Anti-Immigration Media Portrayals and Latinx Well-Being
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ABSTRACT. The current study examined the immediate impact of exposure to anti-immigration sentiments on the psychological well-being of Latinx young adults. A quasiexperimental, mixed-factorial design was used to analyze differences in mood, stress, ethnic identification, and motivation to take action after exposure to a video stressor across four groups: immigrants from Latin America, first-generation Latinx Americans, second-generation and up Latinx Americans, and non-Latinx, nonimmigrant, White Americans. Three hundred forty participants, ages 18–30, were randomly assigned to either an experimental condition involving an anti-immigration video or a control condition involving a multivitamin video. As hypothesized, those who viewed the anti-immigration video exhibited significantly higher levels of negative affect ($p < .001; \eta^2_p =.06$), stress ($p < .001; \eta^2_p =.04$), and motivation to take action ($p < .001; \eta^2_p =.07$) than those who viewed the multivitamin video. Additionally, Ethnicity/Generation American was associated with higher negative affect ($p < .001, \eta^2_p =.06$), stress ($p = .01, \eta^2_p =.04$), and motivation to take action ($p < .001, \eta^2_p =.10$) after video viewings, such that immigrants from Latin American countries and first-generation Latinx Americans tended to have greater levels than the other groups (pairwise comparison $ps < .05$). Contrary to our hypothesis, results indicated that first-generation Latinx Americans ($p = .01$) and non-Latinx, nonimmigrant participants ($p < .001$) experienced a significant decrease in ethnic identification after viewing the anti-immigration video. Our results indicate that, across the differing Ethnicities/Generations American, participants are impacted by anti-immigration sentiments in the media.

Keywords: immigration, ethnic identification, minority status stress, mental health, discrimination

ABSTRACTO. El estudio examinó el impacto inmediato de la exposición a sentimientos anti-inmigrantes en el bienestar psicológico de los adultos jóvenes latinx. Se utilizó un diseño cuasiexperimental de factores mixtos para analizar las diferencias en el estado de ánimo, el estrés, la identificación étnica y la motivación para actuar después de ser expuesto a un video estresante a través de cuatro grupos: inmigrantes de América Latina, latinoamericanos de primera generación, latinoamericanos de segunda generación para arriba, y los estadounidenses blancos que no son latinx o inmigrante. Trescientos cuarenta participantes, de entre 18 y 30 años, fueron asignados aleatoriamente a la condición experimental que involucra un video anti-inmigratorio o a la condición de control que involucra un video multivitamínico. Como hipotetizado, aquellos que vieron el video
The United States is currently experiencing a state of civil unrest as historically marginalized groups attempt to dismantle the foundations of racism and discrimination that have long plagued the nation. However, expressions of intolerance and prejudice continue to rise, fostering division among the people (Flores et al., 2010). An ethnic group that is continuously targeted is the Latinx community. According to a recent Pew survey, 38% of Latinxs indicated they had experienced a form of discrimination in the past year (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2020). For many, it was in the form of being called an offensive name (28%), being criticized for speaking Spanish in public (20%), or being told to return to their home country (19%).

A major contributing factor for these intolerant behaviors is the growing anti-immigration climate found in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, the largest immigrant group in the United States is from Latin America, specifically Mexico, and constitutes 25% of today’s immigrants (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2020). As a result, the topic of Latinx immigration has become a divisive political concern, leading to Latinx immigrants being stigmatized and demonized in the media (Flores et al., 2010). For instance, former President Trump used incendiary, anti-Latinx immigration rhetoric throughout his 2016 election campaign and presidency, using words such as “criminals,” “animals,” and “invaders” when discussing the topic of immigration (Fritze, 2019). Such rhetoric has promoted the current negative racial climate toward Latinx Americans, leading them to be targets of ethnic discrimination, xenophobic sentiments, and violent crimes, regardless of immigration status (Flores et al., 2010).

Although an ethnic group, Latinxs are now treated as a racial group and are undergoing racialization, where native and foreign-born Latinxs are grouped together and assumed undocumented (Anderson & Finch, 2017). As a result, Latinxs as a whole are being targeted by anti-immigration efforts. Latinxs are often identified by their physical appearance or language use, leaving them vulnerable to microaggressions (e.g., questioned over their citizenship status) and racial profiling (Mann-Jackson et al., 2018). Furthermore, as of 2016, there were 530,250 apprehensions conducted by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). In the wake of the new administration in 2016, apprehensions were expected to increase as anti-immigration sentiments expanded and deportation initiatives were being implemented (Miroff, 2018).

Palabras clave: inmigración, identificación étnica, estrés por condición de minoría, salud mental, discriminación.
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...instill fear into immigrants and family members alike. According to the Pew Research Center (2017), approximately 50% of Latinxs were worried about someone they know facing deportation.

Ultimately, these frequent experiences and threat of discriminatory practices has led to a growing concern over how Latinxs are being psychologically impacted by the current anti-immigration climate. For instance, a substantial amount of research has indicated that experiences of discrimination and prejudice are negatively associated with mental health and well-being (Anderson, 2013; Anderson & Finch, 2017; Himmelstein et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2014). Schmitt et al. (2014) conducted an extensive meta-analysis on the association between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being and found perceived discrimination correlated strongly to greater psychological distress (including depression, anxiety, and negative mood) and to less well-being (including high self-esteem, life satisfaction, and positive mood). Therefore, the current study focused on Latinxs residing in America and examined how anti-immigration sentiments in the media impact Latinx young adults’ psychological well-being in terms of perceived stress, mood, and motivation to take action.

