

Essays

Chicana/o Students Respond to Arizona's Anti-Ethnic Studies Bill, SB 1108

Civic Engagement, Ethnic Identity, and Well-being

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ABSTRACT: Arizona Senate Bill 1108, the “anti-ethnic studies bill,” proposed to eliminate ethnic studies programs and ethnic-based organizations from state-funded education. Along with other anti-immigrant legislation, this bill is creating an oppressive climate of discrimination against individuals of Mexican descent in Arizona. This study investigates the impact of SB 1108 on the mental well-being of Mexican-descent undergraduate students and examines protective factors such as ethnic identity, civic engagement, and individual coping responses (engaged and disengaged). Ninety-nine undergraduates who self-identified as Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicana/o completed an online survey. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis indicates that greater stress due to SB 1108 was significantly associated with lower self-esteem and more depressive symptoms. Engaged coping responses to SB 1108 protected students' self-esteem even at high levels of stress; in contrast, students who felt high stress but were not engaged had significantly lower self-esteem. Our results also indicate that a positive ethnic identity, based on knowledge of cultural history and traditions, is a significant protective factor. Thus, while legislation such as the anti-ethnic studies bill may have a negative impact on the mental well-being of youth, it may also make them stronger as they become academically and civically engaged in response.

This summer, around 50 young people—including myself—ran from Tucson to Phoenix because legislators were threatening to eliminate the teaching of ethnic studies here in the state of Arizona. We were joined by the Yoeme and Otham nations. When we reached the state capitol, the legislators were amazed that we had run through the merciless desert in 115 degree heat. The bill was dropped, but they vowed to make another attempt next year. Afterwards, one of the runners commented: “We came to fight this bill, but in the end, we came to know ourselves.”

—Dr. Roberto Rodriguez, 2009

Many scholars have argued that national and state policies aimed at minority populations may increase their fear of discrimination (Michelson 2001; Pew Hispanic Center 2007). However, few studies have investigated the impact of macro-level factors, such as state legislative decisions, on the individual subjective experience of discrimination among members of targeted groups. Empirical research has shown that personal experiences of discrimination are associated with more depressive symptoms among Latino adolescents (Eccles, Wong, and Peck 2006; García Coll et al. 1996; Romero, Martinez, and Carvajal 2007; Romero and Roberts 2003; Spears-Brown and Bigler 2005). Given that Latino youth have long reported the highest rates of depressive symptoms, suicide ideation, and suicide attempts compared to youth of other ethnic groups, it is likely that many have already been negatively affected by stress associated with inequalities in U.S. society (Meyer 2003). Recent anti-ethnic studies legislation in Arizona specifically targets Latino young people, stigmatizing and devaluing their cultural heritage. In light of the rising anti-immigrant hostility in the nation and the likelihood of more anti-ethnic legislation, there is a clear public health need to investigate the mental health impact of such legislation on young adults of Mexican descent.

We carried out a study to evaluate the impact of Arizona Senate Bill 1108, the “anti-ethnic studies bill,” on the mental well-being of a sample of Chicana/o undergraduates at an Arizona university. In this essay we first discuss the contemporary political context of ethnic studies in Arizona, including the introduction of SB 1108, and review the origins and historical context of ethnic studies. We then present a modified version of Meyer’s Minority Stress Model to guide our empirical study of Mexican-descent undergraduate students’ mental well-being in relation to SB 1108. We present our research procedure and results and conclude with a brief discussion of our findings.

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Rising Nativism and the Introduction of SB 1108

In Arizona, as across the United States, the 2008 presidential election was one of the most remarkable in the nation's history. As a direct result of the civil rights movement's progress toward equality, an African American was elected president. Yet during this same period, contentious debates about race, ethnicity, and immigration in America were brewing. They would soon come to a head in Arizona with the introduction of viciously anti-immigrant legislation, SB 1070, signed into law by the state's governor in the spring of 2010.

Nativism, of course, has a long history in the United States. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century policies and laws sought to restrict the entry of those immigrants, especially Chinese and Eastern Europeans, whose cultures differed from what was perceived as the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant norm (Ngai 2004; Zolberg 2006). Nativists have long argued that American culture, which they equate with "white culture," is weakened by the influx of black and brown immigrants, whom they view as inferior both intellectually and morally.¹

The 9/11 attacks intensified fears about the presence of foreigners in the United States, and the period since 2001 has seen an upsurge in state policies and laws attempting to restrict immigration and secure the nation's borders. Although nativist sentiments after 9/11 particularly targeted people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent, the generalized anxiety about anyone characterized as non-American has had broad negative spillover effects on Latinos, even those who are U.S. citizens (Cammarota 2009; Fix and Zimmerman 2001).

Deeply troubled by the climate of growing hostility, Latinos, immigrants, and their supporters marched in towns and cities across the country in 2006 in one of the largest civic mobilizations since the civil rights era (Fraga et al. 2010). This highly visible civic and political participation by immigrants and their allies provoked renewed political repression and a backlash that threatens to further exclude all Latinos from the social fabric of the United States (Cohen-Marks, Nuño, and Sanchez 2009; Fix and Zimmerman 2001; Kilty and Vidal de Haymes 2000; O'Leary 2009). It is exactly this type of systemic exclusion and stigmatization of minority groups that has been linked to excess stress and a threat to mental health (Meyer 2003).

