino Republicans are less supportive of immigrant rights activism than non-Republican Latino respondents.<sup>14</sup>

### *Nativity and ancestry*

We find that, in line with existing research, both nativity and ancestry play important roles in explaining Latino attitudes (Fraga et al. 2011). With regards to nativity, whether or not Latinos were born in the U.S. can also play a role in explaining political attitudes (Fraga et al. 2010). Our results indicate that both nativity and ancestry are important factors in explaining support for immigrant rights activism. We find that Latinos who are not born in the U.S. are *more* likely to support immigrant rights activism. The raw levels of support for immigrant rights activism among U.S. born Latinos compared to foreign born Latinos is 51% and 67%, respectively. Although this result may seem surprising given the impact of immigration on the Latino community as a whole, it is important to underscore that levels of support among U.S. born Latinos are still overwhelming positive; foreign born Latinos are simply even more supportive of immigrant rights activism.

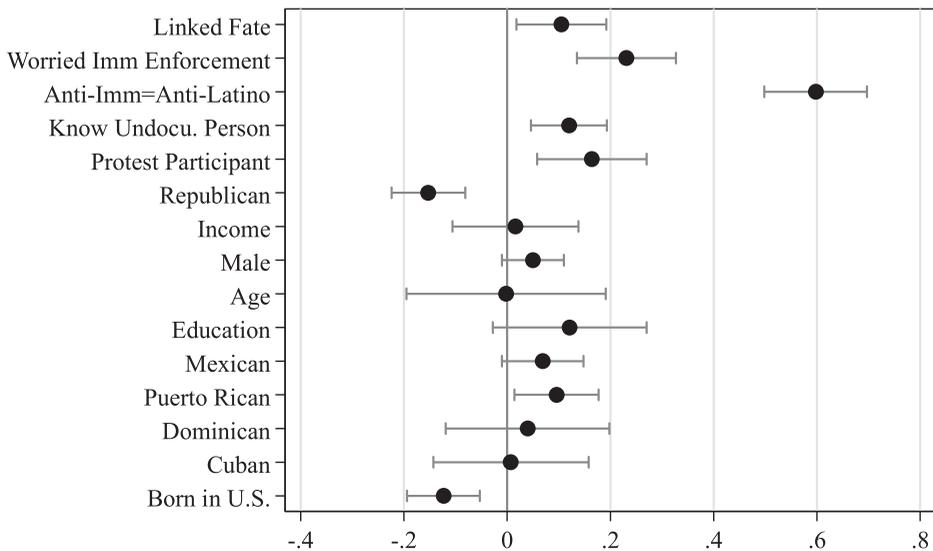
Our models include national origin group variables for the largest groups among the Latino population: Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans. Past research generally finds that Latinos of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent tend to express more liberal attitudes, while Cubans tend to be more conservative (Fraga et al. 2011; García Bedolla 2014). The results show that individuals of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent are more likely to support immigrant rights activism. However, the result for Mexican is only significant at the 10% level. These findings are consistent with typically more liberal views held by Latinos of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent. In addition, since activism has

been a longstanding form of political participation within these communities (e.g. the Chicano, Young Lords, and Puerto Rican Independence movements), they may be more likely to support immigrant rights activism today because of their beliefs in such tactics' efficacy in bringing about political change.

There may also be more personal reasons for these specific national origin groups' support of immigrant rights activism. Our Mexican result may be partially explained by the large proportion of undocumented immigrants who are Mexican, thus support for immigrant rights activism may be more deeply relevant to them on a personal level (Zepeda-Millán 2014). With regards to Puerto Ricans, given that they are the only Latino national origin group who are automatically born with U.S. citizenship, they may find it particularly egregious that they are racialized as immigrants and thus support fighting for equal rights for Latino non-citizens with whom they see their fates as linked. These factors are what, at least partially, motivated some Puerto Ricans to participate in the 2006 demonstrations (Rodriguez Muniz 2010). Overall, the findings of our models indicate that racialisation, identity, social networks, and partisanship play the most significant roles in explaining Latino public attitudes towards immigrant rights activism.

**Substantive effects**

Raw coefficients from ordered logit estimators are difficult to interpret on their own. We thus also estimate the substantive effects of each variable on support for immigrant rights activism. Figure 1 displays the first differences in the probability a respondent will indicate any level of support for immigrant rights activism when changing each variable from its



Results are generated from Model 1 in Table 1. Values represent first differences for each variable on the probability of the respondent indicating any level of support (strongly or somewhat) for immigrant rights activism, while setting all other variables at their means. Continuous variables are changed from their minimum to maximum values, while binary variables change from 0 to 1.