Social Identity Theory and Ethnic Identity

Substantial research has demonstrated the negative impact of discrimination on health; however, the extent to which this extends to viewing negative portrayals of one’s social group is not known. An important aspect of minority groups is their social identities. According to social identity theory, the self-concept consists of a personal identity (beliefs about oneself) and a social identity (beliefs about oneself as part of a group; Armenta & Hunt, 2009). Naturally, individuals aim to preserve positive appraisals of both of these identities (Armenta & Hunt, 2009). A key cultural component of an individual’s social identity is their ethnic identity, which is comprised of two significant factors (Torres & Santiago, 2017). The first factor is an individual’s commitment to their ethnicity, meaning the extent to which they proudly recognize their ethnicity and feel positively about it. The second factor is an individual’s dedication to cultural exploration, or the time and attention they allot toward learning about and engaging with their culture. The current study aimed to determine whether viewing anti-immigration sentiments aimed at one’s ethnic group impacts an individual’s ethnic identification.

Acculturation is an important factor to consider in relation to ethnic identification among Latinx Americans. Acculturation refers to one’s attachment or commitment to society’s dominant cultural norms and consists of two primary features: cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty (Padilla, 2008; Pérez, 2015). Several factors influence an individual’s sense of acculturation, including the extent to which that individual values their culture and how long they have been immersed into society’s dominant culture (i.e., generation status; Kohler, 2016). For instance, in the process of testing the Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale, Stephenson (2000) found a link between generational status and ethnic society immersion. Findings demonstrated that earlier generations (i.e., first- and second-generation Americans) experienced greater immersion into their ethnic culture in comparison to later generations (i.e., third- and fourth-generation Americans), who were more assimilated into society’s dominant culture. Similarly, in a study analyzing the impact of immigration on acculturation, cultural identity, and interpersonal functioning among Puerto Ricans, Kohler (2016) found that immigrants from Puerto Rico demonstrated significantly higher levels of ethnic society immersion and significantly lower levels of dominant society immersion in comparison to children of immigrants. These studies have demonstrated that successive generations are less tied to their ethnic culture because of increased immersion to society’s dominant culture. This raises the question, if successive generations experience a decrease in connection to their ethnic culture, is there a significant difference among the various generations in emotional reaction to an anti-immigration stimulus? In a study analyzing the effects of discrimination on Latinxs across four generations, all participants experienced increased ethnic loyalty (i.e., the behavioral component of ethnic identification) after experiencing ethnic discrimination (Padilla, 2008). Further, Americanization was not associated with lower ethnic identification, despite findings demonstrating a significant decrease in Latinx cultural awareness between first-generation and second-generation Latinxs. Although their study demonstrated that generation status does not influence emotional reactions to ethnicity-based mistreatment, it did not address reactions to anti-immigration efforts. Therefore, in the current study, we wanted to examine whether generation status influences emotional reactions to anti-immigration efforts.
**Rejection-Identification Model**

Informed by social identity theory, which posits that people aim to maintain positive evaluations of their personal and collective identity, the rejection-identification model was devised to explain how perceived discrimination leads to increased in-group identification (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Padilla, 2008). However, there is a need to substantiate the rejection-identification model due to contradictory findings in the literature. Some studies have provided support for perceived discrimination increasing in-group identification (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Schmader et al., 2015), whereas others have indicated that perceived discrimination decreases in-group identification (Torres & Santiago, 2017).

Among studies supporting the rejection-identification model, Schmader et al. (2015) conducted an experiment exploring the affective and attitudinal reactions of Mexican and European Americans to stereotypic Latinx film clips. They found that Mexican Americans experience negative emotional responses to stereotypic film portrayals of their in-group, and that higher pride in one’s ethnicity buffers the negative responses to stereotypic portrayals of one’s ethnic in-group. Similarly, Armenta and Hunt (2009) conducted a study assessing how perceived personal and group discrimination impacts ethnic identification and personal self-evaluations. They found that, among Latinx adolescents, perceived ethnic discrimination had a positive relationship with personal self-esteem due to increased ethnic group identification. These findings support the rejection-identification model; however, due to these studies’ nonexperimental design, no causal claims can be inferred.

Among studies contradicting the rejection-identification model, Torres and Santiago (2017) found that higher ethnic identification among Latinx adolescents did not mitigate the negative effects of discrimination-based stress. Higher ethnic identity commitment, as measured by individuals’ sense of pride and positive feelings toward their ethnic identity, was associated with worse daily negative mood, especially during specific socio-political climates. An explanation for these results can be that people’s responses to microaggressions and other discriminatory practices largely depend on the sociopolitical climate of the time. During times when a specific minority group is constantly targeted by negative media, as a group, they may experience an increase in sensitivity, leading to a greater impact of the negative media on psychological well-being.

Because the literature has offered mixed findings regarding the rejection-identification model, the current study examined whether having a direct or indirect connection to immigration increases or decreases Latinxs’ in-group identification when they perceive discrimination towards Latinx immigrants. Specifically, the current study compared immigrants, first-generation Latinx Americans, second-generation and up Latinx Americans, and nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans.

