Healthy Skepticism or Corrosive Cynicism? New Insights into the Roots and Results of Latino Political Cynicism

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The degree to which citizens and residents trust the government is crucial for the maintenance of democracy and a stable civil society. Trust in government generates willingness to conform to rules and regulations, as well as to work within the democratic system rather than turning to more confrontational or even violent political action. The degree to which immigrants trust the government has symbolic importance, reflecting how well we are staying true to our history as a melting pot and to our history as a nation of immigrants. Residents need to feel safe to contact authorities in case of emergency, without threat of deportation or other negative reprisals related to their immigration status. Existing research finds that Latinos in the United States are increasingly cynical, threatening various negative consequences for the political system. The health of our democracy thus demands a good understanding of the causes and consequences of Latino immigrant trust in government (or lack thereof). This article compares Latino trust in government in the context of the 2012 presidential election campaign—one in which outreach to Latino citizens in pursuit of their votes signaled that they were important and powerful members of the polity—to Latino trust in government in the context of the 2006 immigration marches—one in which Latinos found themselves taking to the streets to protest anti-Latino and anti-immigrant legislation. Latino political trust is sensitive to this shifting context, suggesting that how U.S. society treats Latino immigrants has powerful effects on their political socialization and attitudes.

Keywords: trust in government, Latino immigrants, 2012 election, immigration marches, Latino political attitudes

Political trust matters. The degree to which individuals trust the government is an indicator of the health of civic society and their willingness to support and comply with public policies. Political trust influences the degree to which elected officials are able to govern effectively and the likelihood that the public will believe that the country's resources are being spent wisely rather than wasted. Beyond its importance as an indicator of general civic health, feelings of political trust among traditionally marginalized or underrepresented ethnoracial groups serve as a measure of a healthy democracy—the degree to which members of these communities trust the government is a proxy for how well they are being incorporated into civil society and feel like full members of the polity.

Rogers Smith (1997, 2004) and other scholars have shown how citizenship and inclusion in the U.S. polity has traditionally been defined in terms of race and gender classifications. Throughout U.S. history, immigration and naturalization policies have been explicitly de-

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signed to maintain the United States as a white Protestant nation and to materially privilege the white population (Haney-López 1996; Lipsitz 1998; King 2000). These ascriptive understandings, in turn, have affected the development of political thought within ethnoracial communities, as well as approaches to and engagement with political and collective action (García Bedolla and Michelson 2012; Lavariega Monforti and Michelson 2014). In sum, for many people the terms *American* and *voter* conjure up images of (non-Latino) whites.

When citizens are invited to participate in the electoral process—when they are mobilized to vote—they are given an explicit message of inclusion and political power. Theoretically, this should also influence feelings of trust in government, as those who feel empowered should also feel more trusting of the political system. An opportunity to test this theory arises from the shifting political environment of the last decade, because Latinos have experienced polar extremes in terms of societal messages about their degrees of belonging and political power. In 2006, Latinos were told that they did not belong. In 2012, they were told that they had the power to determine the outcome of the presidential election. In 2006, Latinos were marching in the streets in protest of harsh anti-immigrant legislation passed by the House of Representatives. In 2012, Latinos found Democrats and Republicans walking in *their* streets, asking for their support in the presidential election, and many undocumented immigrants had applied to be part of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program announced by President Obama in July 2012, a program that deferred the threat of deportation and allowed participants to obtain two-year work permits. In sum, Latinos were much more likely to feel a sense of belonging in the United States in the fall of 2012 than in 2006. This should be particularly true for citizens, who were not only being told by media and campaigns that they belonged, but also that they were politically powerful.

This paper tests the hypothesis that Latinos would be more likely to say that they trust the government in the fall of 2012 than in 2006. In addition, in contrast to earlier findings from previous scholarship, citizens are hypothesized to be more trusting than noncitizens, reflecting the sense of empowerment generated via election campaign rhetoric.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL TRUST

Political trust is generally understood as "a basic evaluative orientation toward the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people's normative expectations" (Hetherington 1998, 791). For decades, respondents to surveys have been asked the same basic question meant to measure this trust: "How much of the time do you trust the government to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, some of the time, or never?" Political trust by citizens and residents is crucial for the maintenance of democracy and a stable civil society, and is a powerful predictor of individual political behavior. Rima Wilkes notes, "Trust in government is essential to the health of democratic societies. Trust increases communication between citizens, facilitates the building of democratic organizations, reduces transaction costs and helps to minimise conflict. It also affects tax compliance, electoral choices and policy preferences. Trust matters" (2014, 2).

Low levels of trust lead to decreased compliance with laws, regulations, and judicial decisions, or even active resistance, and make it more difficult for government to take action to address domestic policy concerns (Levi 1998; Scholtz and Lubell 1998; Tyler 1998; Hetherington 1998; Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2001).

