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Judging dream keepers: Latino assessments of schools and educators

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ABSTRACT
There is consensus among scholars, policy experts, and ordinary Latinos that a Latino education crisis exists, and that education is the primary vehicle for achieving the American Dream. Yet we know surprisingly little about what predicts Latinos' views of the bureaucrats and organizations charged with translating their educational hopes into reality. This study links disparate literatures to provide theory and evidence about how group features and elements of citizen-bureaucracy relations explain Latinos' judgments of schools and their assessments of contact with school officials. Using the 2006 Latino National Survey, we find that nativity, acculturation, and discrimination undermine positive evaluations. Our results also indicate that some of these negative associations might be countered with Latino-salient outreach, including providing school-relevant information in Spanish language.

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In the United States, educational opportunity is instrumental in the pursuit of upward social mobility. As Hochschild and Scovronick (2003, 11) proclaim, "Americans want the educational system to help translate the American dream from vision to practice." Still, for many groups, the aspirations pinned to America's education system remain unrealized. Such are the circumstances for Latinos in the US, a group for whom the divide between policy-oriented hopes and reality is especially poignant (Goldenberg et al. 2001; Hill and Torres 2010). Numerous indicators – dismal secondary and postsecondary education attainment, low test performance, paucity in Latino educators, and concentration in ethnically and economically segregated schools – paint a bleak portrait of their place in American education. The Latino education crisis (Gandara and Contreras 2009) exists in sharp contrast to Latinos' belief that education enables favorable life outcomes and incorporation into the American mosaic (Fraga et al. 2010; Zambrana 2011). Yet, the factors that influence Latinos' perceptions of the institutions and actors charged with improving their standing in the broader polity remain under-investigated by social scientists.

For several reasons, a systematic effort to explain Latinos' views of schools and educators – the keepers of Latinos' academic dreams – is long overdue. First, elite observers proclaim that "Improving educational attainment is the single most important issue for Latinos today" (Martinez-Ebers et al. 2000, 547). Ordinary Latinos agree and, from

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2004 to 2012, ranked education as extremely important in their vote choice more often than immigration, health care, and jobs or the economy (Krogstad 2014).[1] Second, by 2060, 1 in 3 Americans will claim Latino heritage.[2] As of 2011, Latinos constituted 23% of students in US schools (Fry and Lopez Fry and Lopez). By 2050, that figure will exceed 50% (Fry and Gonzales 2008). And finally, by implementing education policies, schools determine how the general public experiences democratic governance (Feuerstein 2002). Unlike contact with federal and state officials, the public school system is the most frequented and inclusive venue of interactions with government in the United States (Meier 2002). These interactions are indispensable in preparing citizens for civic engagement (Bedolla 2012; Fraga and Frost 2010); investigating their determinants is critical for providing insight to contemporary Latino politics, as well as advancing knowledge that is relevant to the future politics of education and governance in the US, in general.

Which factors predict whether or not Latinos give high marks to the schools in their communities? When they meet with school officials, what influences their assessment of that contact? Strands of existing literature offer a starting point from which we can begin to answer these questions. Research on citizen satisfaction with urban services (Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog 1993; Sharp 1986), including studies of attitudes toward financing public education (Berkman and Plutzer 2005), emphasizes individuals' vested interests in the services that public organizations deliver. Also relevant is research on Latino policy attitudes (Abrajano and Singh 2009; Branton 2007; Michelson 2007; Sanchez 2006) and general views toward government (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Michelson 2007; Wals 2011). These literatures remain largely unconnected. Here we draw on constructs from each, including those related to Latino identity and features of citizen-bureaucracy relations, to build theory and evidence for the purpose of explaining Latino attitudes of schools and educators.

Using data from the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS), we find that factors related to Latino ethnic minority and immigrant identities help explain why some Latinos are more likely to express favorable evaluations of schools and their officials, and why discrimination undermines these evaluations. Our theoretical arguments anticipate that inclusive gestures, such as the provision of school information in Spanish language, generate positive interactions with educators and favorable evaluations of schools as organizations. We also find that indicators of stakeholder position, prominent in theories of citizen evaluations of service-providing organizations (Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog 1993; Sharp 1986), specifically parenthood and homeownership, explain judgments of contact with school officials.

In the following section, we delineate theoretical linkages that bind important features of Latino identity, and public stakeholder position, with Latinos' evaluations of schools and educators. We then describe the data and methods used to test hypotheses concerning the role of acculturation and discrimination in shaping the attitudes that Latinos report toward educational organizations and their actors. In closing, we discuss the broader implications of our findings and posit directions for future research.

Theoretical roots of Latino views of schools and educators

Nativity is a major distinguishing characteristic among members of the Latino community (Gutiérrez 1995; Jiménez 2008). Although "not all Latinos are immigrants," explains

(Bedolla 2009, 9), "the community contains enough immigrants that thinking about how immigrant politics varies from non-immigrant politics is an important part of learning about the Latino political experience". For Latino newcomers, prior knowledge of politics in their place of origin is an essential reference point when formulating evaluations of similar institutions and actors in the United States (Wals 2011, 2013). In contrast, points of comparison are unlikely to extend beyond the domestic social and political configurations for US-born Latinos. Disparate reference points serve as theoretical foundation for anticipating nativity-based differences among Latinos concerning attitudes toward schools.

The nativity-based distinction is critical in the context of education. In the US, K-12 education is a public good; financing school systems is the charge of federal, state, and local governments. This is unlike many Latin American countries where costs of secondary and postsecondary education are shouldered primarily by families. Relative to education systems in Latin American countries, US public schools are also generally supported with greater resources and better facilities. Compared to the US-born, we argue that these resource disparities lead Latino immigrants to hold more favorable evaluations of American schools and educators. The contrast is reinforced by the cognitive process of rationalizing the decision to leave. Whether for economic or political reasons, immigrants' perspective of public institutions in America is likely biased positively.

A positive bias is uncovered by Portes and Rumbaut (2006, 95), who conclude from interviews of immigrant parents that "[a]mong common themes, none is more salient than generalized optimism," and that "[immigrant] parents are seldom dissatisfied with the education offered to their children in American schools or with their own situation in the country." This differs from US-born Latinos', whose socialization places in sharper contrast the promises of the public school system with unfavorable outcomes. Whether socialization encourages or justifies critical views, or coincides with awareness about the shortcomings of the public education system, these distinctions correspond to nativity.