In Arizona, nearly seventy legislative bills targeting immigrants have been introduced in the state legislature since 2004, paralleling a surge of

similar actions in other parts of the nation (Harnet 2008; Winders 2007). It was in this political and legislative climate that Arizona Senator Russell Pearce (R-Mesa) proposed an amendment to a homeland security bill, SB 1108, that originally would have made only minor changes to the state's Homeland Security Advisory Councils. Introduced in April 2008, the amendment sought to effectively eliminate ethnic studies and ethnic-related student groups from state-funded educational institutions in Arizona at all levels. The proposed amendment thus threatened to roll back the achievements of the civil rights movement, which had struggled for inclusion of ethnic studies courses and ethnic student organizations at publicly funded schools. Proponents of the bill argued that the ethnic studies programs espoused anti-Western teachings and anti-American values. The amendment stated in part:

A primary purpose of public education is to inculcate values of American citizenship. Public tax dollars used in public schools should not be used to denigrate American values and the teachings of Western civilization.

The amendment provided that institutions found in violation of the bill's provisions would lose a portion of their state funding, essentially ensuring that ethnic studies would be stripped from school curricula if the measure passed (see appendix A).

The measure did not pass in 2008, nor when it was introduced a year later as an amendment to an education bill, SB 1069 (see appendix B). But the hostile political climate in Arizona made it likely that attacks on ethnic-based organizations and ethnically diverse curricula would resurface.² The public debate over Arizona SB 1108 must be understood within the state's anti-immigrant discourse on a broader level (see Cammarota 2009). Pearce, a Republican from Mesa, is the architect of many of the anti-immigrant proposals put forward since 2004.³ He was reported as saying that he did not oppose diversity instruction but rather the use of taxpayer dollars to indoctrinate students in "anti-American seditious thinking" (Benson 2008). A particular target was the Mexican American/Raza Studies program in the Tucson public schools. Although the program did fit the description of an anti-American program as set forth in the legislation, Senator Pearce and the state superintendent of public instruction, Tom Horne, made clear that they intended to use the legislation to defund and shut down the program in the Tucson schools.⁴

If passed, the measure would also have prohibited students from forming groups based in whole or in part on race or ethnicity. The one exception

made was for Native American groups. Thus the bill primarily targeted Mexican American studies and affiliated student organizations, because Mexican Americans are by far the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority in Arizona.⁵ The bill strongly implied that Mexican American studies and Mexican American student organizations are anti-American. In this sense, it was an attempt to further stigmatize Mexican-descent students and exclude their heritage from the academic arena. This, we argue, created a macro-level climate of prejudice focused on a single minority ethnic group; this in turn generated social stress likely to have a negative influence on the mental well-being of Mexican American students.

Ethnic Studies in Historical Context

The creation of ethnic studies programs in the United States is rooted in the 1960s civil rights movements, including struggles by African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and women, among others (Wieviorka 2005). Unlike earlier movements dominated by the struggle for economic justice (see, for example, Gómez-Quiñonez 1994), these civil rights movements were driven by disillusionment and cynicism toward government and its unfulfilled promise of equality for all (Muñoz 1989). A direct result of these struggles was the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which addressed the systematic exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from the political process. Activists also fought for educational curricula that would include the experiences and contributions of diverse cultures and help ensure the educational success of minority populations (Sánchez 1966). Civic engagement and ethnic identity thus played a central role in the empowerment process of Chicana/o youth in response to social exclusion and prejudice.

The emerging Chicano movement, or *El Movimiento*, called for unity under the banner of cultural nationalism. Chicana/os saw themselves as a people stripped of their land, history, and culture (Navarro 2005), in part because early Americanization policies discouraged use of the Spanish language and maintenance of cultural traditions. Like other minority groups, Chicanos and Chicanas sought to redefine themselves in ways that were culturally meaningful, in part by adopting a new name. Mexican American activists opted for “Chicano” and “Chicana,” just as African American activists opted for “black.”⁶ This was one step in affirming a positive ethnic/cultural identity, based on a knowledge of history and traditions, as a means to unify communities of Mexican heritage and amplify their political voice.

An emerging collective ethnic identity provided a basis for a critique of institutionalized inequality in the United States, including unequal educational and employment opportunities (Rosen 1973).

Inigorated by cultural pride, the Chicana/o movement helped restore a measure of social respect for the community's language, rituals, history, and religious traditions (Muñoz 1989; Navarro 2005). Movement activists were instrumental in establishing Chicano, Raza, or Mexican American studies at the university level, just as other activists pressed for African American studies, women's studies, and American Indian studies (Reuben 1998). Positive ethnic identity—based on knowledge of the group's history, culture, and experience of social injustice—became a core component of empowerment within the Chicana/o movement and a way in which youth could respond to systemic discrimination.