**Motivation to Take Action**

Another understudied topic is the impact of hostile anti-immigration climates on Latinx Americans’ motivation to take action with regard to addressing anti-immigrant sentiments. Existing literature has primarily focused on the impact anti-immigration contexts have on immigrant groups’ political views and motivation to mobilize (e.g., Philbin & Ayón, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), but has failed to address whether the extent to which anti-immigration sentiments influence motivation to take action varies by generational status. For instance, one study has found that, when confronted with an anti-immigration context, immigrant groups’ ethnic identities increase in salience, prompting them to take actions geared toward increasing their political awareness and support for progroup politics (Pantoja et al., 2001; Pérez, 2015). Similarly, anti-immigrant sentiments and political actions (e.g., unfair immigration policies, mass deportations, and threats to DACA) are often met with the mobilization of Latinx youth (e.g., participation in marches and petitions; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). These actions appear to be driven by a sense of social responsibility and justice (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Research has also found that immigrant parents are highly motivated to take action against intolerant anti-immigration policies with the hope of providing a better future for their children (Philbin & Ayón, 2016). Interested in the various protective measures immigrant parents engage in to mitigate the negative effects of anti-immigration policies and sentiments on their children, Philbin and Ayón (2016) conducted a study consisting of 54 in-depth interviews. Common themes found included parents engaging in activities to enhance their own capacity to assimilate into American culture (e.g., pursue an education), lobbying for positive policy changes, and participating in community movements (e.g., marches). As demonstrated by the literature, there is a link between anti-immigration climates and Latinxs’ motivation to take action.
therefore, the current study examined whether the extent of motivation to take action when confronted with discriminatory sentiments differs among the various Generations American.

**Minority Status Stress Model**

Interested in explaining the higher prevalence of mental disorders among minority groups, specifically lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals compared to heterosexual individuals, Meyer (2003) devised a minority stress model. Minority stress is a term used to explain the excess stress felt by members of minority groups due to their heightened experiences of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. The term is built on three assumptions: minority stress is unique to members of stigmatized groups, it is chronic in that it results from social structures, and it stems from an individual’s social characteristics.

The minority stress model highlights the stress experienced by minority groups, resulting in negative and positive mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003). The model begins by emphasizing a close relationship between an individual’s minority status and the circumstances of their environment. The circumstances people encounter result in general stressors; however, being assigned to a minority group leads to additional, unique distal stressors ranging from loss of dignity to violent crimes. For instance, some common stressors Meyer (2003) found include getting fired from one’s job, verbal harassment, physical/sexual assault, robbery, and property crimes. With this experience of additional stressors, people begin to identify with others who share their minority status, resulting in additional proximal stressors (e.g., expectations of rejection and concealment). In addition, the model considers characteristics of an individual’s minority identification, such as its prominence in the person’s life. This can either intensify or weaken the negative impact stress has on the individual. Further, the model considers how an individual’s minority status can serve as a strength when social support and healthy coping mechanisms are present to help mitigate the negative effects of stressors. Lastly, the model identifies positive and negative mental health outcomes resulting from the constant experience of stress. Prevailing negative outcomes include anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide ideation. These negative outcomes often have physical health consequences that include night terrors, restlessness, headaches, agitation, and drug abuse.

Although Meyer’s work focused on the LGB community, researchers have adjusted his model to analyze the social stress experienced by other members of stigmatized groups, including those targeted on the basis of low socioeconomic status (SES), racism, and ethnicity. For example, Flores et al. (2008) tested this model among Mexican-origin adults. Their findings support Meyer’s model, demonstrating that chronic stress caused by frequent experiences of discrimination (i.e., unfair treatment, disrespect, rejection, or stereotyped), resulted in physical and psychological harm. However, this study was nonexperimental, meaning causal inferences cannot be drawn.

Moreover, interested in understanding the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological well-being, Lanier et al. (2017) studied the impact racial discrimination stress and frequency had on the development of depression. They found that racial discrimination stress on its own, regardless of frequency, has a significant relationship with depression, and that the relationship between racial discrimination frequency and depression is partially mediated by racial discrimination stress. However, this study was also nonexperimental. Given that the research conducted to date has been nonexperimental, the current study aimed to provide experimental data to better understand the psychological impact of racial and ethnic discrimination.

**The Current Study**

The current study examined the acute psychological well-being of Latinx after exposure to anti-immigrant sentiments in order to bring awareness to how anti-immigration sentiments can impact mental health among Latinx. A quasiexperimental, mixed-factorial design was used to supplement previous nonexperimental research and fill the gaps in the knowledge on the psychological impacts of anti-immigration efforts on the Latinx community.

Based on the minority status stress literature, social identity threat literature, and the work of Padilla (2008), we hypothesized (H1) that groups that differ by the extent to which immigration is more personally salient would exhibit different levels of distress in response to the anti-immigration video, with those who are themselves Latinx immigrants experiencing the highest stress, negative mood, and motivation to take action after watching the anti-immigration video, followed by first-generation Latinx Americans, second-generation and up Latinx Americans, and lastly,
nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans. Based on the rejection-identification model (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Schmader et al., 2015), we hypothesized (H2) that Latinx young adults who are themselves immigrants would have the highest increase in ethnic identification after watching the anti-immigration video, followed by first-generation Latinx Americans, and finally, second-generation and up Latinx Americans.