**Figure 1.** Substantive effects of support for immigrant rights activism.

minimum to maximum values, while holding all other variables constant at their means.<sup>15</sup> 95% confidence intervals for each first difference are indicated by horizontal lines.

Substantively, the impact of collective identity and social networks are critical. Specifically, racialisation, linked fate, concerns over immigration enforcement, past participation in protests, partisanship and one's social network are significant factors in explaining support for immigrant rights activism. The main identity variable of interest is the linked fate item. When moving from Latinos who do not see their fates as linked to those Latinos who strongly believe in linked fate, the probability of supporting activism increases by over 10-percentage points. The measure we utilised for social networks, whether a respondent knows someone who is undocumented, had a roughly comparably sized effect to the link fate measure with a 12-percentage point effect. Taken together, these variables have modest positive effects on increasing support for activism.

Since we are directly assessing Latino support for immigrant rights activism, whether individuals have participated in protests could directly influence their levels of support of activism in this area. Recall our protest participation measure is modest in the sense that it only asks respondents whether they have participated in a protest in the last 12 months. The results from the statistical models indicate a strong, positive effect. Substantively, respondents who had participated in a protest were 16-percentage points more likely to support immigrant rights activism. Thus, provided strong evidence of a link between past protest participation and support for activism on immigrant rights.

Turning toward the variable that measures concerns about immigration enforcement, along with the variable that measures perceptions of whether anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments, the results indicate more considerable impacts of these two variables on support for immigrant rights activism. Concerns over potential immigration enforcement, as measured by worrying about the deportation of someone a respondent knows in their social network, results in a 23-percentage point increase in the likelihood of supporting immigrant rights activism. An even larger substantive effect is produced by whether respondents believe that anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments. For individuals who agree with the latter statement, there is an enormous change in the probability of support for immigrant rights activism, resulting in an almost 60-percentage point increase. In other words, believing that immigration has been racialized as synonymous with Latinos dramatically shifts support for immigrant rights activism.

On the other hand, two factors reduce the likelihood of Latino support for activism on immigration issues. The substantive effect of being a Latino Republican results in a 15-point decrease in the probability of supporting immigrant rights activism. This result is likely explained by the Republican Party's position on immigration, which tends to favour more restrictive policies and oppose expanding immigrant rights. In addition, being born in the U.S. is associated with nearly a 12-point decrease in support for immigrant rights activism. Again, it is important to note that this does not mean that U.S. born Latinos are opposed to contentious politics on behalf of immigrants, their raw levels of support were at about 51%. Rather, in comparison to foreign born Latinos, U.S. born Latinos simply have a lower probability of support. Country of origin and general socio-demographics traits have fairly modest substantive impacts overall on attitudes towards immigrant rights activism. We now turn to a discussion of the implications of our findings and conclude by contextualising our results under the current political climate.

## Conclusion

The next several years promise to be challenging ones for the U.S. immigrant rights movement. In his rhetoric, cabinet appointments, and executive actions, Donald Trump has made it crystal clear that immigrants and their rights will be under assault during his presidency. In response, immigrant rights advocates are scrambling to figure out how best to defend themselves from what seems to be the most openly anti-immigrant and anti-Latino president in contemporary American history (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2018). With Republican control of the White House, Senate and Supreme Court, immigrant rights activists will be hard-pressed to see traditional institutional routes of exerting political influence (e.g. lobbying, pushing for legislation, etc.) as likely to be fruitful.

In light of potentially closed opportunities through political institutions, it is possible that advocates will turn to protest as a political tactic. Although contentious politics may not have resulted in the passage of comprehensive immigration reform the last time Republicans fully controlled Washington in 2006, mass mobilisations by millions of Latinos and their allies did help fend off the Sensenbrenner Bill (H.R. 4437), one of the most draconian anti-immigrant laws to pass the U.S. House of Representatives (Gonzales 2013; Zepeda-Millán 2017). Since we believe contentious politics will once again be a vital tool for defending the rights of the foreign-born under the Trump Administration, in this article we explored the factors that impact Latino support for contemporary immigrant rights activism. Our findings make important contributions to several areas of research.

Theoretically, although the literature on the Latino racialisation of immigration has helped us to comprehend the links between Latino identity and the issue of immigration, it has said relatively little about how this phenomenon impacts Latinos' opinions about political activism. Similarly, research on linked fate and political behaviour suggest that nativist public policies can augment the likelihood that Latinos will participate in contentious forms of politics, but says almost nothing about whether these same types of policies impact the general Latino public's opinions about activism. And, lastly, scholars have shown that the composition of Latino social network influenced their participation in the 2006 marches, and play a role in Latino civic engagement today (Terriquez and Lin 2019). However, whether these findings continue to motivate Latino support for immigrant rights activism over a decade after the unprecedented protest wave, and in light of increased deportations and no comprehensive immigration reform passed yet, had yet to be explored.