The degree to which immigrants trust the government is particularly important because it reflects how well we are staying true to our history as a melting pot and as a nation of immigrants. How well are we incorporating new members of the polity, and how welcome do they feel? On March 31, 2014, the *New York Times* published a story about the tendency of young Latinos—the future voting core of America and the likely key to victory in the 2016 election—to resist registering to vote because of their cynicism about both political parties. Noting the lack of comprehensive immigration reform (or the promise that some might be approved in the near future), or even passage of a narrower piece of immigrant-related legisla-

tion like a DREAM Act, combined with the extremely high rate of deportations imposed by the Obama administration, Latinos in the United States were said to be becoming increasingly cynical, generating negative consequences for the political system.[1]

Reflecting the importance of political trust, scholars for decades have noted with alarm the decreasing trust of Anglo (non-Latino white) Americans. As low as Anglos score on surveys of political trust, African Americans score even lower. In contrast, multiple studies have shown that Latinos are more trusting of government than Anglos (Guzmán 1970; Garcia 1973; de la Garza et al. 1992; Putnam 2001). Sergio Wals (2011) finds that Mexican immigrants with higher levels of trust in the Mexican government are more likely to be trusting of the U.S. government. Early studies of Mexican American youth found that youths become increasingly distrustful as they reach adolescence (Garcia 1973), that those who identify as Chicano are more cynical than those who identify as Mexican American (Gutierrez and Hirsch 1973), and that those living in cities with more Mexican American political influence are more trusting (Buzan 1980). Using data from the 1980s and 1990s, scholars find that Mexican American citizens are more cynical than noncitizens of Mexican descent (Michelson 2001), that Puerto Ricans born in the mainland United States are less trusting than Puerto Ricans born on the island of Puerto Rico (de la Garza 1995; Michelson 2003a), and that Mexican American adults who are more acculturated or see more discrimination against those of Mexican descent are more cynical than those who are less acculturated or see less discrimination (Michelson 2003b). As Roger Waldinger and Lauren Duquette-Rury discuss elsewhere in this volume, many other variables predict Latino immigrants' feelings of trust (or cynicism) in the U.S. government, including plans to return and the degree to which an individual voted or was involved with a political party in their home country. Recent examinations of Latino cynicism clarify that Latino trust in government (or the lack thereof) is a function of their acculturation into a racialized subculture. In other words, as Latinos become acculturated they also become more likely to believe that the government is racist, ethnocentric, or anti-immigrant (Michelson 2007; Lavariega Monforti and Michelson 2014).

LATINO CYNICISM AMID THE 2006 IMMIGRATION MARCHES

In 2006, Latinos across the country were taking to the streets to protest the Sensenbrenner bill (HR 4437). As Amalia Pallares and Nilda Flores-González note, "In 2006, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest a congressional bill that would have criminalized undocumented immigrants and those who assisted them. More than 250 massive marches, or megamarches, as they were popularly called, were held throughout the country in cities large and small during March and April, culminating in simultaneous marches on May 1 that drew an estimated 3.5 to 5 million people" (2010, xv). The 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS), a random-digit dialing sample of 8,634 self-identified Latino residents of the United States conducted from November 17, 2005, through August 4, 2006, was in the field amid this political environment of threat and racism.[2] Consistent with previous survey research, LNS respondents are quite trusting of the government, particularly when compared with national surveys of the general pop-

1. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act would provide a pathway to regularization of the immigration status of undocumented youth who graduate from college or serve in the military; the exact list of eligibility requirements has shifted over time as various concerns about the original DREAM Act have been addressed.

2. The Latino National Survey was conducted from November 2005 and August 2006, with a New England extension conducted in late 2007 and early 2008, for a total of 9,834 respondents (8,634 in the original survey and 1,200 in the New England extension). To focus on Latino political attitudes from the appropriate time period, this study uses only the original LNS dataset.

ulation. In the 2008 American National Election Study (ANES), only 5 percent of respondents said they trust the government "just about always." In fact, not since 1966 have more than 9 percent of ANES respondents to this question given the most trusting response. In contrast, 12.3 percent of respondents to the LNS said that they trust the government "just about always." In addition, 19.3 percent said they trust the government most of the time, 49.8 percent trust the government some of the time, and 18.6 percent never trust the government.

Michael Dawson's (1994) theory of linked fate posits that individuals who share a strong group identity believe that their personal fate is tied to that of the collective; in other words, that the success of individuals and the group are linked. The 2006 LNS data indicate that the path to cynicism is the result of a lack of a feeling of belonging. A strong feeling of linked fate inoculates Latinos against the corrosive effect of acculturation by providing a sense of belonging with the Latino community. As Lavariega Monforti and Michelson note, "Cynicism is not just a result of being exposed to the 'harsh reality' of racism and discrimination in this country, or to the political attacks on immigrants such as those experienced by the Latino community in 2006. Rather, cynicism (or trust) is a reflection of a sense of belonging and community, of social capital and interpersonal trust" (2014, 106).

Using a survey of Texans conducted in the summer of 2012, Benjamin Knoll, Rene Rocha, and Robert Wrinkle (2013) find that levels of Secure Communities enforcement affects feelings of trust in government. Their survey of Anglos and Latinos in Texas revealed that foreign-born Latinos are more trusting of government in low-enforcement areas than are U.S.-born Latinos and Anglos, but that Latinos become less trusting as enforcement increases. Their finding about Secure Communities enforcement is consistent with the LNS data: Latinos who are signaled by the local government that they do not belong, through increased enforcement of Secure Communities, are more cynical; low enforcement signals to foreign-born Latinos that they are more welcome, generating increased trust.

LATINO POLITICAL POWER AND THE 2012 ELECTION

Although racism and anti-immigrant sentiment continue to be widespread in the United States, recent demographic trends and political events have served to alter the political context in such a way as possibly to reduce Latino cynicism. In 2012, Latinos found themselves courted by politicians on both sides of the aisle and repeatedly reminded of their potential political power. In such a context, previous findings about predictors of political trust may no longer be relevant or may work in different ways.