Proponents of Arizona's anti-ethnic studies bill, in calling for a ban on ethnic-based organizations, specifically targeted the student group known as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). MEChA had its beginnings in the period of civil rights struggle (Muñoz 1989). Founded in March 1969 in Denver during the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, the organization was instrumental in outlining basic premises for the Chicana/Chicano movement. This included advocacy of Chicana/o studies programs. MEChA and its allies would play an important leadership role in this effort, bringing pressure on U.S. colleges and universities to include Chicana/o culture, history, and politics in their curricula (Muñoz 1989; Rhoads and Martinez 1998; Rosen 1973). Today many Chicana/o studies and other ethnic studies programs throughout the nation credit their existence to the dedication of "Mechistas"—MEChA student group members. Certainly, the activism of student groups such as MEChA influenced the growth of Hispanic postsecondary education participation and the growth of ethnic studies programs in U.S. schools, colleges, and universities. Since the late 1960s, the number of Latina/o and Latin American studies programs and centers has grown to approximately four hundred, according to the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS).⁷

It is ironic that in 2008, approximately forty years after the start of the Chicano movement, legislators in Arizona are attempting to eliminate ethnic studies and race/ethnic-based groups from college, university, and high school campuses. Students of Mexican descent in Arizona today face discriminatory legislation that threatens to undo the educational advances of the civil rights movement (Muñoz 1989; Pizarro 1998; Rhoads and Martínez 1998). But the history of the movement teaches us that Chicana/o

students have become more, rather than less, engaged in response to exclusionary policies, prejudice, and institutional discrimination. We integrate these key elements into our model of minority stress as a way to understand the resiliency of Chicana/o students in the face of Arizona's contemporary nativist agenda and legislation.

Modern Minority Stress and Resilience

In order to investigate the effect of the anti-ethnic studies bill on Mexican-descent students at a four-year college, we turn to a social-psychological model of minority stress. Stress can be defined as external or internal demands that tax or exceed the adaptive resources of individuals (Folkman et al. 1986). *Minority stress* arises from external demands imposed by one's disadvantaged status within a society and the associated stigmatization. However, not every individual experiences minority stress in the same way. Many minority group members not only cope with minority stress but find ways to overcome it, resulting in greater empowerment.

Meyer's Minority Stress Model proposes that circumstances within the macro environment, such as exclusionary and discriminatory policies, may increase minority stress and negatively affect mental well-being. This model also identifies key types of coping that may buffer the effect of minority stress on mental health—namely minority identity, individual coping response, and community coping. In the current study we propose a simplified version of Meyer's model that focuses on stress due to the anti-ethnic studies bill, SB 1108. We further propose that this stress can be buffered through positive ethnic identity based on knowledge of cultural history, through civic engagement, and through engaged individual coping responses to SB 1108. We hypothesize that greater stress due to SB 1108 will be associated with lower self-esteem and more depressive symptoms, but that these negative effects will be lessened when students are more engaged and have a more positive ethnic identity.

Meyer's Minority Stress Model was originally based on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) population research (Meyer 2003). However, it has direct relevance for studying the experience of Mexican-descent populations in the United States. It is based on an established body of research on mental health disparities between the LGB population and the population at large, similar to the research on Latino health disparities. Like ethnic minority groups, LGB populations have been the targets of discrimination and exclusionary legislation. Furthermore, Meyer's model includes an articulation

between macro and micro levels of prejudice and individual mental health, and it identifies protective coping responses similar to those identified in Chicana/o civil rights movement history. Lastly, this model encompasses both positive and negative mental health outcomes; thus it is not merely pathology-oriented, but includes positive youth development trajectories.

In the current study, we include both positive and negative mental health outcomes that are commonly used to study adolescent populations, specifically depressive symptoms and self-esteem. Depressive symptoms include negative affect, loneliness, and hopelessness. Epidemiological studies have demonstrated that such symptoms can be a marker for depression and are often co-morbid with other mental disorders, such as suicide ideation, anxiety, and panic (Radloff 1977). Self-esteem is a long-standing marker of positive and healthy development at the individual level and represents a global positive sense of self-worth (Rosenberg 1965).

Researchers have long argued that coping and resilience are primary responses of minorities to prejudice (e.g., Allport 1954; Clark et al. 1999). In terms of individual coping resources, Bruce Compas and his colleagues (2001) have found that two key components of coping are engagement and disengagement; engagement strategies are associated with fewer behavioral and emotional problems among adolescents. Engagement coping strategies involve direct engagement with the stressor and include problem solving, emotional expression, and emotional modulation. Disengagement coping involves distancing one's thoughts, emotions, and physical presence from the stressor through such mechanisms as denial and wishful thinking. Lisa Edwards and Andrea Romero (2008) report that engagement coping significantly moderated stress due to discrimination in a sample of Mexican-descent adolescents. In the current study, which investigates students' engaged and disengaged responses to SB 1108, we anticipated that being more engaged and less disengaged would lessen the negative effects of SB 1108 stress on the mental well-being of students.

Community-level coping is identified as a key strategy for LGB communities and may also be key for Chicana/o communities, given our shared civil rights history. In light of this history, we identified civic engagement as a form of community coping that may be critical to moderating macro-level discriminatory policy stressors, such as SB 1108. Modern youth of ethnic minority descent have often been portrayed as apathetic with respect to their civic knowledge and civic engagement around ethnic-based policies (Baldi et al. 2001; Hahn 2001; Jennings 2002; Niemi and Junn 1998). In a study by Michelson (2001), for example, Latino youth were found to

be less likely than either Anglo or African American youth to say they view voting as important. However, in the 2008 election, turnout among young Latino voters ages eighteen to twenty-four increased by almost 6 percentage points over their turnout in the 2004 election (U.S. Census 2010). Madeleine Gauthier (2003) and Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota (2006) argue that the supposed political apathy of youth is a mischaracterization and that a broader view of civic engagement is needed to understand the attitudes of modern adolescents, particularly minority adolescents. Qualitative research suggests that urban ethnic minority youth understand civic engagement in a manner different from middle-class Anglo students because of their personal experiences with social injustice (Rubin 2007). Lisa Bedolla's (2000) qualitative research also shows that Latino youth pursue a nuanced form of political participation, often remaining disengaged from the mainstream political system while maintaining a strong ethnic affiliation.