Our study adds to these literatures by showing that factors related to Latino identity, racialisation and social networks, impact their support for contemporary immigrant rights activism. More specifically, our findings show that when Latinos believe that anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments, and when they feel that their individual fates are linked to those of the larger Latino community, they are more likely to be in favour of contentious politics on behalf of the foreign-born. As such, contributing to the literature on the Latino racialisation of immigration, our findings suggest that the close relationship between immigration and Latino identity can have important political implications.

Our results related to punitive immigration policies and social networks also highlight the relevance of the immigration issue to Latinos. Since, as mentioned earlier, most Latinos

are either relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbours of, or immigrants themselves, we posited that knowing someone who is undocumented or who may be detained or deported would yield positive results in our models. Our hypotheses were correct on these matters. Knowing people without papers or who are potentially negatively impacted by anti-immigrant legislation increases the likelihood that Latinos will support immigrant rights activism.

In conclusion, despite one of the main goals of movement organisers being to increase levels of support for their actions, the relationship between public opinion and social movements has been a relatively understudied area of academic inquiry. Given the Trump Administration's targeting of Latinos and immigrants, understanding the factors that drive support for actions such as political protests, marches, and demonstrations is of the utmost importance. While 2006 gave hope to many during the demonstration, subsequent events – including failed immigration reform and increased deportations – might have soured Latinos on protest activity. However, our study shows persistent support for immigrant rights activism, especially among the foreign-born, and the continued relevance of racialized identities, immigration policy threats, and social networks in explaining the degree of Latino support for immigrant rights activism today.

## Notes

1. See Suro and Escobar (2006) <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/07/13/2006-national-survey-of-latinos/>.
2. Barreto et al.'s survey found that on a scale of 1 to 10, Latinos of Mexican (7.8), Puerto Rican (7.8), Dominican (7.7), Central American (7.3), South American (7.1), and even of Cuban (7.2) descent, all expressed high levels of support for the rallies.
3. The most well known of these temporary concessions was Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program implemented via an executive directive.
4. The survey was composed of questions that 55 teams of researchers designed. Researchers purchased time on the survey to field their content and pooled these resources. This allowed for the fielding of a comprehensive instrument with substantial oversamples of Latino, African-American, and Asian respondents. More information about the CMPS survey can be found here <http://www.latinodecisions.com/recent-polls/cmeps-2016/>.
5. A full list of survey items used in the models is included in the Appendix.
6. A table of descriptive statistics of the variables is included in the Appendix in Table A1.
7. The main dependent variable thus measures attitudes toward immigrant rights activism as Support / Neither support or oppose / Oppose. The three-point measure is utilised because of the necessity to use survey weights and the calculation of substantive effects when utilising survey weights. For robustness, we also ran the regression model using the five-point dependent variable and the statistical results are the same. The results of this alternate model specification are contained in the Appendix in Table A2.
8. We do not include a variable for Spanish language media reliance because the proportion of Latino respondents who rely primarily on Spanish language media in the CMPS sample is small (7.3%). We ran an additional model using a Spanish media reliance variable and the results for this variable are not statistically significant. While we do think there is a relationship between Spanish language media reliance and support for immigrant rights activism given the role of Spanish media in 2006 protests, there are too few CMPS respondents who are Spanish media dominant to appropriately demonstrate this relationship. An examination of raw levels of support for immigrant rights activism indicates that 69% of Spanish media dominant respondents support immigrant rights activism compared to 49% of respondents who are English media dominant.