Latinos have been characterized as a sleeping giant for decades; in the weeks leading up to the 2012 presidential election evidence from both major political parties suggested that they believed 2012 would be the year that the giant finally awoke. As Gabriel Sanchez notes, "2012 was undoubtedly big for Latinos" (2013). According to Eric Rodriguez of the National Council of La Raza, outreach to Latinos in 2012 was notable in two ways: for the massive outreach to Latino eligible and registered voters, and for the four interviews provided by presidential candidates to Spanish-language news media outlets, including a bilingual presidential debate (2013). The cover story of the March 5, 2012, issue of *Time* featured an array of Latino faces titled, "Yo Decido. Why Latinos will pick the next President."

A *Yahoo!News* story on September 24, 2012, titled "Vota por mi! Why the Latino vote is crucial in 2012," noted the Spanish news media participation by Obama and Romney, commenting, "The bilingual events were yet another reminder of how crucial the Latino vote will be in this election." The story notes that this "is why both candidates are aggressively courting Latino voters," including high-profile speaking roles for prominent Latinos at both party conventions, endorsements from well-known Latino entertainers, Spanish-language advertisements that included President Obama signing off with "soy Barack Obama y apruebo este mensaje," and Republican spots featuring Romney's bilingual son. "Obama even appeared on a popular local Miami radio station with a Cuban-American host who calls himself

The Pimp with the Limp" (Tapper, Coolidge, and Pham 2012). The power of the Latino vote in 2012 was also emphasized by Obama's July 2012 announcement of the DACA program, widely seen as an election-year move meant to attract Latino support and soften criticism of his administration's lack of progress on comprehensive immigration reform.

The degree to which both parties courted the Latino vote in 2012 is also reflected in the increased level of spending on Spanish-language television advertisements in 2012 compared to previous presidential election campaigns. Although not all Latinos speak Spanish or get their news from Spanish-language television, such spending is a good indicator of outreach to Latino voters because Spanish-language ads are the only advertising specifically targeted to Latino voters. According to the ad tracking firm Kantar Media CMAG, spending in 2012 was eight times what was spent in 2008, which was itself a record year; spending on Spanish-language ads increased from $3 million to nearly $50 million between the 2000 and 2008 campaigns (Abrajano 2010; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Kantar Media 2012).

At the same time that Latinos (especially likely voters) were courted and empowered in 2012, however, other aspects of the political context at the time might be expected to maintain and exacerbate Latino cynicism. Even as the Latino community welcomed and praised the DACA program, they noted its timing (June 15, 2012) as a blatant effort to court the Latino vote in advance of the November election. Obama was widely criticized as the "Deporter in Chief," and was pressed multiple times during the 2012 campaign by Univision news anchor Jorge Ramos for his failure to deliver on 2008 campaign promises for comprehensive immigration reform. More about this aspect of the 2012 political context is discussed by Garcia-Rios and Barreto elsewhere in this volume. These aspects of the 2012 context notwithstanding, I hypothesize that Latinos in 2012 felt more included and powerful as compared to 2006, and that this will be reflected in increased expressions of trust in government.

DATA AND HYPOTHESES

This paper uses data from three national surveys: the 2005–2006 LNS and two conducted just prior to the November 2012 presidential election, the Latino Immigrant National Election Study (LINES) and the ANES. The LINES preelection wave was conducted from October 4 through November 5, 2012, and includes 855 respondents. The LINES postelection wave was conducted from November 12 through December 20, 2012, and includes 886 respondents, 435 from the preelection phase and 451 fresh respondents. All respondents are adult immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. Interviews were conducted by telephone in both English and Spanish, including a mix of landlines and cellular numbers (for more information, see McCann and Jones-Correa 2012). Data collection for the ANES 2012 Time Series Study began in early September and continued into January 2013. Preelection interviews were conducted with study respondents during the two months prior to the 2012 elections and were followed by postelection reinterviewing beginning November 7, 2012. It includes 1,007 Latino respondents (for more information, see ANES 2013).

An important feature of the LINES data and ANES data is the timing: just before the 2012 presidential election. This allows for comparisons with and hypotheses related to the context of Latino political power with the 2006 LNS, which also asked a nationwide sample of Latinos about their feelings of trust in government. The major hypotheses investigated here are that Latino trust in government in 2012 will be stronger than in 2006, and that in 2012 Latino citizens will be more trusting than noncitizens, reflecting the context of a presidential election that highlighted citizens' ability to vote and their potential power to decide the outcome of that election, whereas noncitizens could not and likely were negatively impacted by the continued delay of comprehensive immigration reform:

> H_1: Latinos surveyed in 2012 will be more trusting of government than will Latinos surveyed in 2006.

H_2: Latino citizens surveyed in 2012 will be more trusting of government than will Latino citizens surveyed in 2006.

H_3: Latino citizens surveyed in 2012 will be more trusting of government than will Latino noncitizens.

These hypotheses are explored with models that include a variety of independent variables found in previous scholarship to be important predictors of trust in government among Latinos. Consistent with that scholarship, the models include tests of the following subhypotheses:

H_4: Latino trust in government will be negatively correlated with perceived discrimination against Latinos and personal experiences of discrimination.

H_5: Latino trust in government will be positively correlated with preference for an American identity (rather than a Latino or Hispanic or country-of-origin identity).

H_6: Latino trust in government will be positively correlated with feelings of linked fate with the Latino community.

H_7: Latino trust in government will be positively correlated with support for blending in to the host culture of the United States rather than maintaining a distinct culture.