For this reason, in the current study we take a broader view of civic and political participation, expanding its scope to include actions that can be taken regardless of citizenship status or voting eligibility (Marcelo, Lopez, and Kirby 2007; Montoya 2002; Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2004). We know that there was widespread involvement and organizing among Latino youth in the immigration marches of 2006 and 2007, suggesting that youth are knowledgeable about current legislative debates on immigration and related issues and are not complacent (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Cammarota 2009; Cammarota and Romero 2009). Civic engagement may include wearing buttons with political messages, taking part in demonstrations, voicing concerns to or trying to persuade registered voters, and volunteering to help mobilize communities (Marcelo, Lopez, and Kirby 2007; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Regardless of the activity chosen, the sense of being civically engaged with the political system may be an important factor for youths' mental well-being.

Another key factor in the minority stress model is the protective role that a positive ethnic identity can play in moderating the negative effect of discrimination on mental well-being (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker 2000; Meyer 2003). Two central elements of ethnic identity that increase the resiliency of minorities are (a) identity development based on knowledge of cultural history and traditions, and (b) positive affective valence of identity (Meyer 2003). Too often, research reduces ethnic identity to a simple matter of ethnic identification or ethnic labels (e.g., "Chicano"). We argue that ethnic identity is developmental, requiring exploration of one's history and

traditions combined with a positive sense of belonging and resolution, and that this process creates resilience in the face of adversity due to discrimination (Cross 1991; Phinney 1990, 2005; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bámaca-Gómez 2004). Students who have a positive sense of their own ethnic group may be less vulnerable to hate rhetoric and negative messages about their group. For example, a significant amount of empirical research has demonstrated that strong ethnic identity is associated with higher self-esteem, more optimism, and fewer depressive symptoms (Phinney 1990, 2005; Phinney, Jacoby, and Silva 2007). On the other hand, youth who have less understanding of their ethnic group's culture, history, and traditions may be more personally affected by negative stereotypes and hate rhetoric. Thus, we argue that a positive and developed ethnic identity based on exploration and resolution with a firm grasp of cultural knowledge and traditions will buffer the negative effects of minority stress on mental health.

Ethnic studies encourages a thorough understanding of the history of ethnic minority groups in the United States and fosters critical perspectives in responding to the systemic isolation of ethnic minorities in political and academic arenas. The proposed anti-ethnic studies legislation in Arizona was designed to undermine that process. Rooted in nativist ideology, the bill portrays immigrant and ethnic populations as anti-American, specifically targeting Mexican-descent students, Chicana/o studies, and affiliated student organizations. Drawing on Meyer's Minority Stress Model, we argue that the bill creates stress that can negatively affect mental well-being, resulting in depressive symptoms and diminished self-esteem.

We empirically investigate the impact of stress associated with SB 1108 on the mental well-being of Mexican-descent undergraduate students and their ability to overcome these minority stressors through ethnic identity, individual coping, and community coping strategies. We generated three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Stress from SB 1108 will be associated with more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem.

Hypothesis 2: The negative effect of SB 1108 stress on self-esteem will be moderated by being engaged with SB 1108, being less disengaged with SB 1108, being more civically engaged, and having a more positive ethnic identity.

Hypothesis 3: The negative effect of SB 1108 stress on depressive symptoms will be moderated by being engaged with SB 1108, being less disengaged with SB 1108, being more civically engaged, and having a more positive ethnic identity.

Research Design and Participants

The study, conducted in the fall of 2008, used a one-time online survey design. Undergraduate students at a four-year institution in Arizona were recruited from lower-division courses in Mexican American studies, psychology, and family studies/human development. Undergraduate research assistants read a five-minute recruitment script in each of these classes and students were asked to provide their e-mail address if they were interested in being contacted for the study. The recruitment script informed students that the survey was confidential and anonymous and that they would be contacted only twice by e-mail. In most courses, students were offered extra credit as an incentive for participating in the study. Students who completed the survey were also entered in a raffle for an MP3 player.

Students who provided e-mail addresses were sent individualized links to the Web-based survey. If they did not respond to the first e-mail contact, they received one follow-up e-mail twenty-four hours before the end of data collection. Initially, 513 e-mail addresses were collected; fifty-one e-mails were returned as undeliverable, and seven students opted out of the study. A total of 326 students completed the online survey, which was 71 percent of those with valid e-mail addresses who received an invitation. Of this sample, 30.3 percent ($n = 99$) self-identified as being of Mexican descent. The current study analyzes only this subset of the sample.

PROCEDURE

The participants were sent individualized e-mail links for the survey to ensure that they completed the survey only once. Once students completed the survey they were not able to go back to it to make changes or forward the link to others. The survey was completed at the students' convenience on computers of their choice. Before beginning the survey, participants provided informed consent, with the choice of opting out. The survey took approximately forty-five minutes to complete and was conducted in English. After completing the questionnaire, participants could print out a confirmation page to give to their professors in order to receive extra credit. One MP3 player was raffled off at the end of the study. The study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board committee for the protection of human subjects.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants self-reported their gender, age, and generation (with respect to U.S. immigration). Ninety-nine respondents self-identified as either Mexican National or Mexican American/Chicano and were included in the analyses for the current study. The sample was 73 percent female ($n = 72$) and 27 percent male ($n = 27$). The average age was twenty ($M = 20.22$, $SD = 1.77$), with a range from eighteen to twenty-three years old. Nine students (9.1 percent) were born in another country. Of the ninety students born in the United States, forty-two (42.4 percent) had at least one parent who was an immigrant, and forty-eight (48.5 percent) were of a later generation.