This line of reasoning comports with the *acculturation-corrodes-trust* perspective. Michelson (2001, 327) argues that:

> because non-citizens and Puerto Rican immigrants are more likely to view American politics in comparison to Mexican and Puerto Rican politics, they are more likely to idealize American government, while Mexican American citizens and US-born Puerto Ricans have a different point of reference.

This argument builds on political socialization research by Garcia (1973) that argues acculturation exposes Latinos to a hostile reality that deteriorates trust. As Michelson (2001, 327) explains, "Because non-citizens and immigrants have less contact with the larger society, they are less aware of the racism and discrimination that encourages cynicism." We extend this reasoning to offer new hypotheses about Latinos' assessment of organizations and bureaucrats in the public education system. One hypothesis addresses acculturation, the other discrimination.

Acculturation is the process of adaptation by immigrants and natives following the arrival of newcomers (Gordon 1964; Park 1928; Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936). This process is typically operationalized as English language proficiency and adaptation

to the dominant receiving community (Cruz et al. 2008).[3] Empirical analyses often treat nativity as a constituent component of acculturation (Branton 2007; Cruz et al. 2008). An alternative conceptualization is to distinguish nativity, a function of birth location, from acculturation, a *process* of newcomers integrating culturally with the receiving or host society. The latter conceptualization underscores the possibility that acculturation is experienced differently by US-born children than their immigrant parents, and therefore, may hold distinct evaluations of institutions and actors. Whether operationalized in combination or separately (as we explain below), these indicators represent our *acculturation-cynicism hypothesis* by tapping the degree to which nativity-based reference points operate for Latinos in their evaluations of school systems.

H1: Acculturation is negatively associated with favorable evaluations of public schools and educators.

Models of immigrant political behavior typically distinguish between formal acts of integration and broader processes of immigrant cultural adaptation (Gordon 1964; Jones-Correa 2002; Wong 2002). Naturalization by non-citizens, for example, crosses the boundary into shared *bona fide* political membership. According to Jones-Correa (1998, 192), naturalization means "breaking definitively with the myth of return and cutting formal ties with their country of origin" (but see Bloemraad 2006, 148) for views of citizenship as additive, not subtractive). Naturalization represents the legal manifestation of acculturation, closer to what Gordon (1964) refers to as structural assimilation. One possibility is that naturalization formalizes political cynicism that develops with acculturation, and is therefore negatively related to favorable assessments of schools and school authorities.

H2: Naturalization is negatively associated with favorable evaluations of public schools and educators.

Closely related yet conceptually distinct from the logic of acculturation are arguments about the Latino experience as an ethnic and racialized minority. In political science, several theoretical frameworks inspire arguments about the importance of discrimination for Latinos. Early frameworks such as the *ethnicity/assimilation* model (Dahl Dahl; Gordon 1964; Park 1928; Warner and Srole 1945) and the *internal colony* model (Acuña 1972; Almaguer 1975; Barrera 1979; Blauner 1972) are now eclipsed in influence by frameworks such as *segmented assimilation* (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993), the *racial diversity* thesis (Hero 2007; Tolbert and Hero 1996), *group conciousness* (Miller et al. 1981; Sanchez 2006), and the concept of *racial formation* (Omi and Winant 1994). The development and trajectory of each of these approaches, and how they relate to one another, is beyond the scope of this study. What is relevant is that each argues that discrimination is a key variable to understanding life in America for Hispanics.

The aforementioned theoretical frameworks ground discrimination in institutional and structural relations, and not exclusively psychological dynamics such as categorization and motivation (Allport 1954; Tajfel 1981). However, they lack theoretical statements that specify the link between discrimination and attitudes toward institutions and their bureaucrats. Some empirical insights are offered by Sanchez (2006), who finds that perceived discrimination is associated with Latino support for bilingual education. For Sanchez,

perceptions of discrimination serve as a metric of groups' recognition of their marginalized position, a key dimension of the *group consciousness* framework (Miller et al. 1981). To the extent that policies are institutions (Pierson 1993; Schneider and Ingram 1993), this provides a basis for anticipating an association between discrimination on the one hand and organizations and their bureaucrats on the other.

For our purpose, the racial formation framework details how the broader understanding of racism evolved from an individual-centered perspective reinforced by adverse policy, to a view of discrimination as "a structural feature of US society, the product of centuries of systematic exclusion, exploitation, and disregard of racially defined minorities" (Omi and Winant 1994, 69). In education, Meier, Stewart, and England (1989) and Meier and Stewart (1991) identify this institutional dimension of discrimination in the prevalence of *de-facto* or "second-generation discrimination". They argue that even after successful campaigns to desegregate schools in the 1960s, sorting students within schools according to ability, and the differential enforcement of disciplinary practices, recreates segregation-effects that help explain disparities in graduation and dropout rates by ethnicity. The critical implication of the analyses by Meier and colleagues is that seemingly neutral policies can – and do – exact discriminatory consequences. What does this mean for how individual Latinos evaluate schools and their bureaucrats?

One possibility is that discrimination, be it perceived or experienced, undermines favorable dispositions that immigrants hold toward education. This reinforces the cynicism we anticipate among the US-born. In their interviews of second-generation children (US-born to immigrant parents), Portes and Rumbaut (2006, 61) find evidence of a belief that "education does not pay and that discrimination prevents people of color from ever succeeding", a lesson that plants the seed for developing an "adversarial stance" against education. As Alba and Nee (2003, 51) explain, "[o]ppositional norms, a feature of a reactive subculture formed in defiance of perceived rejection by mainstream authorities (such as teachers), contribute to maintaining the solidarity critical to group success". Collectively, these studies suggest that discrimination influences attitudes held by immigrants and their children toward education. Whether this matters for judgments of schools or contact with public school officials is not answered.

Our theoretical expectation about discrimination is that in addition to facilitating an adversarial stance toward education as a service, discrimination shapes how immigrants and their children view the actors tasked with the implementation of the service itself.

Thus, our *marginalized-group hypothesis* anticipates that discrimination generates negative judgments of schools and contact with officials.

> H3: Perceived discrimination is negatively associated with favorable evaluations of public schools and interactions with educators.