9. More discussion of the results and potential alternative explanations for what the DV is measuring are contained in Fn. 13 on pg. 14.
10. Respondents of all other national origin groups not specifically controlled thus represent the excluded, or baseline, category. The sample of respondents analysed is entirely Latino respondents.
11. The Latino sample of CMPS is comparable to other large surveys of Latino respondents such as the LNS in 2006 (Fraga et al. 2013). One exception is that the CMPS sample has more female respondents and is slightly skewed towards higher educated Latinos and younger Latinos. To balance for difference between our sample and the Latino adult population, we have utilised survey weights. A post-stratification ranking algorithm was used to balance the categories of age, gender, education, nativity, ancestry, and voter registration, within +/-1 point of the ACS estimates for each racial group. For more information, see [http://www.latinodecisions.com/files/1214/8902/9774/cmeps\\_methodology.pdf](http://www.latinodecisions.com/files/1214/8902/9774/cmeps_methodology.pdf). A table of descriptive statistics for the variables in this analysis is contained in the Appendix in Table A2.
12. One alternative explanation is that expressed levels of support for activism is actually capturing support for immigration overall. Latino support for pro-immigration policies is considerably higher (over 80%) than the reported levels of support for activism (53%). Thus, while many of the people who support pro-immigration policies may support activism on the issue as well, there is not a one to one overlap with those that support activism. Additionally, one may suggest that Latinos may express the same levels of support for activism overall and they would be similarly supportive of any other type of activism that is not immigrant rights related. In examining Latino support for Black Lives Matter 45% indicated support, while 58% indicated support of LGBT activism, thus there is variation in Latino support for activism on different issues.
13. All analysis conducted using Stata 15.
14. One may wonder whether Latinos who voted for Trump were also less supportive of immigrant rights activism. Trump supporters are less supportive than Clinton voters. Latinos who voted for Clinton overwhelmingly support immigrant rights activism. Whereas, Trump voters had nearly equal percentages of individuals who supported and opposed for immigrant rights activism. This pattern is also true of Latino Republicans. While not all Latinos who voted for Trump are Republicans, the correlation between Latino Republicans and Latino Trump voters in this sample is .63.
15. All values are calculated using the `-mchange-` command from the `SPost` software package (Long and Freese 2014). For dichotomous variables, the first difference represents a change from 0 to 1, whereas for continuous variables the estimate shows the first differences as a result from moving from the minimum to the maximum value.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the reviewers and editors of this JEMS issue for their valuable feedback and support. We would also like to thank Michael Jones-Correa and Taeku Lee, as well as Geoff Wallace for their comments on this paper.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix

### Substantive survey items from CMPS used in models (2016)

[L300] How strongly do you support or oppose Immigrant Rights activism?

Strongly support	5
Somewhat support	4
Neither support or oppose	3
Somewhat oppose	2
Strongly oppose	1
Modified 3-point item	
Oppose (Combines Strongly and Somewhat)	0
Neither support or oppose	1
Support (Combines Strongly & Somewhat)	2

[L366] How worried are you that people you know might be detained or deported for immigration reasons?

Extremely worried	4
Very worried	3
Somewhat worried	2
A little worried	1
Not at all worried	0

[L301] Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Anti-immigrant sentiments are really anti-Latino sentiments.

Strongly Disagree	1
Somewhat Agree	2
Neither Disagree or Agree	3
Somewhat Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

[L364] Now take a moment to think about all the people in your family, your friends, co-workers, and other people you know. Do you happen to know somebody who is an undocumented immigrant? This is completely anonymous and is just for simple demographic analysis.

Yes	1
No/Don't Know	0

[C150 & 151] Combined two items to create one scale of Latino linked fate.

Do you think what happens generally to Latino/Hispanic people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?

For those answered yes, will it affect you?

A lot	3
Some	2
Not very much	1
No/None	0

S10. [If Latino] Hispanics and Latinos have their roots in many different countries in Latin America. To what country do you or your family trace your ancestry?

Created binary variables for Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuban, Dominican Republic (0, 1).

**Table A1.** Descriptive statistics of variables.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Immigrant Rights Activism	3,003	1.42	0.69	0	2
Linked Fate	3,003	1.28	1.19	0	3
Worried Imm Enforcement	3,003	1.44	1.46	0	4
Anti-Imm = Anti-Latino	3,003	3.29	1.12	1	5
Know Undocu. Person	3,003	0.38	0.48	0	1
Participated in Protest	3,003	0.12	0.32	0	1
Republican	3,003	0.21	0.41	0	1
Income	2,762	4.57	3.29	1	12
Male	3,003	0.32	0.47	0	1
Age	2,998	37.39	14.02	18	98
Education	3,003	3.98	1.15	1	6
Mexican	3,003	0.50	0.50	0	1
Puerto Rican	3,003	0.16	0.37	0	1
Dominican	3,003	0.04	0.19	0	1
Cuban	3,003	0.05	0.22	0	1
Born in U.S.	3,003	0.76	0.43	0	1

**Table A2.** Determinants of support for immigrant rights activism (ordered logit with 5-point version of outcome variable).

	(1)
Linked Fate	0.186** (0.0558)
Worried Imm Enforcement	0.310** (0.0515)
Anti-Imm = Anti-Latino	0.723** (0.0778)
Know Undocu. Person	0.252+ (0.145)
Protest Participant	0.778** (0.237)
Republican	-0.498** (0.152)
Income	0.0122 (0.0231)
Male	0.112 (0.119)
Age	-0.00412 (0.00445)
Education	0.0663 (0.0589)
Mexican	0.271+ (0.148)
Puerto Rican	0.444* (0.177)
Dominican	0.128 (0.258)
Cuban	-0.0198 (0.278)
Born in U.S.	-0.419** (0.138)
Observations	2758
Pseudo R-squared	0.147
Log Likelihood	-3098.9
Chi-squared	294.2

Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights included.

+ $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Cutpoints not shown.