ENGAGEMENT, DISENGAGEMENT, AND STRESS RELATED TO SB 1108

First, the following summary of SB 1108 was provided: "In the spring of 2008, some Arizona senators proposed a law (SB 1108) that would ban curricula that conflict with Western values (such as Raza studies) and 'race-based' organizations (such as MEChA) from public school campuses, including colleges and universities." Participants were then asked: "To what degree do the following describe your response to the proposed law/these events?" A Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree was provided for each of the following responses:

I . . .

Realize I have to live with how things are

Try not to think about it

Talk to friends and family about it

Learn all I can about it

Concentrate on positive things

Pray or meditate to calm myself

Participate in activism (e.g. petitions, marches, rallies, etc.) with people who share similar views

Don't know what I feel

Feel stressed out

For the purpose of analysis, these responses were grouped into "engaged" and "disengaged" categories (table 1). As noted above, engagement strategies involve directly coping with the stressor or one's feelings about it, while disengagement strategies involve distancing one's thoughts, emotions, and physical presence from the stressor. Internal reliability was $\alpha = .71$ for engaged and $\alpha = .66$ for disengaged.

Table 1. Items Used to Determine the Variables “Engaged” and “Disengaged”

Engaged with SB 1108	Disengaged with SB 1108
Talk to friends and family about it	Realize I have to live with how things are
Learn all I can about it	Try not to think about it
Concentrate on positive things	Don't know what I feel
Pray or meditate to calm myself	
Participate in activism (e.g. petitions, marches, rallies, etc.)	

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement items were modified from scales by Constance Flanagan, Amy Syvertsen, and Michael Stout (2007). A list of nineteen possible actions was presented, including writing an opinion letter to a local newspaper, contacting an elected official, getting other people to care about the problem, participating in a boycott, voting on a regular basis, and wearing a campaign button. Participants were asked, “How often have you used the following strategies when you feel there is problem in your community?” A Likert scale presented the following range: 1 = never, 2 = a few times, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot. The alpha for all items was $\alpha = .93$. All items were combined to create an overall average score of civic engagement, with a higher score indicating more frequent use of civic engagement behaviors.

ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity was assessed with (a) twelve items from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney 1992) that represent the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnic history and traditions and have committed and resolved their feelings about their ethnic group, and (b) seven affirmation items (Marsiglia et al. 2004) that represent the positive-negative emotional valence of ethnic identity. Response items ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The twelve identity items were averaged for a mean score, with a higher score indicating greater agreement. A mean value of the affirmation items was taken and standardized from -1 to 1 in order to create a valence for the positive-negative effect of the affirmation of identity. Thus, a variable to represent positive ethnic identity was created by multiplying the identity mean with the standardized affirmation mean. The internal reliability was $\alpha = .90$.

DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

Depressive symptoms were measured with ten items from the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff 1977). Participants rated how frequently they had experienced each symptom during the past week, on a scale from 1 = rarely to 4 = most of the time. Items included, among others: I felt that I could not shake off the blues, even with help from my family or friends; I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing; I felt lonely; I felt hopeful about the future. Higher mean scores denoted higher depressive symptoms. The scale was reliable ($\alpha = .76$).

SELF-ESTEEM

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem as a global sense of self-worth. The seven-item scale (1 = never, 5 = almost always true) was reliable in previous studies with adolescents (Rosenberg 1965, 1979) and particularly with Mexican Americans, where Cronbach's alpha ranged from .73 to .87 (Cervantes et al. 1990–91; Joiner and Kashubeck 1996). A sample item is "I feel that I have a number of good qualities." For this sample the internal reliability was $\alpha = .86$. An average self-esteem score was computed.

Results

Descriptive results for variables of interest are provided in table 2.

Hypothesis 1: More stress from SB 1108 will be associated with more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem. Using Pearson product-moment correlations to assess associations between two continuous variables, we find that there were significant correlations between SB 1108 stress and self-esteem and depressive symptoms (table 3). More SB 1108 stress was associated with lower self-esteem ($r = -.25, p < .05$) and more depressive symptoms ($r = .32, p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypotheses 2 and 3: Being more engaged with SB 1108, less disengaged with SB 1108, more civically engaged, and having a more positive ethnic identity will moderate the relation between SB 1108 stress and self-esteem/depressive symptoms. Two separate multiple linear regression models for each dependent variable (self-esteem and depressive symptoms) were conducted to determine the effects of several independent variables (SB 1108 engaged, SB 1108 disengaged, civic engagement, and positive ethnic identity). The independent variables were entered in steps as follows: (1) SB 1108

Table 2. Descriptive Values for Variables of Interest

Variable	M (SD)	Range
SB 1108 Stress	2.27 (0.94)	1.00–4.00
SB 1108 Engaged	2.67 (0.51)	1.33–4.00
SB 1108 Disengaged	1.94 (0.65)	1.00–3.33
Positive ethnic identity	1.19 (2.72)	-5.60–4.75
Civic engagement	1.50 (0.50)	1.00–4.00
Self-esteem	4.20 (0.60)	2.12–5.00
Depressive symptoms	1.96 (0.51)	1.00–3.20