The absence of discrimination is the baseline comparison implied in the hypothesis above. But, the logic of the *marginalized-group hypothesis* extends to perceived acceptance and inclusion. For instance, proponents of segmented assimilation place in the hands of the receiving society partial responsibility for creating a context of reception upon immigrants' arrival (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993). Whether reception is hostile *or* welcoming to newcomers, it influences the trajectories of assimilation and social mobility experienced by migrants and their progeny.

Commenting on how this might work in education settings, Zambrana (2011, 93) writes "education achievement is linked with access to social capital in the form of translators, bridges to information, guidance, role models and respect for culture and language that signals equality in ethnic group membership". For instance, school officials accommodate Latino clientele by delivering educational services in Spanish language. Such outreach can take the form of bilingual classroom instruction, or the dissemination of Spanish-language information to Latino parents. Even for Latinos who are English-language dominant or report no Spanish language proficiency, we foresee that the perception of schools as organizations that adopt inclusive practices leads Latinos to view schools and educators positively.

H4: Latinos who perceive that schools engage their community in ways salient to Hispanics are more likely to assess schools and educators favorably.

Controlling for Latinos' position as stakeholders

In addition to immigrant and ethnic identities, roles *in relation to institutions* constitute another important facet of Latinos' social identity. Like other Americans, Latino parents of children enrolled in public schools have direct interests in the delivery of education services. Latinos also have a vested interest in public schools as homeowners who help finance public school systems through local property tax, and as investors whose home values are linked to the quality of local schools. Still, many Latinos are not tied to schools as parents or homeowners, and have a less direct stake in public education.

The idea of citizens as "stakeholders" features prominently in frameworks examining interaction (Sharp 1986) and satisfaction (Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog 1993) with local service-providing bureaucracies. Stakeholder status is similar in concept to self-interest, a key factor explaining individual-level support for public policy (Sears and Funk 1991).[4] For instance, parenthood and homeownership have been used as proxies for self-interest in studies of public support for school budget decisions (Berkman and Plutzer 2005; Chew 1992; Preston 1984). However, Sharp (1986, 71) imagines "stakeholder" more broadly as "one's investment in a neighborhood that is the key to what one expects for the neighborhood". In analysis of individual-level satisfaction with local public services, Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog (1993, 20) argue "[t]hose who are highly invested in and attached to their community are hypothesized to be more satisfied with their local governments and more loyal to them". Yet, contrary to the *homevoter hypothesis* (Fischel 2001) that suggests homeowners will support higher taxes to maintain school quality and home values, Berkman and Plutzer (2005, 44) find that "short-term instrumental self-interest" leads homeowners to be less supportive of education spending than renters.

How does stakeholder status, whether narrowly conceived as self-interest or broadly accounting for social investment, relate to evaluations of schools and educators? There appear two alternative plausible directions for the relationship between stakeholder position and evaluations of local schools and educators. From the perspective of loyalty as Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog (1993) articulate, stakeholders are predisposed toward favorable assessments of schools and school officials. Conversely, self-interest motivates a critical view, as parents and homeowners who feel that schools and educators fall short of expectations exemplify.

The self-interest component of the theory suggests one final comparison. The association between having a public K-12 child and judgments of schools and school officials should be stronger than observed for homeowners. If stakeholder status is a unidimensional construct, then interests in public schools between homeowners and parents can be directly compared. Renters and nonparents anchor one end of the dimension. Homeowners, whose property tax finances local schools, which underpin home values, are in the middle. And, parents with a public K-12 child have a direct stake in the outcomes of the service that teachers deliver. *Ceteris paribus*, we anticipate the marginal influence of parenthood on judgments of schools and officials is greater than that for homeownership.

Data, measurement and strategy for comparisons

We use data from the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS), based on 8634 completed interviews of Hispanics between November 2005 and August 2006. The LNS was conducted via computer-assisted telephone interviews, and participants could complete the survey in English language or Spanish language, with 40% preferring the latter. The survey was conducted by Interviewing Service of America, and the national margin of error is approximately ± 1.05%. The state-stratified sampling strategy selected a representative sample of Hispanics from 15 states, some traditional states of Hispanic residence (e.g., California, New Mexico, Florida), and some "new destination" states (e.g., Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas). The sampled states cover 87% of the Hispanic population in the United States. In the analyses, we present below post-stratification weights are applied in order to offer inference to that 87% of the Hispanic population.

Critical for our investigation, the LNS includes items inviting respondents to evaluate local schools and to rate their contact with school officials. With respect to schools as organizations, respondents were asked: "What grade would you give your community's public schools … A, B, C, D, or FAIL?" This item was posed to all LNS respondents, with the following distribution of responses in the full sample: A 30%, B 40%, C 20%, and D/Fail 10%. We measure evaluations of educators using the question: "When you have had contact with school officials, would you say your experience has been very good, somewhat good, not too good, or not good at all?" Judgments about contact with educators were asked only of parents with a K-12 child, and among the 2349 respondents or 33% of the full sample, 58% indicated "Very good," 36% said "Somewhat good," and 7% stated "not too good." In general, Latino judgments of public schools and educators are very positive.

What factors might reinforce or diminish these generally favorable attitudes? Table 1 provides initial insight for assessing the extent to which Latino identity factors are associated with attitudes toward public education officials and organizations. While 37% of foreign-born Latinos give local schools an "A", the highest grade or rating available, only 23% of US-born Latinos offer the same. The *Acculturation-Cynicism* hypothesis is further evinced in the differences by English language proficiency (a 21-point difference). Differences by discrimination also comport with our theoretical argument, as a grade of "F" is more prevalent among those reporting greater experienced discrimination (18%) than those reporting low discrimination (10%).

Among indicators of stakeholder position, the largest difference appears between those with and without a school-aged child. Parents of public K-12 children are more generous

Table 1. Latino evaluations of public schools and their contact with school officials, 2006.