**Method**

**Participants and Design**

A total of 438 participants were recruited; however, after deleting listwise 59 who did not complete the study, 37 with missing data, and 2 who failed the manipulation check, we had a final convenience sample of 340 participants. This final sample consisted of 187 U.S. Latinx and 153 non-Latinx, nonimmigrant, White Americans ($M_{age} = 23.1, SD = 4.9$). The sample was also 55.3% women ($n = 188$) and 44.7% men ($n = 152$). Regarding Ethnicity/Generation American, 9.1% were immigrants from a Latin American country ($n = 31$), 27.4% were first-generation Latinx American ($n = 93$), 18.8% were second-generation and up Latinx American ($n = 64$), and 44.7% were nonimmigrant and non-Latinx White Americans ($n = 152$). Although all participants were fluent in English, 94.4% of participants identified English as their language of choice ($n = 321$), whereas 3.8% of participants identified it to be Spanish ($n = 13$), and 1.8% of participants identified another language ($n = 6$). Lastly, 34.1% of the sample reported a low SES ($n = 116$), 55.3% reported a middle SES ($n = 188$), and 10.6% reported a high SES ($n = 36$).

Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a university’s research participation system, social media outreach to Latinx organizations and student associations throughout the United States, and snowball sampling by granting participants the opportunity to share the study’s link with others. At the end of the survey, a debrief message asked participants to share the study’s link with people who they think would be interested. Participants recruited from the affiliated university received research credit for a psychology course after participating. Participants recruited through MTurk received payment (75¢), and those recruited through social media had the option of providing their email address to be entered in a raffle for a $25 Amazon gift card.

Our study was approved by Pepperdine University’s institutional review board. We utilized a 2 x 4 quasieperimental, mixed factorial design. The first independent variable was experimental exposure to anti-immigration sentiments, and its two levels were exposure to an anti-immigration video (experimental group) and exposure to a multivitamin video including no anti-immigration elements (control group). The second independent variable was quasiexperimental and captured ethnicity and Generation American, with four levels: nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White American, immigrant from a Latin American country, first-generation Latinx American, and second-generation and up Latinx American. Our dependent variables included acute stress, mood, ethnic identification, and motivation to take action.

**Procedure**

The current study was conducted online, via the survey platform Qualtrics. After providing informed consent, participants completed a demographic survey and ethnic identity scale. Qualtrics then randomly assigned participants to the anti-immigration video or the multivitamin video. After watching their assigned video, participants answered a manipulation check item before completing an Acute Stress Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), a Motivation to Take Action Scale, and the Ethnic Identity Scale. Upon completion of these questionnaires, participants received a debriefing message.

**Materials**

**Anti-Immigration Stimulus**

The anti-immigration video was a 1:37 minute compilation of three veridical clips that demonstrate anti-Latinx immigration sentiments and efforts. The first clip is of Jim Steinle’s testimony at the 2015 Senate’s hearing on illegal immigration. He recounts the day his daughter, Kate Steinle, was shot and killed by an illegal immigrant and asks for justice through stricter laws that will stop illegal immigrants from coming into the United States and committing crimes. As his testimony is played, footage from a commercial sponsored by Florida’s house speaker, Richard Corcoran, who denounces Florida becoming a sanctuary state.

**Neutral Stimulus**

The neutral stimulus consisted of a 1:46 minute
 informational video on appropriate multivitamin use. The video warns viewers about the vitamin industry’s use of false advertising, explaining how vitamin supplements should only be taken when a deficiency is present. It also explains how surpassing the upper intake level could place individuals at risk for negative health effects.

**Manipulation Check Item**
Participants were presented with an open-ended item querying them about the topic presented in their assigned video. Responses were evaluated for accuracy, meaning they needed to adequately describe the central issue discussed in their video. All participants in the experimental group needed to mention that their video dealt with “Hispanic/Latinx immigration” or “illegal immigration,” and those in the control group needed to mention that their video dealt with the use of “vitamins.” All but two participants met this criterion.

**Ethnic Identity Scale**
Two subscales of the Ethnic Identity Scale (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004) were used to determine strength of ethnic identification. The first subscale consisted of four-items assessing resolution, or the reconciliation of individuals’ conceptions of themselves and their communities’ recognition of them, and the second subscale consisted of six-items assessing affirmation, or individuals’ degree of positive feelings toward their ethnic group. A sample resolution item is “I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me,” and a sample affirmation item is “My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative” (reverse coded). Participants were asked to rate each statement on a 4-point scale from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 4 (describes me very well). Scores ranged from 10 to 40, and 6 of the items were reverse coded. Both subscales of the Ethnic Identity Scale have demonstrated high internal consistency; .86 for affirmation and .92 for resolution (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Correlations conducted to assess construct validity indicated that the resolution subscale was positively associated with the exploration subscale of the Ethnic Identity Scale, self-esteem, and familial ethnic socialization (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). The affirmation subscale was also significantly related to the exploration and resolution subscales among ethnic minorities (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). The current study found an internal consistency of .89 for resolution and .92 for affirmation during the pretest, and an internal consistency of .76 for resolution and .89 for affirmation during the posttest.