Table 3. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Variables of Interest

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SB 1108 Stress	1.00						
2. SB 1108 Engaged	0.36**	1.00					
3. SB 1108 Disengaged	-0.11	-0.30**	1.00				
4. Civic engagement	0.14	0.27**	-0.19	1.00			
5. Positive ethnic identity	0.04	0.14	-0.38***	0.02	1.00		
6. Self-esteem	-0.25*	0.04	-0.07	0.07	0.27**	1.00	
7. Depressive symptoms	0.32**	0.09	-0.05	0.06	-0.22*	-0.55***	1.00

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

stress; (2) SB 1108 engaged and SB 1108 disengaged; (3) civic engagement and ethnic identity; (4) interactions between SB 1108 stress and each independent variable. Steps 1–3 tested for main effects of independent variables. The final interaction step tested for the moderating effect of the independent variables on the relationship between stress and the dependent variable. See table 4 for results at each step; results are provided here only for final models, significant interactions, and main effects. Other notable significant relationships were (a) being engaged with SB 1108 was associated with being more civically engaged; (b) positive ethnic identity was significantly associated with being less disengaged with SB 1108, with higher self-esteem, and with fewer depressive symptoms; and (c) more self-esteem was significantly associated with fewer depressive symptoms.

SELF-ESTEEM

The overall final model to predict self-esteem accounted for 18 percent of the variance and was significant at the $p = .001$ level (table 4). In the final model, more stress was significantly associated with lower self-esteem ($p < .01$), more engagement with SB 1108 was associated with more self-esteem ($p < .05$), and more positive ethnic identity was associated with more self-esteem ($p < .05$). The only significant interaction was between SB 1108 engagement and SB 1108 stress ($p < .01$) (fig. 1). No other interaction with SB 1108 stress was significant. At high levels of SB 1108 stress, students' self-esteem was not as negatively affected when they were more engaged. Students' self-esteem was significantly negatively affected at high levels of SB 1108 stress when they were less engaged. Thus, our hypothesis was partially supported: being engaged with SB 1108 buffered the negative effects of SB 1108 stress on students' self-esteem.

DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

The overall final model to predict depressive symptoms was significant at the $p = .004$ level, accounting for 12 percent of the variance (table 4).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3

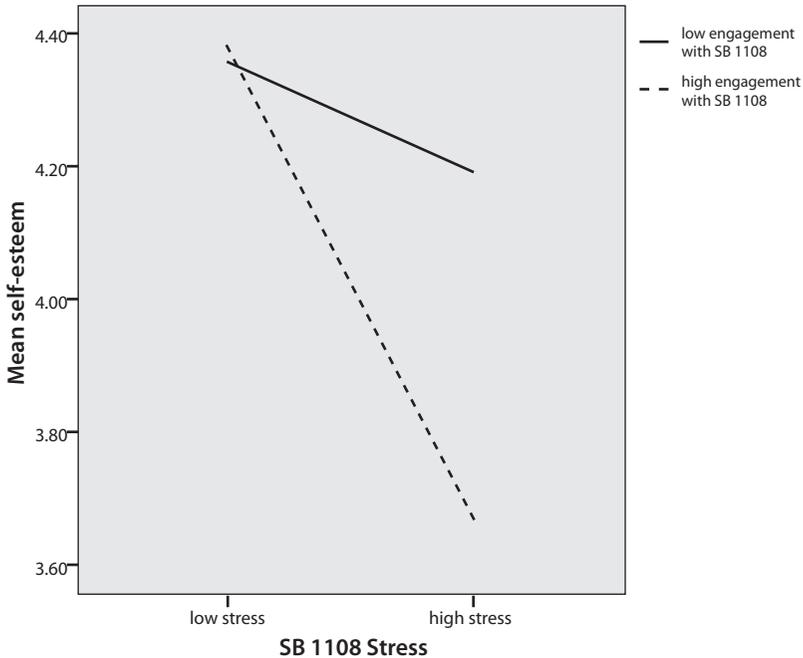
	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. β	t value
Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem	Final model: $F(6, 91) = 4.45, p = .001$			
1. SB 1108 Stress	0.06	0.05	-0.33	-3.46**
2. SB 1108 Engaged	0.08	0.05	0.13	-2.11*
SB 1108 Disengaged			0.04	0.33
3. Civic engagement	0.15	0.11	0.06	0.61
Positive ethnic identity			0.24	2.33*
4. Interaction engaged and stress	0.23	0.18	0.28	2.90**
Hypothesis 3: Depressive symptoms	Final model: $F(5, 92) = 3.67, p = .004$			
1. SB 1108 Stress	0.09	0.08	0.31	2.97**
2. SB 1108 Engaged	0.10	0.07	-0.02	-0.14
SB 1108 Disengaged			-0.14	-1.32
3. Civic engagement	0.17	0.12	-0.01	-0.04
Positive ethnic identity			-0.29	-2.80**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Modified Version of Meyer's Minority Stress Model



Note: At high levels of SB 1108 stress, individuals who were less engaged reported significantly lower self-esteem than those who were engaged. At low stress levels, engagement had minimal impact on self-esteem.