	All Latinos public schools				Latinos with K-12 kids						
					Public schools				Educators		
	D/F	C	B	A	D/F	C	B	A	Not good	Somewhat good	Very good
Nativity and Acculturation											
US Born	13	27	38	23	11	23	39	27	8	40	52
Naturalized citizen	11	19	39	31	10	17	40	33	6	35	59
Non-citizen	9	13	37	40	7	12	36	46	4	34	61
Low English language proficiency	11	11	30	48	7	10	30	53	4	37	59
High English language proficiency	13	20	39	27	11	16	37	36	5	30	64
Discrimination & Welcomeness											
No school info in Spanish language	15	20	35	30	15	17	35	33	12	36	52
School info in Spanish language	10	18	38	33	8	16	38	39	5	36	59
Low Experienced discrimination	10	22	42	25	10	16	46	28	8	40	52
High Experienced discrimination	18	25	32	25	15	23	32	29	12	44	44
Stakeholder Status											
No kid in K-12 public school	12	20	38	30	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kid in K-12 public school	9	16	38	38	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Not a homeowner	11	18	37	34	9	16	34	40	6	35	59
Homeowner	11	20	39	31	9	16	40	36	6	37	58
Not a parent	10	19	39	32	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Parent, but no kid in K-12	12	19	36	33	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note: All figures using weights; $n = 8634$ for evaluation of public schools; $n = 2634$ for evaluation of school officials (only asked of respondents with kids enrolled in K-12 school).
Source: 2006 Latino National Survey, $n = 8634$.

in their grading of public schools (38% give schools an "A") than those with no kids in K-12 (30% give schools an "A"). At the bivariate level, homeownership does not meaningfully distinguish attitudes toward public schools. In general, the bivariate evidence reveals that acculturation and discrimination undermine favorable judgments of schools and educators, while distinction by stakeholder position comports with the "loyalty" perspective. These comparisons are instructive, but offer limited insight because they do not partial out the associations of other factors plausibly related to evaluations of schools and officials.

The outcomes of interest are ordinal, indicating that cumulative link models are most appropriate for statistical analysis. We select an ordered probit model to fit the data.[5] In our regression estimates, we account for factors related to immigrant identity, racial minority experience, public school stakeholder position, as well as a set of demographic and socio-economic indicators. These various indicators represent important dimensions of Latino social, political, and economic life that have theoretical bearing on judgments of schools and educators.

We tap into the immigrant dimensions of Latino identity and experience using indicators of immigrant generation, percent life in the US, English language interview, and self-reported English language proficiency. These indicators are widely used in the literature to measure the concept of acculturation (Cruz et al. 2008), and explain Latino political attitudes (Branton 2007; Michelson 2007; Pedraza 2014; Sanchez 2006). Binary indicators are coded 1 if affirmative, and 0 otherwise. English language proficiency is an ordinal measure with values between 0 and 4, higher values matching greater English language

proficiency. The proportion of life spent in the US is bound between 0 and 1. We specify an additive index of these variables to evaluate the *acculturation-cynicism hypothesis*. The index is a reliable scale (eg. $\alpha = 0.76$), ranging from values of 1 to 9, with a mean = 4.8 and s.d. = 2.7. We specify an indicator of naturalized citizen separately because when it is included in the acculturation index measurement reliability is reduced ($\alpha = 0.71$).[6] We expect that Latinos with greater levels of US cultural adaptation, as well as those who are naturalized citizens, will hold higher expectations for schools and officials, and therefore should be negatively related to favorable assessments of schools as organizations and to contact with school authorities.

We evaluate the *marginalized-group hypothesis* using measures of Latino experience as an ethnic minority. An additive index is constructed from responses to four items about experienced discrimination in the workplace, in police interactions, in securing housing, and in restaurants or stores.[7] Research in social identity posits that group-based discrimination is conceptually distinct from that targeting an individual (Tajfel 1981). An indicator for perceived group discrimination taps the belief that "Latinos can get ahead in the US if they work hard." We anticipate the coefficients for these variables are negative, meaning that discrimination undermines positive judgments of schools and educators.[8]

To account for stakeholder status, we use a cluster of indicators that identify individuals as parents with children enrolled in public K-12 schools, parents in general, and homeowners. Each indicator taps theoretically relevant stakeholder roles with respect to public schools. The indicators for parents with and without kids in public K-12 schools are mutually exclusive and should be interpreted with respect to nonparents.

The indicator for homeowner is not mutually exclusive with either measure of parenthood and, in the relationship with assessments of schools and educators, represents the partial association of owning a home relative to being a renter. We are agnostic on whether stakeholders are likely to express negative or positive assessments of schools and school authorities. However, we do anticipate the association between parents of K-12 children and judgments to be stronger than the independent relationship for other parents and homeowners.

We include an indicator of whether a person's financial situation has worsened in the past year, *Financially worse*, coded 1 if the description applies, and 0 otherwise. A person's economic status matters for evaluating government and officials at the federal level (Fiorina 1981; Key and Cummings 1966), and may apply to local organizations and actors. Although schools are not responsible for the macro-economy, they are stewards of public monies, and as bureaucracies they are an extension of the state. Thus, we expect that people use their own financial situation to evaluate schools and the officials they contact, with negative evaluations given by those who believe their economic standing has worsened.

Diversity in socio-economic status is measured by *Education*, a scale ranging between 1 and 6 categories[9] and annual household income.[10] The expectation is that those with more education and income have higher expectations for public schools and therefore are more critical. Each of these socio-economic indicators is uncorrelated with evaluations of personal financial situation, $r = -0.12$ for income and re = -0.08 for education.

We add a measure of interest in politics to account for higher awareness of political affairs, anticipating more negative evaluations of schools and officials reflects the generally critical narrative in the media of the public education system in America. A final set of

Table 2. Summary statistics of in-sample cases for model of assessment of local schools (valid responses $n = 7473$).

Statistic	*N*	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Local school judgment	7473	3	1	1	4
Acculturation (4-item)	7473	5	3	1	9
Naturalized citizen	7473	0	0	0	1
Experienced discrimination	7473	2	1	1	4
Spanish language outreach	7473	1	0	0	1
Home owner	7473	1	1	0	1
Child in K-12	7473	0	0	0	1
Latino can't get ahead	7473	1	0	1	2
Parent	7473	0	0	0	1
Age	7473	40	15	18	97
Education	7473	3	2	0	6
Income	7473	3.45	1.92	0.77	7.00
Financial situation	7473	0	0	0	1
Interest in politics	7473	1	1	0	2
Female	7473	1	0	0	1
Proportion Hispanic neighborhood	7473	43.75	31.17	0	100

Table 3. Summary statistics of in-sample cases for model of contact with school officials (valid responses $n = 2349$).