Additional predictors of trust in government found to be important in previous scholarship are also included: language of interview, English-language fluency, partisanship, approval of the president (Barack Obama), trust in government in the country of origin, and gender, as well as standard sociodemographic variables of age, education, and income.[3]

Many surveys, including those examined here, ask respondents whether they were contacted before the election and asked to vote. For example, the 2012 LINES survey asked, "Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year?" Respondents were also asked, "Other than someone from the two major parties, did anyone (else) call you up or come around and talk to you about supporting specific candidates in this last election?" Although these self-reports might initially seem a good source of information about the extent of mobilization efforts, they are known to be highly unreliable (Vavreck 2007; Michelson 2014). Thus, they are not included in this analysis.

Dependent Variables

The analysis here focuses on answers to the standard *trust* item, as well as an alternative item, *big interests*. The LINES and ANES items are worded as follows. *Trust*: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" *Big interests*: "Would you say the government in Washington is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?" These questions were also asked in the 2006 LNS, albeit with different wording for *big interests*. LNS respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "Government is pretty much run by just a few big interests looking out for themselves, and not for the benefit of all the people." Response categories for the single *trust* item also varied. "Never" was included in the LNS and in the ANES alternate question. "Never" is not included in the LINES *trust* item wording or the ANES standard wording for face-to-face interviews but is recorded as a volunteered response; ANES respondents interviewed via the Internet did not have this response option. In the comparisons that follow, parallel questions are used as often as possible and tables indicate when the question wording (or response categories) differed for each group of respondents.

3. Some respondents switched languages between the pre- and post-LINES surveys. Because the trust question was asked during the preelection interview, this analysis uses language used in the preelection interview. Unfortunately, although the ANES was conducted in both English and Spanish the language of interview is not included in the dataset. An alternative measure, self-reported language use at home, is thus used to explore both datasets.

LINES includes an additional two questions that are traditionally used in ANES analyses to construct a trust-in-government index (see Wilkes 2014), these questions (*waste* and *corrupt*) are not included in the LNS and thus no comparisons between 2006 and 2012 levels of trust in government are possible with those items, but they are used to construct a trust in government index to test my secondary hypotheses. The question wordings for those additional questions are as follows. *Waste*: "Do you think that people in government in Washington waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?" *Corrupt*: "How many of the people running the government in Washington are corrupt? All, most, about half, a few, or none?" To construct the index, responses to all four trust questions were recoded on a scale of 0 to 100, summed, and scaled to create an index that ranges from 0 to 100.

RESULTS

The most basic hypothesis examined here is that Latinos were more trusting in 2012 than they were in 2006. This is tested by comparing responses to the 2006 LNS and 2012 LINES and ANES surveys, noting the different response categories available to respondents in each survey. Results are shown in table 1. Trust in government is notably higher among LINES respondents than among LNS respondents. Note that the LNS and ANES include both first-generation (foreign-born) and U.S.-born respondents, whereas LINES respondents are all first-generation. LINES respondents are the most trusting, 21.7 percent giving the most trusting response versus only 12.3 percent of all LNS respondents and 14.6 percent of all first-generation LNS respondents. Respondents to the ANES, in contrast, are less likely to give the most trusting response but are also less likely to give the least trusting response. For example, they are more likely to say that they trust the government "most of the time" when asked the standard question, and less likely to say never when asked the revised question, 7.4 percent for Latinos interviewed face-to-face and 8.0 percent for Latinos interviewed via the Internet, compared with 18.6 percent of LNS respondents. Overall, there is some support for H_1 when comparing the LNS to the LINES, but less when comparing the LNS to the ANES.

H_1 was further explored with comparisons of responses to the *big interests* question. Results are shown in table 2. In 2006, only 30.5 percent of Latinos responding to the LNS, and only 33.9 percent of first-generation respondents, said that they disagreed with the question and believed that government was run for the benefit of all people. There is mixed evidence of increased trust when comparing this with responses to the more neutral question wording used in the LINES and the ANES. Whereas 54.5 percent of LINES respondents gave the trusting response to the question, only 28.2 percent of ANES Latino respondents gave this response, a level of trust statistically indistinguishable from the 2006 LINES proportion.

Digging deeper into the data, respondents are divided into subgroups based on nativity and citizenship, as appropriate to each dataset. These comparisons are shown in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 examines trust in government among first-generation respondents only. Findings are similar to those from table 1: LINES respondents are notably more trusting than LNS respondents, particularly when looking at the percentage of respondents giving the most trusting response. ANES respondents, however, are less likely than LNS respondents to say that they are very trusting. At the same time, LNS respondents are much more likely to say that they never trust the government compared to ANES respondents. Table 4 examines first-generation Latino responses to the *big interests* item. In 2006, responses to this item were quite cynical, only 33.9 percent of first-generation LNS respondents disagreeing with the question; a very similar 34.5 percent of 2012 ANES respondents also gave the trusting answer to this question. In the 2012 LINES survey, by contrast, 54.5 percent of respondents gave the trusting answer. In sum, changes over time are not consistent, though this may in part be an artifact of the shifting question wording.

