“Latinos Rising to the Challenge: Political Responses to Threat and Opportunity Messages” – I examine variations in responses to one’s political context by considering a more dynamic approach to the signals one is exposed to. By relying on underlying principles of psychology and persuasive communication, I build upon the theoretical and empirical research on the political impact of threat. I employ an experimental design to isolate the effects of coupled threat and opportunity appeals on electoral and non-electoral forms of political behavior. The policy domain for my experiment is immigration and I rely on a U.S. sample of 1,015 Latino adults. One of my major findings is that, relative to a no-political appeal, a message combining elements of threat and opportunity is most effective at encouraging various forms of issue-based activism, including intended and observed measures of political behavior such as talking about politics and sending an electronic postcard to their U.S. Senators. I also use secondary survey analyses from the American National Election Studies (2008, 2012) to test my hypotheses about the mobilizing effects of threat and opportunity cues on nationally representative samples of Latino adults in the U.S. My research findings imply that mobilizers must communicate a more complete picture of one’s political landscape and offer a different set of motivators beyond fear for the Latino community. I find that it is more effective to combine fear-inducing messages with appeals emphasizing the possibility of political success with policies or candidates that are intended to advance one’s status quo. My work provides strong support for the novel proposition that more balanced political appeals—involving political environments that signal peril and promise—are more successful at mobilizing Latinos to engage in political activity.

Co-Chairs: Vincent L. Hutchings and John A. Garcia

Dissertation Committee: Nancy Burns and Don Kinder

Awards / Honors

- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant 2017-2018
- Indiana University, Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society Postdoctoral Fellowship 2017-2019
- Princeton University Center for the Study of Democratic Politics Postdoctoral Fellowship (declined) 2017-2018
- University of Maryland Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship (declined) 2017-2018
- Midwest Political Science Association 73rd Annual Meeting & Exhibition 2016

“Rising to the Challenge: Latino Political Responses To Two-Prong Threat and Opportunity Messages” (Nominated for the Latino/a Caucus “Best Graduate Student Paper Award”)

- University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford Fellow 2016–2017
- NRC Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship 2014–2015
- NRC Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship 2011–2014
- American Political Science Association Minority Fellowship 2009–2011
- Outstanding Classroom Contributions, Pi Sigma Alpha Honors Society 2008–2009
- Midwest Association for Latin American Studies, Best Student Paper 2009
- The Urban Institute Summer Academy, Research Fellow 2008
- Berkeley Summer Research Opportunity Program, Scholar (Mentor: Irene Bloemraad) 2007
- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program 2006–2009

Publication Experience


*Winner of Best Student Paper at 58th Annual Midwest Association for Latin American Studies

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER PREPARATION

Cruz Nichols, V. “Peril and Promise: Framing a More Complete Political Landscape to Spark Intended and Observed Activism” (to be submitted to Political Behavior)

Cruz Nichols, V. “Motivating Political Action: Gender Differences Under Threat and Opportunity” (to be submitted to Politics and Gender)


LeBrón, Alana, V. Cruz Nichols and F. Pedraza. “Immigration Surveillance and Mental Health: Findings from a National Multi-Ethnic Sample.” (to be submitted to Ethnicity & Health)

LeBrón, Alana, V. Cruz Nichols and F. Pedraza. “Street-Level Race and Self-Rated Health in an Era of Heightened Immigrant Policing: Findings from a National Sample of Latinas/os.” (to be submitted to Ethnicity & Disease)

PROJECTS / GRANTS

**National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant** 2017-2018
“Rising to the Challenge: Political Responses to Threat and Opportunity Messages” $23,250

“Rising to the Challenge: Political Responses to Threat and Opportunity Messages” $500

**Gerald R. Ford Research Grant** May 2016 - May 2017
“Rising to the Challenge: How Mobilizers Catalyze Threat and Opportunity Messages Into Action” $1,275

**Candidate Research Grant, Rackham Graduate School** May 2016 – May 2017
“Rising to the Challenge: Political Responses to Threat and Opportunity Messages, a Bottom-Up Approach” $3000