Statistic	*N*	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Contact with educator	2349	3	1	1	3
Acculturation (4-item)	2349	5	3	1	9
Naturalized citizen	2349	0	0	0	1
Experienced discrimination	2349	2	1	1	4
Spanish language outreach	2349	1	0	0	1
Home owner	2349	1	0	0	1
Latino can't get ahead	2349	1	0	1	2
Age	2349	39	9	18	81
Education	2349	3	2	0	6
Income	2349	3.60	1.92	1.00	7.00
Financial situation	2349	0	0	0	1
Interest in politics	2349	1	1	0	2
Female	2349	1	0	0	1
Proportion Hispanic neighborhood	2349	42.72	30.60	0	100

controls consists of indicators for *Age* in years; *Female* coded as 1 for female and 0 for male respondents. We turn first to tabular results of the regression models and then offer visuals of the relationship between stakeholder status, participatory citizenship, and public evaluations of bureaucracies using predicted probability charts.

The in-sample summary statistics for the models reported below are collected in Table 2 and Table 3.

Empirical findings

Table 4 reports the regression results of several specifications modeling judgments of schools as organizations and assessments of contact with educators. Looking first to the columns *Evaluations of Local Schools* in Table 4, we find that Latino's evaluations of their community schools and contact with them is influenced by several factors that, in theory, generally matter for other groups as well, including stakeholder position and socio-economic status. For instance, results of the first ordered probit model indicate

Table 4. The determinants of Latinos' evaluations of schools and contact with school officials.

	Local schools		School officials	
Acculturation	−0.065***		−0.044***	
	(0.006)		(0.011)	
US born (2nd generation)		0.025		−0.092
		(0.047)		(0.094)
US born (3rd generation)		−0.096*		−0.203*
		(0.057)		(0.114)
% Life in US		−0.188***		−0.188
		(0.067)		(0.134)
English language interview		0.028		−0.020
		(0.057)		(0.117)
English language dominance		−0.091***		−0.016
		(0.022)		(0.044)
Naturalized citizen	−0.082**	−0.049	−0.015	−0.043
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.062)	(0.067)
Experienced discrimination	−0.089***	−0.088***	−0.119***	−0.120***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Perceived group discrimination	−0.055*	−0.059*	−0.141**	−0.139**
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.060)	(0.060)
Spanish language outreach	0.169***	0.172***	0.329***	0.330***
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.070)	(0.070)
Home owner	0.091***	0.095***	−0.023	−0.021
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Kid in school	0.233***	0.235***		
	(0.035)	(0.035)		
Parent	0.086**	0.087**		
	(0.034)	(0.034)		
Age in years	−0.001	−0.001	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Education	−0.064***	−0.064***	0.016	0.013
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Income	−0.012	−0.011	0.035**	0.037**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Financial situation	−0.079***	−0.077**	−0.106*	−0.096
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.059)	(0.059)
Interest in politics	−0.036*	−0.035*	−0.025	−0.024
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Female	0.060**	0.060**	0.040	0.041
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.053)	(0.053)
% Hispanic in neighborhood	−0.003***	−0.003***	−0.002***	−0.002**
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.001)	(0.001)
τ1	−2.003***	−1.988***	−2.046***	−2.019***
	(0.084)	(0.085)	(0.186)	(0.192)
τ2	−1.269***	−1.254***	−0.647***	−0.618***
	(0.082)	(0.084)	(0.182)	(0.188)
τ3	−0.239***	−0.223***		
	(0.081)	(0.083)		
AIC	18803	18806	3973	3976
Observations	7473	7473	2349	2349

*$p < .1$.
**$p < .05$.
***$p < .01$.

that Latino homeowners are more likely to give their schools a positive evaluation, a grade of "A" or "B," than respondents who do not own their home. Similarly, Latinos with children enrolled in K-12 classes (*Kid In School* $\beta = 0.23$, $se = 0.04$) voice more favorable evaluations than Latinos without children. In terms of how Latinos rate their contact with school officials, the model detects no difference by home ownership.

In general, even controlling what appears to be a loyalty-inducing pattern of increasing stakeholder position, the model estimates the that *Acculturation* is negatively related to

favorable evaluations of schools ($\beta = 0.065$, $se = 0.006$) and contact with educators ($\beta = 0.044$, $se = 0.011$). Although statistical certainty is reduced for some of the constitutive factors of the proxy acculturation scale when estimated separately (columns 2 and 4 of Table 4), they are consistently negative, as anticipated. Also consistent with expectations, discrimination is inimical to the most favorable assessments of schools and teachers, while perceptions that schools reach out in Spanish language buoy positive views. We turn next to visual evidence to facilitate more nuanced interpretation of the model estimates.

Judging schools

The statistical model estimates are illustrated for select scenarios in Figure 1. The model is nonlinear, and the predicted probabilities illustrate that the largest responses to change in the data are observed for the categories of a grade of "C" and a grade of "A." However, the modal prediction of the model is a grade of "B" across the various scenarios. What we learn from the statistical model is that greater acculturation, experienced discrimination, and perceiving no Spanish language outreach from schools are factors that increase the certainty with which respondents assign schools a "B" grade, while lower acculturation and having a child enrolled in public schools makes an "A" grade just as likely as a "B."

For instance, respondents who are −1 SD below the mean of the acculturation scale have an equal probability of giving local schools a "B" and an "A." Increasing acculturation