Previous scholarship has found that citizens are less trusting of the government, reflecting increased awareness of the American

Table 1. Latino Trust in Government, Standard Question

	2006 LNS			2012 ANES			
	ALL	First Generation	2012 LINES	Standard Response Categories		Revised Response Categories	
	N=8,634	N=6,184	N=783	F2F (N=223)	Internet (N=281)	F2F (N=245)	Internet (N=251)
Just about always	12.3	14.6	21.7	4.5	6.8	Always 2.0	Always 1.2
Most of the time	19.3	16.8	17.9	27.4	32.4	20.4	15.5
Only some of the time	49.8	49.2	57.9	61.0	60.9	About half the time 29.0 Some of the time 41.2	About half the time 35.9 Some of the time 39.4
Never	18.6	19.3	2.6 {Vol.}	7.2 {Vol.}	N/A	7.4	8.0

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: Figures in percentages. "Never" is not included in the LINES *trust* item wording or the ANES standard wording for face-to-face interviews but is recorded as a volunteered response; ANES respondents interviewed via the Internet did not have this response option. LNS data includes respondents from the original 2005–2006 survey only (N=8,634); all LINES respondents are first generation. ANES includes 1,007 Latino respondents, half of which were asked each version of the trust in government question. Data used to generate this figure is shown in table 1A.

Table 2. Latino Trust in Government, Big Interests Question

	2006 LNS			
	All (N=7,663)	First Generation (N=5,336)	2012 LINES (N=725)	2012 ANES (N=979)
	Government is pretty much run by just a few big interests looking out for themselves, and not for the benefit of all the people.		Would you say the government in Washington is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?	
Agree/big interests	69.5	66.1	45.5	71.8
Disagree/all the people	30.5	33.9	54.5	28.2

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: Figures in percentages. LNS data includes respondents from the original 2005–2006 survey only (N=8,634); all LINES respondents are first generation.

Table 3. First-Generation Latinos Who Trust the Government

	LNS (2006)			LINES (2012)			ANES (2012)			
	All	Citizens	Noncitizens	ALL	Citizens	Noncitizens	All, Standard Response Categories		All, Alternative Response Categories	
	N=6,184	N=2,342	N=3,842	N=783	N=319	N=464	F2F (N=63)	Internet (N=119)	F2F (N=76)	Internet (N=109)
Just about always	14.6	12.1	16.1	21.7	25.1	19.4	9.5	10.1	Always 5.3	Always 1.8
Most of the time	16.8	18.9	15.6	17.9	16.9	18.5	36.5	35.3	22.4	22.0
Only some of the time	49.2	52.4	47.3	57.9	53.9	60.6	52.4	54.6	About half the time 32.9 Some of the time 34.2	About half the time 39.5 Some of the t ime 27.5
Never	19.3	16.6	21.0	2.6 {Vol.}	4.1 {Vol.}	1.5 {Vol.}	1.6 {Vol.}	N/A	5.3	9.2

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.

Note: Figures in percentages. "Never" is not included in the LINES *trust* item wording or the ANES face-to-face standard wording but is recorded as a volunteered response. ANES respondents interviewed via the Internet did not have this response option. LNS data includes first generation respondents from the original 2005–2006 survey only (N=8,634); all LINES respondents are first generation.

Table 4. First-Generation Latinos Who Trust the Government, Big Interests Question

	2006 LNS (N=5,336)	2012 LINES (N=725)	2012 ANES (N=359)
	Government is pretty much run by just a few big interests looking out for themselves, and not for the benefit of all the people.	Would you say the government in Washington is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?	
Agree/big interests	66.1	45.5	65.7
Disagree/all the people	33.9	54.5	34.5

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: Figures in percentages.

Table 5. Latino Citizens and Noncitizens Who Trust the Government, Standard Question

	LNS Noncitizens (N=3,842)	LNS Citizens (N=4,792)	LINES Noncitizens (N=464)	LINES Citizens (N=319)
Just about always	16.1	9.2	19.4	25.1
Most of the time	15.6	22.3	18.5	16.9
Only some of the time	47.3	51.8	60.6	53.8
Never	21.0	16.7	1.5 {Vol.}	4.1 {Vol.}

Source: Authors' compilation based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: "Never" is not included in the LINES *trust* item wording but is recorded as a volunteered response.

Table 6. Latino Citizens and Citizens Who Trust the Government, Big Interests Question

	LNS Noncitizens (N=3,232)	LNS Citizens (N=4,431)	LINES Noncitizens (N=429)	LINES Citizens (N=296)
	Government is pretty much run by just a few big interests looking out for themselves, and not for the benefit of all the people.		Would you say the government in Washington is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?	
Agree/big interests	64.3	73.3	42.7	49.7
Disagree/all the people	35.7	26.7	57.3	50.3

Source: Authors' compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: Figures in percentages.

norm of cynicism or exposure to discrimination and racism. Here, I hypothesize that this will be reversed given the supportive context of 2012. Because the ANES only includes citizens, this hypothesis is tested using the LNS and LINES data only.

As shown in table 5, trust among noncitizen Latinos shows little movement over time, 16.1 percent of 2006 LNS respondents and 19.4 percent of 2012 LINES respondents giving the most trusting answer. In contrast, trust among citizens differs by a large and statistically significant amount, from 9.2 percent in 2006 to 25.1 percent in 2012, supporting H_2. Table 6 illustrates similar movement for responses to the *big interests* question, though again these results must be interpreted with caution given the item wording differences. In addition, trust

in 2012 among Latino citizens is higher than trust among non-Latino citizens, 19.4 percent and 25.1 percent giving the most trusting response. Responses to the *big interests* item differ in the opposite direction, however, 57.3 percent of noncitizens and 50.3 percent of citizens giving the trusting response. In sum, evidence is mixed for H_3.