**Acute Stress Scale**
Informed by Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) theory of stress and cognitive appraisals, the Acute Stress Scale was created for the current study. It consists of 15 items assessing acute stress in response to a stimulus video. Items assess the three elements of Lazarus’ model of stress: harm, threat, and challenge. Examples of items include “The mention of this issue caused me anxiety” and “I find dealing with the issue presented in this video overwhelming.” Items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Four items indicating a lack of stress, e.g., “The mention of this issue does not affect me”, were reverse scored. Scores can range from 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating higher levels of stress. In a pilot study, internal consistency was .70. In the current study internal consistency was .75.

**Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)**
The current study utilized the ten negative affect items of the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988): distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, and afraid. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt each affect at the present moment using a 5-point scale from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). Scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating high levels of negative affect. Previously tested, the negative affect items were found to have internal consistencies ranging from .84 to .87 (Watson et al., 1988). Supporting construct validity, the negative affect items of the PANAS are significantly and positively associated with scores on depression and anxiety scales like the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (Crawford & Henry, 2004). Further, correlations between the negative affect and positive affect scales are invariably low, with a range from −.12 to −.23 (Watson et al., 1988). In the current study, the internal consistency was .82.

**Motivation to Take Action Scale**
The Motivation to Take Action Scale was developed for the current study. It consists of 10 items assessing intention to engage in actions involving raising awareness and bettering an issue. Although worded differently, the majority of the items were adapted from the Civic Behavioral Intentions Measure, a 7-item measure with high internal consistency (α = .97) and unidimensionality used to assess people’s willingness to engage in civic actions against cyberbullying/bullying (Alhabash et al., 2015). For instance, an item used from the Civic Behavioral Intentions Measure
is, “This video makes me want to sign a petition to push for stricter laws to penalize cyberbullies and bullies.” For the purpose of our study, we reworded the following item to read, “This video makes me want to sign a petition to push for more laws to protect individuals from this issue,” and created a reverse coded item that read, “This video makes me want to sign a petition to push for more laws in support of this issue.” Participants rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores ranged from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating a lack of motivation to take action. In a pilot study, internal consistency was .84. In the current study, internal consistency was .83.

Results

Hypothesis 1
To investigate the effect of condition (experimental vs. control condition) and Ethnicity/Generation American (immigrant from a Latin American country; first-generation American; second-generation and up; nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White American) on three of our dependent variables (acute stress, negative affect, and motivation to take action), we conducted a two-way multivariate analysis of covariance. SES was controlled, in light of SES being associated with immigration status in previous literature (Anderson & Finch, 2017; Arbona & Jimenez, 2014; Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Park et al., 2017; Pérez, 2015). The omnibus multivariate test resulted in significant findings for condition, $F(3, 327) = 13.59, p < .001, 
\eta_p^2 = .11$, Ethnicity/Generation American, $F(9, 987) = 5.30, p < .001, 
\eta_p^2 = .05$, and the interaction between condition and Ethnicity/Generation American, $F(9, 987) = 2.11, p = .03, 
\eta_p^2 = .02$. The respective results for each dependent variable are specified in subsequent subsections.

Acute Stress
Condition had a significant main effect on acute stress, $F(1, 329) = 20.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$. Those who viewed the anti-immigration video experienced higher stress ($M = 39.1, SD = 7.1$) compared to those who watched the multivitamin control video ($M = 34.0, SD = 8.8$). Additionally, Ethnicity/Generation American had a significant main effect on acute stress, $F(3, 329) = 4.21, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparison indicated that both immigrants from a Latin American country ($M = 39.9, SD = 5.7$) and first-generation Latinx Americans ($M = 40.9, SD = 8.3$) displayed significantly higher stress than nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans ($M = 37.5, SD = 4.2$), $p = .03$ and .04, respectively. There was no significant interaction between the experimental manipulation and Ethnicity/Generation American for acute stress, $F(3, 329) = .88, p = .45, \eta_p^2 = .01$.

Negative Affect
Condition had a significant main effect on negative affect, $F(1, 329) = 15.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Those who viewed the anti-immigration stimulus ($M = 19.0, SD = 6.0$) experienced higher levels of negative affect compared to those in the control group ($M = 17.0, SD = 5.9$). Additionally, Ethnicity/Generation American had a significant main effect on negative affect, $F(3, 329) = 6.50, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparison indicated that immigrants from a Latin American country ($M = 21.8, SD = 7.1$) displayed significantly higher negative affect than second-generation and up Americans ($M = 18.4, SD = 5.3$) and nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans ($M = 17.0, SD = 4.7$), $p = .04$ and .001, respectively. A significant interaction was found between the effects of condition and Ethnicity/Generation American on negative affect experienced after viewing the video stimulus, $F(3, 329) = 3.18, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Figure 1). Specifically, follow-up analyses to the interaction showed there was an impact of Ethnicity/Generation American on negative affect in the experimental condition ($p < .001$) but not in the control condition ($p = .75$). Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons indicated that, in the experimental condition, first-generation Latinx Americans displayed significantly higher negative emotion than second-generation and up Americans and nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans, $p = .02$ and .001, respectively.

| Mean Negative Affect Scores Across Ethnicity/Generation American for the Immigration and Control Conditions |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Mean Negative Affect Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration from Latin American country</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-generation Latinx American</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second and up-generation Latinx American</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonimmigrant and non-Latinx White American</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 1**