**Latino National Health and Immigrant Survey** Jan. - March 2015
Co-Student Investigator

**Chandler and Sangunett Research Award** Summer 2015
UM Political Science Department $3000
“Rising to the Challenge: Political Responses To Threat and Opportunity Messages”

**GSRA Pilot Program** Summer 2015
UM Political Science Dept. (Vince Hutchings) $9450
“Whitewashing: How Minority Candidates Use Implicit Racial Cues as a Defense Against Political Rumors”

**Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research** July 2014
$2000

**Pre-Candidate Research Grant, Rackham Graduate School** Dec. 2012-Dec. 2013
“Understanding Threat: The Spillover Effects of Restrictive Immigrant Messages among $1500
**Center for Political Studies, Roy Pierce Award**

“Revisiting the Source of Ethnic Cues: The Effectiveness of Family and Panethnic Group Appeals in Mobilizing Latino Voters”

**Political Science Department Summer Collaboration Fellowship**

“The Effects of Redistricting in 2010 and the Latino Vote in 2012 Congressional Districts”

**UM Rackham Spring-Summer Collaboration Grant**

“Racialized Cues: The Effects of Whitewashing Strategies in Obama’s Campaigns” & “Latino Politics: the Mediating Effects of Second-Generation Immigrant Adolescents”

**Gerald R. Ford School’s Center for Public Policy in Diverse Societies**

Principal Investigator


**UM Institute for Social Research – Rackham Summer Training**

ICPSR Summer Institute Program Scholar

**The Coalition of Interdisciplinary Research on Latina/o Issues**

Co-founder & Student Coordinator

**Institute for Social Research – Rackham Summer Training**

Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Program Scholar

**INVITED PROFESSIONAL TALKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of American Culture Latina/o Studies, University of Michigan</td>
<td>Nov. 3, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Latinos/as and the 2016 Election”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Wood Johnson Fellowship Center for Health Policy, Department of Political</td>
<td>April 21-23, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science, University of New Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Cautious Citizens: Immigration and Health Policy Impacts on Civic Behaviors and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Participation” &amp; “Navigating Immigration Enforcement: Implications of</td>
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<td>Latinos Living in the Shadows and Trusting Healthcare Providers”</td>
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<td>University of Arizona, Political Science, Guest Lecturer</td>
<td>April 15, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Coupling Urgency with Hope: Latino Political Participation in Response to Threat</td>
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<td>and Opportunity”</td>
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<td>Wake Forest University, Latino Politics Class, Guest Lecturer</td>
<td>Oct. 21-23 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Spillover Effects and Mixed Messages: Government Skepticism Among Latinos</td>
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<td>Surrounding Immigration and Health”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wake Forest University, University-wide presentation, Guest Lecturer</td>
<td>Oct. 21-23 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Cautious Citizens Amidst Mixed Messages: Immigration and Health Policy Signals</td>
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<td>Impacts on Government Trust and Political Participation”</td>
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**CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

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<tr>
<td>Western Political Science Association 2017 Annual Meeting &amp; Exhibition (Vancouver)</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Peril or Promise: Coupling Threat and Opportunity Messages to Spur Latino Political Participation”</td>
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<td>Western Political Science Association 2017 Annual Meeting &amp; Exhibition (Vancouver)</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Cautious Citizenship: Chilling and Mobilizing Effects Surrounding Immigration Policy”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwest Political Science Association 74th Annual Meeting &amp; Exhibition (Chicago)</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Peril or Promise: Latino Political Activism Surrounding Threat and Opportunity Messages”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwest Political Science Association 73rd Annual Meeting &amp; Exhibition (Chicago)</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Rising to the Challenge: Latino Political Responses To Two-Prong Threat and</td>
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<td>Opportunity Messages” (Latina/o Caucus nomination for “Best Graduate Student Paper Award”)</td>
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<td>Midwest Political Science Association 73rd Annual Meeting &amp; Exhibition (Chicago)</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
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<td>“Continued Ripple Effects: Avoiding Government and Health Officials Based on</td>
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<td>Immigration Policy Concerns”</td>
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<td>“Policy Feedback and Unexpected Ripples: Government Skepticism Stemming From</td>
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<td>Immigration Policing”</td>
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<td>Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Immigration Consortium (PRIEND), 40th Meeting,</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>(South Bend) “Is Threat Sufficient? Political Responses To Threat and Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messages”</td>
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Western Political Science Association 2015 Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Las Vegas)  
“Secure Communities: Reassessing Threat’s Catalyzing Effect on Political Engagement across Group Differences”  
April 2015