Secondary Hypotheses

As noted, previous scholarship has devised and tested various models of trust in government among Latinos, using as predictors measures of discrimination, identity, linked fate, and support for acculturation into mainstream U.S. society. In addition to testing my major hypothesis about shifting trust among Latinos over time, I used the LINES data to test findings based on previous surveys of Latinos. However, in part because of the panel structure of the data, not all items relevant to these hypotheses were asked of all LINES respondents. Measures of discrimination, linked fate, and support for acculturation were all asked only of postelection respondents. To examine the effect of these variables on feelings of political trust, the Amelia II package in R was used to impute missing data (Honaker, King, and Blackwell 2013).

Two measures of perceived discrimination are used to explore trust among Latinos: one about personal experiences, and one about the degree to which respondents believe that discrimination against Latinos and Hispanics exists in the United States. The two items have been found in previous surveys to generate notably different reported levels of discrimination among Latino respondents (Fraga et al. 2010, 71–72). In general, Latinos are much more likely to report discrimination against Latinos as a group than personal experiences based on their ethnicity; both measures are used here to test H_4. The importance of preference for an American identity is included to test H_5. H_6 is tested with inclusion of responses to questions about linked fate; respondents were asked, "Do you think that what happens generally to Hispanic people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" Those who answered yes were further asked whether they thought it would affect them a lot, some, or not very much. These two items are combined to generate a measure of linked fate ranging from 1 = none to 4 = a lot. To test H_7, the multivariate models include responses to questions about the importance of blending in, "How important is it for Hispanics to: Change so that they blend into the larger American society?" and maintaining a distinct culture, "How important is it for Hispanics to: Maintain their distinct cultures?" Given that very few (N = 7 and N = 4) LINES respondents chose the "not at all important" response to each item, in the analysis those responses are recoded with the adjacent response ("not very important").

Secondary Hypotheses Results

Two multivariate models were estimated, as shown in table 7, one with the basic trust in government question, *trust*, as the dependent variable, and one using a trust index constructed from all four trust questions (*trust*, *big interests*, *waste*, and *corrupt*). Reflecting previous scholarship, the models include variables indicating language of interview, use of Spanish at home, partisanship, approval of President Barack Obama, trust in the government of the country of origin, gender, age, education, and income. In addition, data is weighted to be nationally representative. Few respondents declined to answer the *trust* item; more responses are missing (and thus more are imputed) for the trust index.[4]

Controlling for other variables, citizenship is not a statistically significant predictor of political trust among LINES respondents, disconfirming H_3. As shown in model 1, political trust is stronger among supporters of President Obama, older respondents, respondents with lower levels of household income, and among those who trusted the government in their country of origin. Model 2 predicts levels of trust as measured by the four-item index. Again, citizenship is not a statistically significant predictor of trust; respondents who see less discrimination against Latinos, who support the president, and whose interviews were conducted in Spanish have stronger scores on the trust-in-government index.

4. Seventy responses to *trust* are imputed; 332 responses to *trust index* are imputed.

Table 7. Multivariate Ordered Logit Models of Latino Trust in Government

	Model 1 (Trust, 3 Categories)		Model 2 (Trust Index)	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Citizen	.181	.218	.249	3.459
Years in United States	−.005	.012	−.164	.137
Discrimination against Hispanics	−.163	.097	−3.350*	1.108
Discrimination, personal	−.057	.107	.165	1.131
American identity	−.026	.327	−6.752	3.630
Linked fate	.116	.108	−.179	1.214
Blend in	.138	.212	.103	2.363
Distinct	.010	.186	1.212	1.789
Spanish interview	.259	.387	9.939*	4.333
Democrat	−.089	.210	.778	2.441
Approve President Obama	.567*	.143	6.695*	1.493
Female	.075	.197	−1.188	2.366
Age	.023*	.011	.177	.099
Education	.021	.027	−.161	.263
Income	−.221*	.099	−1.445	1.112
Trust government, country of origin	.260*	.124	4.771	2.114
Cut_1	3.189	1.245	—	
Cut_2	4.260	1.254	—	
Constant	—		23.313	12.615
N	666		670	

Source: Author's compilation based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.
Note: Data is weighted to be nationally representative. Missing data is imputed using the Amelia II package in R.
*$p < .05$ (two-tailed)

DISCUSSION

Much changed for Latinos in America between 2006 and 2012. In 2006, marchers felt compelled to take to the streets in massive numbers to protest the racism and anti-immigrant sentiment expressed by the Sensenbrenner bill. Although the size of the megaprotests was a sign of power and solidarity, that they were seen as necessary was also a reminder of Latinos' lack of traditional political power (Beltrán 2010). In 2012, in contrast, Latinos received frequent reminders of their power to determine the outcome of the presidential election through the traditional and conventional power of voting. Citizens in particular were told that they were an important component of the American political system. This paper explores the hypothesis that this shifting political context led Latinos, particularly Latino citizens, to become more trusting of the government, reversing a decades-long trend of findings that Latino trust decreases with acculturation into the U.S. system. Additional variables in the models sought to confirm findings from previous research.

Overall, and most significantly, the main hypothesis is confirmed by the LINES data: Latinos surveyed in 2012 were much more likely to say that they trust the government than were Latinos surveyed in 2006, and the difference is particularly large when comparing responses from U.S. citizens. This is a marked change from previous findings. When signaled by elites and media that they were welcome and that they were important, Latino immigrants said they were more trusting of the government.