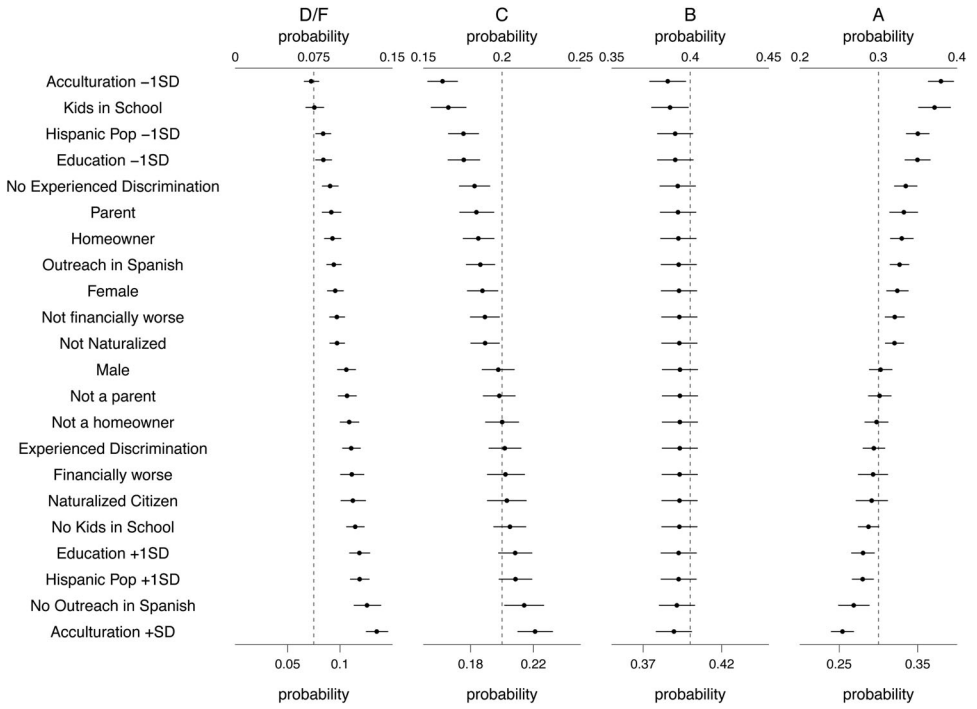

Figure 1. Predicted probability of Latino assessment of local schools for selected scenarios. Data: 2006 Latino National Survey.

+1 SD above the mean reduces this uncertainty, shifting the prediction by 0.12 points, from 0.38 to 0.26, rendering a "B" grade as modal category, or the response most likely to be given under this condition, holding other variables constant at their mean or modal value. This evidence shows that acculturation differences do map to evaluations of schools as the *acculturation-cynicism* argument anticipates. However, the relationship is not so strong as to predict that Latinos will assign local schools a failing or even "average" grade of "C". The combined probability that either of these lower assessments is expressed does not exceed 36%, for either a +1 SD increase in acculturation or under the condition that no Spanish language outreach is perceived.

Perceived discrimination shifts the probability that a "typical" Latino grades local schools as "A" performers, but the shift is modest from 0.29 to 0.33. A similarly modest, but statistically discernable, shift is predicted for perceived welcomeness by schools as captured by outreach in Spanish language, an increase in the probability of "A" from 0.27 to 0.33. From this evidence we see that the model discerns a statistically significant difference in school assessments on the basis of the "context of reception", but these differences are not large.

Favorable judgments of schools are also positively associated with stakeholder position. The model predicts greater shifts in the probability of giving schools an "A" grade among parents with K-12 children (0.37 vs. 0.28), relative to homeowners and renters (0.33 vs. 0.30). The direction of these differences, again, comports with the "loyalty" interpretation of stakeholder position posited by Lyons, Lowery, and DeHoog (1993). The relative differences in favorable shifts also lend support to characterizing the parents of K-12 children as greater stakeholders in public education than parents or homeowners, in general.

To further facilitate comparison, the first differences are plotted separately in Figure 2. Stakeholder position and outreach by school generate the largest absolute differences in predicted probabilities. However, Latinos, on average, give local public schools in their neighborhood high marks. The empirical leverage from the data is primarily in the certainty with which Latinos give schools the highest or the next highest mark. In summary, differences by acculturation, discrimination, and stakeholder position do

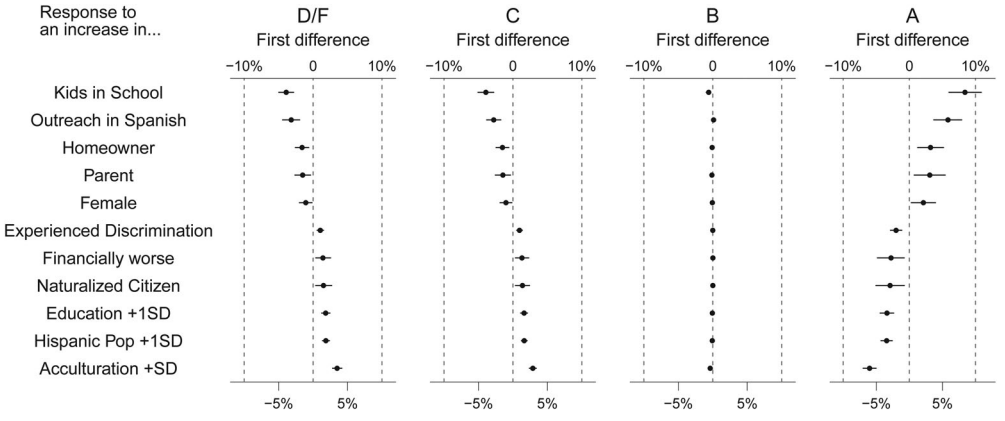

Figure 2. Change in predicted probability of Latino assessment of local schools. Data: 2006 Latino National Survey.

more to create "statistical ties" between assigning an "A" or "B" grade, than to nudge Latinos to categorize local schools as average, much less failing.

Judging contact with educators

In our specification of Latino assessments of their contact with educators, we necessarily limit the sample to those who have children enrolled in K-12 public schools ($n = 2349$). Among the "greater" stakeholders, the distinction by homeowner status is unrelated to whether contact with school officials is "not good" or "very good". About 1 in 10 Latinos give the least favorable assessment, "not good," and the model results deviate very little from this tendency as shown in Figure 3.

Like judgments of schools, on average, Latinos report that interactions with school officials are favorable (i.e., "very good"). The certainty with which the model predicts this outcome is mainly influenced by two factors. First, a ±1 SD change from the mean of acculturation is the difference between assigning a 0.53 probability of "very good," and greater certainty of 0.62. Second, the results also indicate that school outreach in Spanish language, as well as perceived discrimination in everyday life, influences how Latinos assess schools and contact with educators. Latinos who report more experience with discrimination are less likely to express positive views than those who perceive less discrimination. However, the model estimates characterize this influence as modest.