Note: Error bars: +/- 1.5 SE.
Motivation to Take Action
Condition had a significant main effect on motivation to take action, $F(1, 329) = 25.67, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .07$. Those in the experimental group experienced higher levels of motivation to take action ($M = 31.3, SD = 7.0$) compared to those in the control group ($M = 27.3, SD = 6.3$). Additionally, participants’ Ethnicity/Generation American had a significant main effect on motivation to take action, $F(3, 329) = 12.26, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .10$. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparison indicated that immigrants from a Latin American country ($M = 33.9, SD = 6.9$) and first-generation Americans ($M = 34.7, SD = 6.7$) displayed significantly higher motivation to take action than second-generation and up Americans ($M = 31.1, SD = 7.4$) and nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans ($M = 28.8, SD = 6.1; ps < .01$). There was no significant interaction between the effects of condition and Ethnicity/Generation American on motivation to take action after viewing the video stimulus, $F(3, 329) = 1.95, p = .12, \eta^2_p = .02$.

Hypothesis 2
To investigate the effect of condition and Ethnicity/Generation American on change in ethnic identification from before to after watching the video stimulus, a repeated-measures analysis of covariance was conducted. Again, SES was controlled in the analyses.

There was a significant two-way interaction between condition and Ethnicity/Generation American on change in ethnic identification from before to after the experimental manipulation, $F(3, 328) = 6.62, p = .00, \eta^2_p = .06$ (see Figure 2). Follow-up analyses were conducted to examine how the Ethnicity/Generation American groups differed from one another in the impact of the experimental manipulation on ethnic identification. The findings indicated that the non-Latinx, nonimmigrant, White participants experienced a significant difference in ethnic identification change between the experimental and control video conditions, $F(3, 148) = 104.10, p = .00, \eta^2_p = .41$. Among these non-Latinx, nonimmigrant, White participants, controlling for SES, the experimental video resulted in a significant reduction of ethnic identification (from $M = 33.5, SD = 4.4$ before the anti-immigration video to $M = 22.3, SD = 2.9$ after the anti-immigration video; $p < .001$), whereas the vitamin control video did not result in a change in ethnic identification ($M = 32.9, SD = 5.0$ before the vitamin control video to $M = 31.6, SD = 5.9$ after the vitamin control video; $p = .58$).

With regard to the Latinx populations, only first-generation Latinx participants experienced a significant difference in ethnic identification change between the experimental and control video conditions, $F(3, 88) = 6.44, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$. Ethnic identification decreased for first-generation Latinx participants from $M = 33.3, SD = 6.1$ before the anti-immigration video to $M = 24.4, SD = 7.0$ after the anti-immigration video, when ethnic identification only decreased from $M = 33.7, SD = 6.1$ before the vitamin control video to $M = 29.6, SD = 7.8$ after the vitamin control video. Immigrants from Latin America ($p = .90$) and second-generation and up Latinx Americans ($p = .40$) did not experience a significant difference in ethnic identification change between the experimental and control video conditions. Among our immigrants from Latin America population, ethnic identification decreased from $M = 32.9, SD = 4.5$ before the anti-immigration video to $M = 23.0, SD = 6.2$ after the anti-immigration video, and from $M = 35.7, SD = 3.1$ before the vitamin control video to $M = 26.1, SD = 8.1$ after the vitamin control video. Among our second-generation and up Latinx American population, ethnic identification decreased from $M = 34.1, SD = 5.2$ before the anti-immigration video to $M = 25.3, SD = 6.4$ after the anti-immigration video, and from $M = 34.6, SD = 5.8$ before the vitamin control video to $M = 27.9, SD = 8.0$ after the vitamin control video.

Follow-up analyses among the first-generation Latinx participants indicated that neither the experimental video ($M = 33.3, SD = 6.1$ before the anti-immigration video and $M = 24.4, SD = 7.0$ after the anti-immigration video; $p = .08$) nor the control video ($M = 33.7, SD = 6.1$ before the vitamin video and $M = 29.6, SD = 7.8$ after the vitamin video; $p = .70$) resulted in a significant change in ethnic identification.

### FIGURE 2

#### Pre and Postethnic Identification Scores Across Ethnicities/Generations American for the Experimental Group

![Graph showing ethnic identification scores across ethnicities/generations for the experimental group.](image-url)

Note: Error bars: +/- 1.5 SE.
Exploratory Analyses

Exploratory correlations were run, finding that, in the immigration condition, both Latinx and non-Latinx who experienced the most negative effect after watching the anti-immigration video also experienced the highest levels of motivation to act, Latinxs: $r(97) = .39, p < .001$; non-Latinx: $r(76) = .28, p = .01$. Additionally, in the immigration condition, both Latinxs and non-Latinxs who experienced the most stress after the video also experienced a greater increase in ethnic identification after watching the video, Latinxs: $r(97) = .42, p < .001$; non-Latinx: $r(76) = .31, p = .01$.

Discussion

The current study was designed to gain a better understanding of the psychological impact negative portrayals of immigrants in the media have on Latinx young adults. Informed by social identity theory, the minority status stress model, and the rejection-identification model, we developed two hypotheses. Our first hypothesis (H1) postulated that groups that differ by the extent to which immigration is more personally salient would exhibit different levels of distress in response to the anti-immigration video, with those who are themselves Latinx immigrants experiencing the highest stress, negative mood, and motivation to take action after watching the anti-immigration video, followed by first-generation Latinx Americans, second-generation and up Latinx Americans, and lastly, nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans. Our second hypothesis (H2) postulated that immigrants from Latin American countries would experience the highest increase in ethnic identification after being exposed to anti-immigration sentiments, followed by first generation Latinx Americans, and second-generation Latinx Americans.