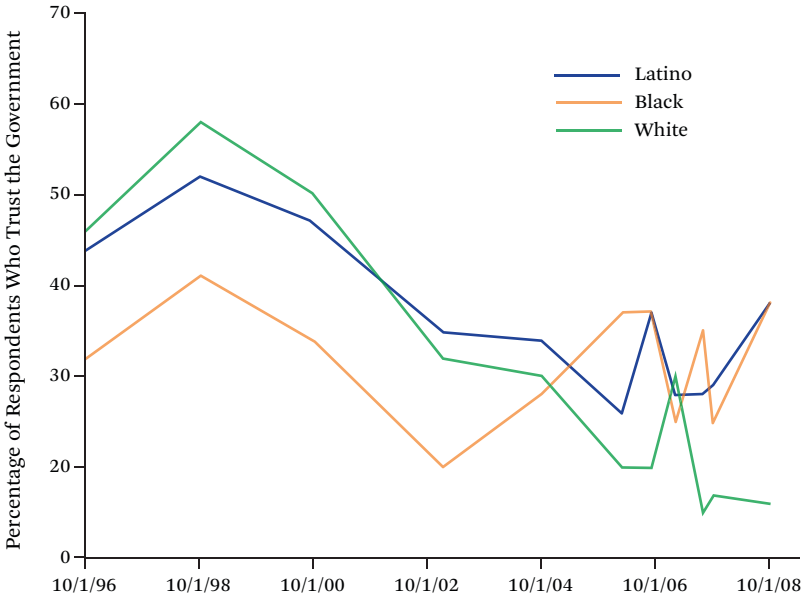
Given the limitations of cross-sectional sur-

vey data, alternative explanations exist for these observed shifts. One is that Latinos were responding in 2012 to the candidacy of Barack Obama and the control of the presidency by the Democratic Party; previous research has shown a strong link between which political party controls the presidency and how partisans feel about the government (Keele 2005). Not all Latinos are Democrats; in fact, 37 percent of Latino voters supported Republican Ronald Reagan in 1984, and 40 percent supported Republican George W. Bush in 2004. However, shifting levels of trust may nevertheless reflect the change in who controls the presidency. This is tested by examining the timing of the shift in Latino trust in government over time, from 2000 to 2012, encompassing both George W. Bush's Republican and Obama's Democratic administrations. A second alternative explanation is that the observed shift is part of a broader shift in public trust in government—that Latinos shifted their opinions in sync with non-Latinos in response to broader contextual shifts in the political environment. This is tested by examining shifts in public trust in government for the same 2000 to 2012 period for a variety of ethnoracial groups.

BROADER TRENDS IN TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

As noted, public opinion surveys have measured trust in government for decades, allowing for examination of shifts over time, although longitudinal data on Latinos (and blacks) is elusive because of the small number of Latino respondents included in most national surveys. For example, although the ANES has collected data on trust in government since 1958, no Latinos are included before 1978, and the total number of Latino respondents from 1978 to 2008 is 2,290, almost a quarter of those from 2008 alone. Combining data from a variety of sources, including the LNS, the ANES, the Pew Hispanic Center, and the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, reveals a clear divergence in patterns of Latino (and black) trust in government from white trust in government, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. White, Black, and Latino Trust in Government, 2000–2012



Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2010, ANES 2012, Pew Research Center 2015.
Note: Data points indicate the percentage of respondents saying that they trust the government always or most of the time.

Table 8. Trust in Government, 2000–2012

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2012
White Democrats	49.8	50.6	37.7	22.7	33.6	20.9
	(N=518)[c]	(N=433)[c]	(N=308)[c]	(N=959)[a]	(N=214)[c]	(N=698)[c]
White Independents	39.0	50.7	48.4	23.3	28.6	10.9
	(N=141)[c]	(N=67)[c]	(N=62)[c]	(N=288)[a]	(N=63)[c]	(N=256)[c]
White Republicans	42.4	62.2	59.6	44.3	26.1	13.3
	(N=530)[c]	(N=534)[c]	(N=376)[c]	(N=742)[a]	(N=234)[c]	(N=824)[c]
Latino Democrats	44.4	58.5	42.2	29.3	32.1	42.6
	(N=54)[c]	(N=41)[c]	(N=45)[c]	(N=3,970)[b]	(N=137)[c]	(N=498)[d]
Latino Independents	50.0	50.0	20.0	29.0	33.3	26.8
	(N=16)[c]	(N=4)[c]	(N=10)[c]	(N=3,146)[b]	(N=30)[c]	(N=112)[d]
Latino Republicans	37.1	67.7	51.4	43.1	42.9	40.0
	(N=35)[c]	(N=31)[c]	(N=35)[c]	(N=1,518)[b]	(N=42)[c]	(N=110)[d]

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2010, ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013, Pew Research Center 2015.

Note: Cell entries indicate percentage of respondents saying that they trust the government always or most of the time. Partisans include leaners.

[a]2006 Pew Survey (in Pew 2015).

[b]2006 Latino National Survey (in Fraga et al. 2013).

[c]The table gives data by year. The ANES data for 2000–2008 is from the cumulative datafile (ANES 2010) and ANES data for 2012 is from ANES 2012.

[d]2012 LINES.

White distrust in government shows a fairly steady increase over time, particularly since 2002. In contrast, Latino (and black) distrust increases from 2002 to 2006 and then stays fairly constant in 2008, then drops in 2010 and 2012.