Midwest Political Science Association 73rd Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Chicago)  
“Immigration Enforcement: Policy Threat and Its Effects on Political Trust and Behavior of Latinos”  
April 2015

Midwest Political Science Association 72nd Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Chicago)  
“Producing Good, Yet Unhealthy Citizens: Secure Communities and Surrounding Threat”  
April 2014

Symposium on the Politics of Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity - SPIRE (Bloomington)  
“Mirrored Threat: Political Responses to Denigrating Group Messages in the Media”  
March 2014

Western Political Science Association 2012 Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Los Angeles)  
“Does Threat Matter? Counter-Mobilization Beyond Semisovereign Latino and White Americans”  
April 2013

Midwest Political Science Association 70th Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Chicago)  
“The Electoral Consequences of Obama’s Use of Racial Inoculation in 2008: Group Conflict Differences in Presidential Approval and Policy Support Among Voters.”  
April 2012

American Political Science Association 107th Annual Meeting & Exhibition (Seattle)  
“How Children of Immigrants Redefine Stereotype Threats and Discrimination”  
Sept. 2011

American Political Science Association 106th Annual Meeting & Exhibition (D.C.)  
“Latino Politics: The Political Leverage of Second-Generation Immigrant Adolescents”  
Aug. 2010

Midwest Political Science Association 68th Annual National Conference (Chicago)  
“Tucking in the Sleeping Giant: Political Socialization as it Relates to the Incorporation & Family Dynamics of Latino Families”  
April 2010

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI  
Introduction to American Politics – Graduate Student Instructor (2 semesters)  
Sept. 2010-April 2011

Created my syllabi and thoughtful lesson plans to lead two one-hour sections that met twice per week, each consisting of 23 students; I also create my section’s quizzes and critical thinking assignments to help them think more analytically and understand the fundamental principles of American politics. Our class readings and discussions range from the Framers of the U.S. Constitution to War on Terrorism, where each are covered through interactive dialogue and simulations. I was a GSI for Dr. Hanes Walton, Jr. the first semester, and then Dr. Ken Kollman the second semester.

DePaul University, Chicago Quarter First Year Program
Chicago, IL  
Common Hour – Honors Program Peer Mentor/Instructor  
March 2006-Nov. 2007

Generated well-organized lesson plans and innovative assignments to best lead a weekly class of thirty first-year students; these students were enrolled in “Through the Lens: Exploring the City of Chicago” in the Honors Program.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Political Scientists of Color, Political Science Department, Michigan, Co-President, 2010-2012, Member, 2009–
Women’s Caucus, Political Science Department, Michigan, Member, 2009–
Coalition for Tuition Equality, Michigan, Graduate Student Liaison, 2011-2013
Rackham Student Government, Michigan, Student Representative, 2012-2013
Coalition for Interdisciplinary Research on Latino/a Interests, Michigan, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, 2010-2015
Hustle&Grow Mentorship Program, Michigan, Co-Founder, 2011-2013
Students of Color at Rackham, Michigan, Academic Chair and Political Action Chair, 2010-2012

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND SERVICE

American Political Science Association 2009–
NSF-Funded Women of Color of Political Scientists, Member, 2013–
Latino Caucus, 2009–
Women’s Caucus, 2009–
Section on Race, Ethnicity and Politics, 2009–
Minority Fellows Program, Fellow, Mentee and Mentor, 2009–
American Political Science Association Mentorship Program, Mentee and Mentor, 2008–

Midwest Political Science Association 2009–
Women’s Caucus, 2009–