SB 1108 stress was significantly associated with more depressive symptoms ($p < .01$), and more positive ethnic identity was significantly associated with fewer depressive symptoms ($p < .01$). There were no significant interactions for depressive symptoms. Thus, our overall hypothesis was not supported in that none of the independent variables moderated the effect of SB 1108 stress on depressive symptoms.

Discussion

This study used a minority stress and coping model to investigate the impact of Arizona SB 1108, the anti-ethnic studies bill, on the stress and mental well-being of Mexican-descent undergraduate students. We investigated whether ethnic identity, civic engagement, and engaged or disengaged coping strategies affected the negative impact of SB 1108 stress on depressive symptoms and self-esteem. More depressive symptoms and

lower self-esteem were associated with more SB 1108 stress. Being engaged with SB 1108 (talking with friends and family, learning about the issue, concentrating on the positive, prayer and meditation, activism) protected students' self-esteem at high levels of SB 1108 stress. A positive ethnic identity had an overall direct protective effect on mental well-being, but did not buffer the impact of SB 1108 stress.

Our results indicate that the proposed anti-ethnic studies policy aimed at Latino youth via their school curricula and school-based organizations is associated with more stress, lower self-esteem, and more depressive symptoms. They show that such discriminatory legislation may contribute to the risk factors that negatively influence the mental health of Mexican-descent youth in the United States, a group already at risk for depressive symptoms and suicide. However, our findings also demonstrate that youth are active agents in coping with such negative legislative policy. Youth who were engaged with the anti-ethnic studies legislation were more likely to report higher self-esteem, even at high levels of stress. Furthermore, we also found that a positive ethnic identity, based on knowledge of one's cultural heritage and history, was associated with higher self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms. The take-home message of this study is that youth are finding strategies to remain engaged in the nation's civic processes and that this contributes to their personal resilience, despite the barrage of negative messages and obstacles placed in their way by powerful individuals in the society.

This conclusion, while encouraging, should be interpreted with caution. These macro-level social phenomena must be dealt with not only at the individual level but also at the community level. If we focus only on individual coping resources, we place the burden on individuals to cope with adversity or create change rather than demanding action from the larger society, which both creates the oppression and has the means to change it. Future research is needed on the community-level factors that may reduce minority stress and decrease social and educational inequalities.

Additionally, looking at discrimination in the U.S. political context and its consequences for well-being necessarily suggests the need to examine how group identities are politicized and the role that ethnic identity plays in framing civic and political engagement (Schildkraut 2005). Thinking about and acting to counter the oppressive social and economic forces that impede the development of a healthy identity and environment is fundamental to Chicana/o studies curricula (Cammarota and Romero 2009; Romero 2008). However, as the case in Arizona proves, the growth

and success of such ethnic studies programs may increase the backlash from critics who accuse these programs of promoting ethnic chauvinism, racism, and self-segregation (Cammarota 2009). These false claims have never been documented; in fact, there is evidence that ethnic studies programs improve *all* students' life chances by improving academic success and educational attainment (Romero 2008).

Even though our study is based on a small, nonrandom sample, it provides timely insight into the impact of nativist legislation designed to marginalize specific ethnic groups. A limitation of the study is that we use a measure of individual differences in the perception of the legislation rather than a group-level measure. Future studies could advance our work by including community-level coping strategies, climate measures at the school level, or comparison of legislation across states.

Clearly, minority stress at macro levels does have a negative impact on the mental well-being of Mexican-descent students. Although this type of legislation is designed to further alienate and isolate a targeted group of people, we find that many Mexican-descent students have responded by becoming actively engaged and cultivating a positive ethnic identity. It is exactly these two factors that help them maintain higher levels of self-esteem and avoid depressive symptoms. It is clear to us that in order for Mexican-descent students to continue to thrive despite pervasive anti-immigrant prejudice, a positive ethnic identity is critical to their coping resources. Nativist agendas continue to push forward legislation that is alienating Latino populations and increasing discrimination. Yet the next generation of youth activists is becoming civically and academically engaged. In so doing, they are preserving their own mental health, safeguarding civil rights achievements, and moving ahead to address modern social inequalities in education and politics.

Appendix A: 1st Proposed Amendment to SB 1108, April 2008

Section 1. Title 15, chapter 1, article 1, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by adding sections 15-107 and 15-108, to read:

START STATUTE 15-107. Declaration of policy

The legislature finds and declares that:

1. A primary purpose of public education is to inculcate values of American citizenship.
2. Public tax dollars used in public schools should not be used to denigrate American values and the teachings of western civilization.
3. Public tax dollars should not be used to promote political, religious, ideological or cultural beliefs or values as truth when such values are in conflict with the values of American citizenship and the teachings of western CIVILIZATION.