The factor that shifts evaluations the most appears to be in the hands of educators

For respondents who report that their schools do not provide information in Spanish language, as shown by the bottom marks in Figure 3, the model predicts nearly the

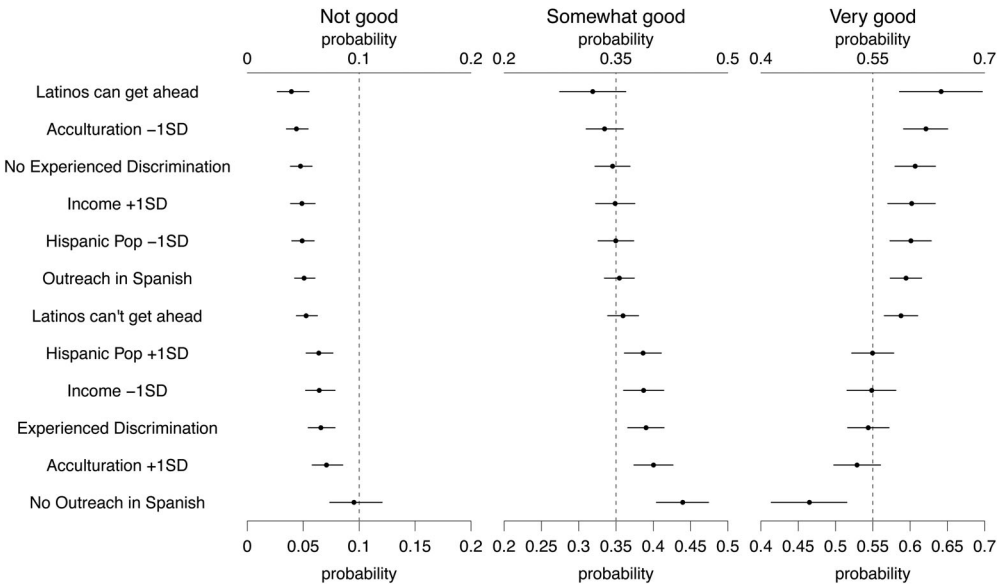

Figure 3. Predicted probability of Latino assessment of contact with educators for selected scenarios. Data: 2006 Latino National Survey.

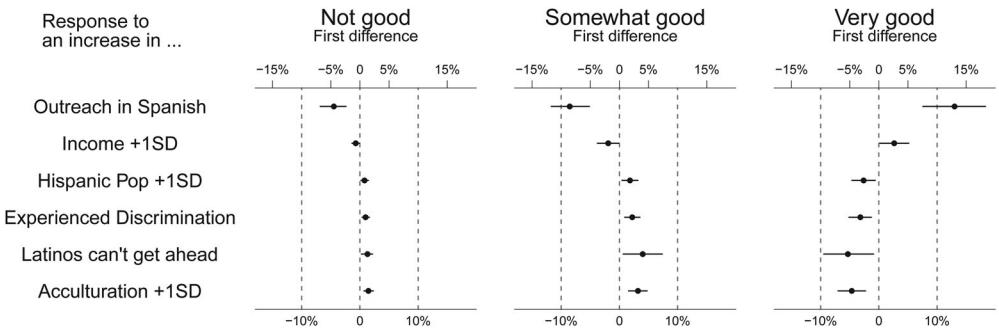

Figure 4. Change in predicted probability of Latino assessment of contact with educators. Data: 2006 Latino National Survey.

same probability of the middle (0.44) and high categories (0.46) of evaluating contact with school officials. Among respondents who report that their schools do provide information in Spanish language, this uncertainty gives way to a prediction of "very good" that is about 0.59 compared to 0.35 for "somewhat good," a difference of 0.24 points. The corresponding first differences illustrated in Figure 4 reinforce the contrast and the importance of school outreach relative to other factors in assessing contact with educators. This finding is consistent with an interpretation of Spanish language outreach as an effort to enhance the quality and nature of the schools connection to its clients, and the evidence suggests that the return on this investment is favorable judgments from clients.

We also observe that income levels and one's financial situation exert meaningful, but modest, impacts on school evaluations. Respondents with lower levels of household income, along with those who report a negative view of their financial standing, are less likely to favorably evaluate their schools and contact with school officials. In the latter case, this is relative to respondents who hold a more favorable view of their financial situation. The final coefficients in the first model highlight the importance of relatively high levels of interest in political affairs ($\beta = -0.036$, $se = 0.019$) and gender ($\beta = 0.060$, $se = 0.026$) in understanding Latinos' school evaluations. Interestingly, based on Table 4 alone, these variables wield little influence over evaluations of contact with school officials.

The statistical relationships reported in Table 4 underscore some of the general determinants of how Latinos evaluate keepers of the American Dream, both in terms of the public schools in their community and their contact with school officials. The visual evidence, both in terms of the predicted category and the first differences, reveal that assessments of "Dream Keepers" pivot most on differences in the levels of cultural adaptation, perceived discrimination and welcomeness, as well as vested interest in bureaucratic performance. Although statistically significant in association, indicators of socio-economic status, political interest, sex, and the share of Hispanics in one's local context, figure less prominently as predictors of Latino judgments of schools and contact with school officials.

Evaluative discussion

There is a long tradition of asking the public to give opinions on matters of education. Indeed, a core element of our investigation is based on a survey item that George

Gallup introduced in 1974 to anchor a newly minted time-series showcasing the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools (Gallup 1976), an annual report commissioned by Phi Delta Kappa education society (PDK). In the first three years of Gallup's report, a nationally representative sample consisted of 88% White and 12% Nonwhite. Despite 25% of the K-12 student population being Latino in 2010, by 2013, Whites still represented 85% and Nonwhites 15% of the sample interviewed for the PDK annual report (Bushaw and Lopez 2013). The pedigree of the survey question and the under-representation of Latino public opinion in the PDK reports underscore the value of the 2006 LNS as a critical data source for the systematic study of Latino assessments of schools and educators.

Akin to the characterization of Spanish-speaking students as the "invisible minority" in a 1966 report by the National Education Association, contemporary adult Latino views of schools and educators are invisible in research of US education politics and policy. Our study marks a critical step toward filling this gap by proposing and answering three theoretical questions. First, to what extent do levels of cultural adaptation structure assessments of organizations and bureaucrats? Second, does communication between organizations and their clients shape client judgments of organizations and bureaucrats? Third, are loyalties to service-providing bureaucracies an outgrowth of stakeholder position?

Our analysis accommodates the particular experiences of immigrant-proximate communities. The evidence we uncover indicates that acculturation tracks negative judgments about schools and contact with educators among Latinos. We interpret these findings to suggest that newcomers form their attitudes with reference to prior knowledge, much of which is formed in their place of origin. These patterns comport with theory in Latino politics, which heretofore has not been applied to what is arguably the most important institution shaping the state of life in Latino America.