The results partially supported our first hypothesis (H1). When exposed to an anti-immigration video, those with specific generation status exhibited higher negative affect than others; specifically, first-generation Americans experienced higher levels of negative affect than second-generation and up Latinx Americans and nonimmigrant, non-Latinx White Americans. These results align with those of Schmader et al. (2015), who found that, after witnessing negative film portrayals of their ethnic in-group, Mexican Americans demonstrated elevated negative emotional responses, specifically feelings of anger and shame. This may be because anti-Latinx immigration portrayals elicit social identity threat among Latinxs. Immigrants from Latin American countries are specifically being pinpointed as undesirables, emphasizing their status as a culturally devalued member of American society. Consequently, this triggers a negative emotional reaction among Latinxs. First-generation Americans specifically exhibit higher negative affect which could have been because they perceived such a video as targeting their immediate family (i.e., parents), causing heightened emotions. However, the results did not find that those with specific generation status exhibited significantly higher stress or motivation to take action than others.

Additionally, the condition a participant was placed in exhibited small to medium (Cohen, 1988) main effects on motivation to take action, stress, and negative affect, with those in the experimental condition of watching the anti-immigration video having the highest levels of each construct, regardless of Ethnicity/Generation American. This demonstrates that negative portrayals of Latinx immigrants have a negative impact regardless of audience. As explained previously, anti-Latinx immigration portrayals elicit social identity threat among Latinxs, resulting in a negative psychological response. Furthermore, because those in the film speaking intolerantly of Latinx immigrants were all non-Latinx, White Americans, this might have also elicited social identity threat among non-Latinx White American participants. White Americans are frequently targeted for being bigoted, so when they witnessed members of their ingroup confirming this stereotype, they too experienced a negative psychological response (Schmader et al., 2015).

Contrary to our second hypothesis (H2) and the findings of Schmader et al. (2015) and Armenta and Hunt (2009), our results demonstrated that, when exposed to an anti-immigration video, only first-generation American Latinx and non-Latinx, nonimmigrant, White Americans experienced a significant change in ethnic identification. Interestingly, both groups experienced a significant decrease in ethnic identification. Although these results contradict the rejection identification model, they align with recent findings by Torres and Santiago (2017), who observed that perceived discrimination resulted in decreased ethnic identification. These results could have been influenced by both of these groups experiencing higher negative affect from watching the anti-immigration video. Most clips used in the anti-immigration video consisted of politicians utilizing examples of undocumented Latinx immigrants who had committed serious crimes (i.e., murder) in attempt to
confirm the stereotype that Latinx immigrants pose a danger to society. Latinx participants watching individuals in their ingroup confirm negative stereotypes might have elicited shame through social identity threat, impacting their ethnic identification scores. Similarly, non-Latinx White Americans watching members of their ingroup confirming the stereotype that White Americans are bigoted might have elicited shame and guilt, impacting their ethnic identification scores. It would be useful for future researchers to examine whether different types of negative emotions (e.g., shame/guilt versus anger) relate differently to changes in ethnic identification.

The fact that those who experienced the most stress watching the anti-immigration video, regardless of ethnicity, increased most in ethnic identification suggests that the rejection-identification process may be activated when a person experiences a high degree of stress as a result of negative portrayals, but not when they are relatively less stressed by the portrayal. These results highlight a need for additional research on how negative representations have an impact on those who share the same identity as the stigmatized group and those who share the same identity as those who do the stigmatizing.

Lastly, we found that, after watching the anti-immigration video, those who experienced the most negative affect were also the most motivated to take action. These results suggest that strong emotional responses prompt action, similarly to the findings of Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015). They found that Latinx young adults’ motivation to mobilize stems from a sense of social responsibility, awareness of unfair treatment, and wanting to create social change for future generations. Because the following study exposed Latinx young adults to anti-immigration sentiments, it can be assumed that first-generation Latinx American’s strong emotional responses inspired them to want to create change.

**Implications**

With the increasingly negative political climate toward Latinx immigrants, the current study was timely for gaining a better understanding of how Latinx young adults are being psychologically impacted. Our finding that negative representations of immigrants have a negative impact on both Latinx and European Whites suggests that there may be subtle, yet malignant, processes by which adverse representations result in emotional costs for those who identify with the targeted group, and those who identify with the perpetrators of the adverse representations (Schmader et al., 2015). However, our finding that those who were impacted the greatest with respect to negative affect were those who resonate most with the stigmatized group suggests meaningful implications for professionals serving this population’s mental health and well-being needs. It is particularly imperative that professionals comprehend the links between discrimination and mental health (Schmader et al., 2015). A momentary negative mood may not be seen as a significant concern, but according to Torres and Santiago (2017), if frequent, discrimination-based negative moods are not addressed promptly, it can result in the development of depression and anxiety, diminishing quality of life. This is concerning considering that we found a significant increase in negative affect after watching a brief anti-immigration video. Thus, there is a need for increased availability and access to mental health services that help individuals cope with adverse political climates.