START STATUTE 15-108. Denigration, disparagement or encouragement of dissent from values of American democracy and western civilization; prohibition; enforcement; prohibition of race-based organizations; definition

- A. A public school in this state shall not include within the program of instruction any courses, classes or school sponsored activities that promote, assert as truth or feature as an exclusive focus any political, religious, ideological or cultural beliefs or values that denigrate, disparage or overtly ENCOURAGE dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilization, including democracy, capitalism, pluralism and religious toleration.
- B. This section does not prohibit the inclusion of diverse political, religious, ideological or CULTURAL beliefs or values if the course, CLASS or school sponsored activity as a whole does not denigrate, disparage or overtly ENCOURAGE dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilization.
- C. On request of the superintendent of public instruction or the superintendent's designee, a public school shall promptly provide copies of curricula, course materials and course syllabi to the superintendent of public INSTRUCTION. the superintendent of public instruction, after providing appropriate notice and conducting an appropriate hearing, may withhold a proportionate share of state monies from any public school that violates subsection

- A. The superintendent of public instruction may take reasonable and APPROPRIATE regulatory actions to enforce this subsection. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to enlarge the authority of the superintendent of public instruction to regulate the CONTENT of curriculum in public schools.
- D. A public school in this state, a university under the JURISDICTION of the Arizona Board of Regents, and a community college under the JURISDICTION of a community college DISTRICT in this state shall not allow organizations to operate on the CAMPUS of the school, UNIVERSITY or community college if the organization is based in whole or in part on race-based criteria.
- E. For the purposes of this section, “public school” means any of the following:
1. A school district.
 2. A school in a school district.
 3. A charter school.
 4. An accommodation school.
 5. The Arizona state schools for the deaf and the blind.

END STATUTE
RRUSSELL K. PEARCE

Appendix B: 2nd Proposed Amendment to SB 1108, July 2009

Section 1. Title 15, chapter 1, article 1, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended by adding sections 15-110 and 15-111, to read:

START STATUTE 15-110. Declaration of policy

The legislature finds and declares that public school pupils should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not based on ethnic background.

START STATUTE 15-111. Prohibited courses and classes; enforcement

A. A school district or charter school in this state shall not include in the program of instruction any courses or classes that either:

1. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
 2. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of PUPILS as individuals.
- B. If the superintendent of public instruction determines that a school district or charter school is in violation of subsection A, the superintendent of public instruction shall notify the school district or charter school that it is in violation of subsection A. If the superintendent of public instruction determines that the school district has failed to comply with subsection A within sixty days after a notice issued pursuant to this subsection, the superintendent of public instruction may direct the department of education to withhold up to ten per cent of the monthly apportionment of state aid that would otherwise be due the school district or charter school. The department of education shall adjust the school district or charter school's apportionment accordingly. When the superintendent of public instruction determines that the school district or charter school is in compliance with subsection A, the department of education shall restore the full amount of state aid payments to the school district or charter school.
- C. This section shall not be construed to restrict or prohibit:
1. Courses or classes for native American pupils that are required to comply with federal law.
 2. The grouping of pupils according to academic performance, including capability in the English language, that may result in a disparate impact by ethnicity.

Amend title to conform
JONATHAN PATON

Notes

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Zolberg, Aristide R. 2006. *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

1. In 2004, Harvard University professor Samuel Huntington's controversial essay in *Foreign Policy*, "The Hispanic Challenge," sparked a national debate on the impact of Latino immigrants in the United States. Huntington asserts that Mexican immigration poses the "single most immediate and most serious challenge to America's traditional identity" (32). He foresees, as a "plausible reaction" to the demographic shift, the rise of an anti-Hispanic and anti-immigrant movement, consisting largely of white males protesting what they perceive as job losses to immigrants, the displacement of English, and "the perversion of their culture" (40).

2. Arizona's anti-immigrant legislative activity has followed a pattern in which which failed bills are retooled and reintroduced in later legislative sessions (O'Leary 2009). An anti-ethnic studies measure was first introduced in 2007, failed, and reappeared in 2008. Failing again in 2008, it was attached to SB 1069 in 2009.

3. On the Arizona State Legislature website, Pearce boasts, "I am Arizona's, and the nation's, most outspoken advocate for stopping the illegal invasion, securing our borders and enforcing our laws." He claims to be an architect of Proposition 200, requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote and a photo ID when voting. In addition, he says, he authored "Arizona's Employer Sanctions legislation, the toughest worksite enforcement bill in the nation to stop illegal employers and to protect jobs for Arizonans. Proposition 100 in 2006, a Constitutional Amendment to refuse bond to any illegal alien who commits a serious crime in Arizona . . . Proposition 102 to require that an illegal alien who sues an American citizen cannot receive ANY punitive damages. . . . Prop. 103 making English the Official Language of Arizona" (http://www.azleg.gov/MembersPage.asp?Member_ID=109&Legislature=49).

4. See Horne's "Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson," June 11, 2007 (<http://www.ade.state.az.us/administration/superintendent/AnOpenLettertoCitizensofTucson.pdf>). The Mexican American/Raza Studies program in Tucson has since been renamed Mexican American Studies.

5. According to the Latino Education Equity Index (<http://latinostudies.nd.edu/equityindex/>), the percentage of Arizona's school-age population that is Latino increased dramatically, from about 26 percent in 1990 to 34 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2006. The state now ranks fourth among the fifty states and the District of Columbia in terms of the percentage of school-age children who are Latino.

6. Likewise, Native Americans became increasingly political in articulating opposition to derogatory and dehumanizing labels imposed on them by conquering

Western peoples (Anglos and Spaniards). In some cases they managed to replace the imposed names with traditional names of their choosing. For example, "Papago," the name given to the largest Amerindian nation in the state of Arizona, was replaced with "Tohono O'odham."

7. NACCS was established in 1972 to promote communication and exchange of ideas among Chicana and Chicano scholars across geographic and disciplinary boundaries. The 2005 NACCS directory lists almost 400 Chicana/o, Latina/o, and Latin American studies programs and research centers across the country (http://www.naccs.org/naccs/Directory1_EN.asp?SnID=983388241).

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