Although not conclusive, these trends are consistent with the explanation offered here, that Latino trust in government is responsive to the political climate and to signals of belonging issued by policymakers and policies. Black and Latino trust are moving together, but white trust follows a different trajectory. This suggests that changes in the political climate including the election of the first black president in U.S. history and the related attentiveness to black and Latino voters by both political parties is affecting black and Latino attitudes toward the government. Further discussion of black public opinion and political trust is beyond the scope of this paper. For Latinos, the long-term trends and subgroup differences (citizens versus noncitizens) provide suggestive evidence that Latino trust is responsive to shifts in the political environment.

Trust in government is responsive to which party controls the presidency (Keele 2005), but trust among Latinos (and blacks) may also reflect minority empowerment. Unfortunately, there is limited data available on how nonwhite trust in government by party affiliation varies over time, due to small sample sizes in most public opinion surveys. Some trends are still visible, as shown in table 8, but note that for many of the cell entries these percentages are based on fairly small numbers of responses. Focusing on the larger cell sizes, Latino Republicans and Independents held about the same level of trust between 2006 and 2012, but Latino Democrats became more trusting, indicating that minority empowerment is not the mechanism driving increased trust. White Republicans and Independents became less trusting between 2006 and 2012 while white Democrats were more trusting in 2008 but less trusting in 2012.

Table 9. Latino Feelings of External Political Efficacy

	ANES (N=510)	LINES Citizens (N=324)	LINES Noncitizens (N=483)	LNS Citizens (N=4,465)	LNS Noncitizens (N=3,305)
	Public officials don't care much what people like me think.				
Disagree	17.7	27.2	27.2	—	
	People like me don't have any say about what the government does.			People like me don't have any say in what the government does.	
Disagree	35.5	41.2	28.9	44.9	40.7

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2012, McCann and Jones-Correa 2012, Fraga et al. 2013.
Note: All figures in percentages.

TRUST AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

A considerable body of work finds that trust in government is closely related to feelings of external political efficacy, although the concepts differ. Stephen C. Craig defines trust as "the anticipated quality of government outputs," and external efficacy as "the degree to which an individual perceives his political actions as being (potentially) successful" (1979, 229). In other words, while trust is about the quality of government action, external efficacy is about government responsiveness. This suggests that the increased outreach to Latino voters between 2006 and 2012 should be reflected not just in feelings of trust but also in feelings of empowerment. In fact, heightened feelings of external political efficacy between 2006 and 2012 may be the mechanism through which trust increased among Latino citizens.

There are two traditional measures of external efficacy; respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with the following items: "Public officials don't care much what people like me think" (*dontcare*), and "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" (*nosay*). While both items were included in the 2012 ANES and LINES, only *nosay* was included in the LNS, although with slightly different wording ("People like me don't have any say in what the government does.")

Given that feelings of political trust increased among Latinos between 2006 and 2012 due to increased outreach by politicians and heightened feelings of belonging, it follows that feelings of external political efficacy should also have increased, particularly among Latino citizens. Using responses to the *nosay* item in the three surveys generates some evidence that this is the case, as shown in table 9. In 2006, citizens reported slightly stronger feelings of external political efficacy than did noncitizens, 44.9 percent versus 40.7 percent, a statistically significant difference of 4.2 percentage points (S.E. = 1.1). Among respondents in 2012 (LINES), citizens reported much stronger feelings of external political efficacy, 41.2 percent versus 28.9 percent, a statistically significant difference of 12.1 percentage points (S.E. = 3.4). However, looking again at the 2012 data, there is no difference in how citizens and noncitizens responded to the *dontcare* item. At the same time, Latino respondents to the ANES and LINES reported somewhat weaker feelings of external political efficacy (in 2012) than did respondents to the LNS (in 2006). In sum, there is some evidence that the same contextual factors generating increased trust between 2006 and 2012 also led to increased feelings of external efficacy among Latino citizens, but the efficacy data is incomplete and inconsistent.

CONCLUSION

The degree to which members of ethnoracial minority groups feel that they belong to the broader polity has important effects on their method and degree of acculturation. The depiction in 2012 of Latinos as deciders, as American voters, combined with outreach that respected their culture—including Spanish-

language television advertisements and candidate appearances on Spanish-language television—sent a clear message to Latinos: *you belong*. This support and inclusion led Latinos to be less cynical about their government despite the continued inability of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform, or even a DREAM Act, and the continued high level of deportations suffered by the Latino community under the Obama administration.

The wake of the 2012 elections brought renewed attention to the power of the Latino vote. Media and elites recognized the contribution of Latino voters to Obama's landslide victory and predicted how this might influence future contests. A postmortem analysis of why Republican nominee Mitt Romney did so poorly noted the need to reach out to Latino voters to keep the party competitive. Speculation abounded regarding how this demonstration of Latino political power—and the likelihood that the growing Latino electorate would continue to be decisive—would affect immigration policy reform. Regardless of how these trends play out, evidence from the LINES and LNS surveys in the two very different political contexts of 2006 and 2012 suggests that the way U.S. society treats Latino immigrants has powerful effects on their political socialization and attitudes.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Data for Figure 1

	Latino	Black	White	Source
10/31/12	38	38	16	ANES
10/4/11	29	25	17	PRC
8/21/11	28	35	15	PRC
3/1/11	28	25	30	PRC
9/6/10	37	37	20	PRC
3/21/10	26	37	20	PRC
10/15/08	34	28	30	ANES
1/09/07	35	20	32	PRC
10/15/04	47	34	50	ANES
10/15/02	52	41	58	ANES
10/15/00	44	32	46	ANES

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES 2010, ANES 2012, Pew Research Center 2015.

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