The implications of the evidence in support of the acculturation-cynicism hypothesis are both lamentable and encouraging. On the one hand, to the extent that parent support for student education achievements follows favorable assessments of schools and educators, the findings suggest that the contemporary Latino education crisis might be more acute were it not for the replenished optimism furnished by immigrants to the Latino population. On the other, natural births already eclipse immigration as the primary driver of Latino growth, effectively reducing the influence of foreign-born optimism in the aggregate, and this would be the case even if immigration were to continue at peak rates from the 1990s. For better or worse, the cynicism that research documents as more prevalent among US-born Latinos is likely to be a growing feature of Hispanic judgments of schools and their contact with school officials.

What, then, might counter the anticipated growth in negative bias toward dream keepers? This investigation finds that school managers have at least one option at their disposal: communication to parents about school happenings in the Spanish language. While we do not measure outreach directly, the evidence here indicates that the perception of outreach is strongly correlated with individual-level, favorable assessments of schools and contact with educators. Assuming that favorable evaluations facilitate positive parental involvement, the investment that educators make as part of their broader mission to educate the public can be diversified to include a connection to the community.

Our analysis engages alternative logics related to the nature of stakeholder position and evaluations of service-providing bureaucracies. Specifically, our statistical comparisons help adjudicate competing theoretical expectations regarding the role of stakeholder

position. On whether self-interest considerations animate a critical predisposition toward assessments of schools and educators, or whether loyalty is fostered by greater attachment and "buy-in" to the local community, the evidence we uncover favors the latter.

The anticipated loyalty from greater "buy-in" to the local community holds implications for the value of deepening the ties between local schools and the surrounding neighborhoods. Having children enrolled in K-12 schools, as we might expect, is more strongly correlated with favorable assessments of schools than being a homeowner. However, homeowners are clearly distinct from renters. To the extent that schools can further their connection to a broader public, particularly with respect to homeowners, the more conducive a neighborhood context might be created to reinforce the efforts by schools.

Latinos are a marginalized group whose interface with government mostly excludes the agenda-setting opportunities of governance. In our study, experiences with discrimination appear to undermine favorable attitudes toward schools and school officials; perceived differences in how schools reach out to Latinos, particularly in providing school-relevant information in Spanish language, correspond to positive evaluations. This evidence suggests that within the implementation stage of the policy process, there is important give and take between bureaucrats and the clients they serve. Latinos may be a marginalized community; however, public servants are critical intermediaries with resources available to reach out in culturally competent ways. The findings also suggest that broader experiences as racial minorities influence Latino views of schools and their officials. Indeed, public schools do not have total control over the broader controversies linked to race and ethnicity that affect Latinos and other minority communities. The good news for school officials, however, is that they can embrace their Latino constituents by providing Spanish-language information about school policies and other relevant school happenings.

While Latinos hold education in high regard, their struggle to improve their standing in American education continues (Fraga et al. 2012). Improving our understanding of Latino attitudes toward the actors charged with converting the hopes that their children will succeed academically into a public policy reality is a critical pursuit with, we argue, far-reaching implications. In the education system, the pursuit of performance-driven accountability measures reigns supreme. Such measures are implemented in accordance with international performance benchmarks for the purposes of bolstering the US's educational standing, with the most recent manifestation coming in the form of Common Core State Standards initiative. From a strategic standpoint, understanding why Latinos' feel the way they do about public schools can arm policy-makers with vital information about how best to involve Latino parents in the education process and pursuits of Latino youth. A mature body of research that links parental involvement to positive student outcomes underpins the value of such information for the sake of students. But, the link between outreach, Latinos' perceptions, and their school involvement is also important for the sake of our nation's educational competitiveness. As the Latino share of the school-aged population grows, the fate of the US's academic standing on the international stage will be linked to how America's schools and educators, the keepers of the American Dream, promote Latinos' school involvement and achievement. We hope our investigation animates more research on the factors that influence how Latinos judge the keepers of a dream that remains unrealized.

Notes

1. It is only on the heels of the most recent economic recession that a statistical tie appears between the importance of education and jobs/economy for Latinos.
2. Census projections at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html.
3. Scholars debate the concept of acculturation. One point of contention is specifying acculturation as immigrant adjustment to the American mainstream, or that "Anglo conformity" best describes patterns of acculturation (Gordon 1964, 109–110). Internal colony models mount the strongest criticism of this view (Acuña 1972; Almaguer 1975; Barrera 1979), but see Fraga and Segura (2006) and Kasinitz et al. (2009) for critiques of claims that Anglo-Protestant culture is the "core" of American national identity. For another summary of this debate addressing the term "assimilation", see Alba and Nee (2003).
4. Self-interest is a staple facet of theoretical models of policy attitude, but only observed when policy benefit or burden is salient, large, clear, and certain (Sears and Funk 1991).
5. $\Pr(y_i = j \mid X_i) \int_{T_{j-1}}^{T_j} Normal(x_i\beta, 1)dx_i\beta$ where y is the response, x is a vector of covariates, i indexes cases, j indexes categories of the response, τ is a $j + 1$ vector of cutpoints with $t_1 = 0$, $t_1 = 0$, and $t_j = \infty$ for identification, and Normal indicates the pdf of the Normal distribution.
6. Principal component factor analysis further reveals that naturalization uniquely loads onto a distinct dimension, demonstrating that formal political membership is orthogonal to linguistic cultural adaptation.
7. Adding the four discrimination items produces an index that ranges from 1 to 5 (scale of reliability coefficient: $\alpha = 0.572$, average inter-item covariance: 0.029). Principal component factor analysis reveals that these indicators tap a single latent factor. Thirty-nine respondents (about 0.05% of 8634 cases) report experiencing discrimination in all four contexts queried. We estimate results using an index of experienced discrimination that collapses those with a value of five and value of four, assuring that outliers do not drive results. This recoding does not affect our results or conclusions. Reported estimates are based on the discrimination index variable with values ranging from 1 to 4, mean = 2.2 and SD = 0.6.
8. The Spearman's ρ for the individual and perceived group discrimination is 0.0083 ($p > .45$), indicating independence between our measures of discrimination.
9. The education variable is coded as 1 for no schooling, 2 for less than High school, 3 for H.S. graduate or GED, and 4 for at least some college, 5 for college graduate, and 6 for post-graduate studies.
10. Surveys typically report about 20% missing or refused on questions concerning in- come. We impute missing values using information about education level, age, sex, home-ownership, and employment status.

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