In addition, preventative measures should be taken into consideration. For instance, the three videos that were compiled to form our experimental video were all derived from political commercials that were aired. Given the detrimental impact such sentiments were found to have on individuals, the media and those disseminating these portrayals need to become aware of the harm their negative portrayals are causing and be held accountable for their effects (Schmader et al., 2015).

What was particularly intriguing was the decrease in ethnic identification for all groups after witnessing the anti-immigration video. Because all Latinx participants demonstrated a decrease in identification with their ingroup, our findings exhibit that watching negative portrayals harms self-concept. This aligns with the research highlighted by the American Psychological Association that states that many stigmatized groups experience guilt and shame regarding their “second-class” status (American Psychological Association, 2012, p. 65). As a result, instead of increasing their identification with their in-group, as we hypothesized, they experienced a decrease in identification. Future research is needed to distinguish whether the type of negative emotion experienced resulting from discrimination determines whether an individual will identify more or less with their ethnic identity. For instance, does shame and guilt lead to rejection of one’s ethnic identity, and anger and irritation lead to increased identification with one’s ethnic
identity as stress did in the current study?

Additionally, our findings that negative portrayals of stigmatized groups harm members’ self-concept can be used to advocate for the removal of negative portrayals and stereotypical images of stigmatized groups in the media, and to push for their replacement with more positive images (Sirin et al., 2015). Positive representation can help foster resiliency, so professionals should be encouraged to empower Latinx young adults to overcome discrimination-related events, and take the initiative in creating tolerant environments that allow individuals to positively explore their identities (Sirin et al., 2015). There is a substantial literature basis suggesting that ethnic identification is positively correlated with well-being (Smith and Silva, 2011). In a metanalysis examining the findings of 184 studies that utilized various members of stigmatized groups (i.e., African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latinx American, Native American, and Pacific Islander American), Smith and Silvia (2011) found that ethnic identity was positively correlated to various positive aspects of well-being, including mental health, self-esteem, happiness, and coping. Their findings specifically highlight that a higher ethnic identification is particularly beneficial for adolescents and young adults. Emerging adulthood is a critical period in terms of identity development; therefore, young adults should be encouraged in the classroom and community settings to explore and participate in activities that could potentially boost their ethnic pride and help them realize that there are communities of people who appreciate diversity and are tolerant within society (Torres & Santiago, 2017).

However, it is important to remember that some of these implications are tempered in light of the fact that, although many of the effect sizes for our significant findings, as assessed by partial eta squared, were moderate, two of the effect sizes were relatively small. Specifically, the impacts of Ethnicity/Generation American on acute stress and experimental condition on negative effect were relatively small, which potentially limits the degree to which these findings have practical significance.

**Limitations**

Generalizability is a primary limitation of this study. Most participants were aged 18–23 years, potentially limiting generalizability to the full range of young adults. Furthermore, our smallest population represented in our sample size was that of immigrants from a Latin American country, with only 31 participants. Due to potential violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption, the small sample size might have impacted power to detect effects, demonstrating an observed power of .6 when running the two-way analysis of covariance. Of note, the negative affect variable, despite the group size differences, did not violate the assumption of homogeneity of variance according to the Levene’s test ($p = .18$). However, given that other dependent variables did, this is a limitation, and results should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, future research is needed to examine whether our findings apply to immigrants and minorities of different racial/ethnic groups.

Other limitations relate to methodology. Online studies require participants to have access to technology and the internet. Because Latinx immigrants, as one of our desired populations, are recognized as a disadvantaged population—with many having low SESs—they may be less likely to have internet access or less likely to spend their time completing online studies. In addition, participants might have experienced order effects that impacted the results. For instance, having participants complete a demographic survey that queries participants over their ethnic identity and immigration status prior to completing the other measures. Having participants think about their minority status at the start of the study might have influenced their scores on the first ethnic identification scale, depending on the prominence of their ethnic identity in their life and whether they have a social support group (Meyer, 2003). Furthermore, ethnic identification was the only dependent variable measurable before and after the introduction to the independent variable. This raises questions over the participants’ scores on the rest of the dependent variables’ measures and whether they were a result of their assigned stimulus.

**Future Research**

Future studies should strive to replicate the current study with a larger immigrant sample. Latinx immigrants make up the largest immigrant group in America, so further research on this disadvantaged and vulnerable group is needed. Future studies should also expand this work to a greater diversity of ages and ethnic/racial groups.

Furthermore, our study only examined the psychological impact derived from media videos. Stigmatized populations experience various forms of discrimination through various outlets. Therefore, future research should adopt a daily-life
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approach to capture the various forms of discrimination experienced and how they impact psychological well-being. This will help professionals gain a better understanding of the populations they are working with and how they are burdened daily by their minority status.

Lastly, considering that the current study found evidence contradictory to the rejection-identification model, further research is needed to explore a new model to explain the relationship between perceived discrimination and ethnic identification. As demonstrated by the literature, social identity is significant to one’s self-concept, and ethnic identity is an essential component of one’s social identity.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the current study sought to bring awareness to the psychological impact anti-immigration sentiments have on the Latinx community. Anti-immigration sentiments and other negative portrayals of the Latinx community are frequently utilized by politicians for their own political gain. The clips compiled for the anti-immigration video were all real commercials that were once aired for millions to see. Our hope is that research continues to be conducted on the topics of minority status stress, ethnic identity, and rejection identification theory to help spark a conversation on the harm intolerant behaviors create.

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