The Impact of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election on the Mental Health of Hispanics

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Abstract

Introduction

Method

**Participants**

One hundred and ten participants (28 men, 81 women, and 1 trans/non-binary person) who identified as Hispanic or Latino were recruited using the Psychology Department SONA system and word of mouth. The majority of the participants were Mexican-American (XX%) and ranged in age from XX to XX years old (*M* = 23.6). Participants received $20 for completing an initial onboarding questionnaire prior to the beginning of the daily diary period. Then, participants received $40 for participating in the daily diary period, which ran from Oct. 28, 2020 – Nov. 10, 2020. Participants received bonus compensation ($10) for completing at least 85% of the daily diary surveys, resulting in a maximum of $70 in compensation. Compensation was distributed via online Target gift cards following the daily diary period. Compliance was acceptable (*M* = XX, min = XX, max = XX).

**Procedure**

The entire study took place online and all surveys were administered using Qualtrics. Participants first participated in an onboarding session via Zoom, where the details of the study were described, informed consent was obtained, and the onboarding survey was completed. All onboarding sessions took place in the week before the daily diary period began. During the daily diary period, which ran for the week prior to the election and continued for the week following the election, participants were sent a daily survey link via email every day at 6:00 pm MT. Participants were instructed to complete that survey within 8 hours (i.e., before 2:00 am the next day). Each daily survey took less than 10 minutes to complete.

**Measures**

**Onboarding.** In the onboarding questionnaire, participants completed a number of trait measures, including measures of trait anxiety (Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 [GAD-7]; CITATION), trait depression (Patient Health Questionnaire-9 [PHQ-9]; CITATION), ethnic identity, including subscales related to identity exploration and identity commitment (Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised [MEIM]; CITATION), and cultural values of familism (support, obligation, and referent subscales of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale [MACVS], CITATION). Additionally, participants rated their agreement to two items we created assessing associations between Trump and ICE (“Donald Trump has had a huge impact on border policy” and “I associate ICE with Donald Trump”), which we created because of the heavy emphasis Trump’s campaign and administration have had on immigration issues and border policy. Last, participants indicated which presidential candidate they were leaning towards voting for (Response options: Trump, Biden, Other candidate, Not voting, Haven’t decided) and since the onboarding questionnaire was administered two weeks before the election, whether they had already voted, either by mail or by early voting. Other measures were administered that are not relevant to the current analyses, as well as several demographic variables (age, gender, nativity, and parents’ nativity). A complete list of all measures administered can be found in the Supplementary Material.

**Daily diary period.** In each daily diary survey, participants were asked to first rate the degree to which they felt a number of different emotions that day. We used items from the PANAS-X (CITATION) to assess positive and negative affect and added 3 items to assess anxiety (anxious, worried, restless) and 3 items to assess depression (depressed, sad, downhearted).

**Analytic Approach**

First, to separately examine trends in negative and positive affect, depression, and anxiety during different periods of time within the study, we used multilevel piecewise growth models (Singer & Willet, 2003). To fit these models, we first determined three distinct time periods over the course of the study: Days 1-6 (before the election), days 7-10 (after the election but before the winner was announced), and days 11-14 (after Biden was announced the winner). Three unique time-varying predictors (one per time period) were created, which allows for estimation of a separate slope describing the trajectory of the outcome during each time period. In the models, we included the initial intercept for Stage 1 as a parameter but did not include additional intercepts for Stage 2 and Stage 3, presuming that outcomes would be consistent in elevation from one stage to another and merely shift in trajectory.[[1]](#footnote-1) Thus, the model (without covariates) is described as:

Outcome ~ 1 + A1 + A2 + A3 + (1|SubID)

where A1 coded Days 1-14 as {0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6}, A2 coded Days 1-14 as {0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4}, and A3 coded Days 1-14 as {0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 2, 3}. The parameter associated with A1 estimated by the model describes the trajectory of the outcome during the first time period. The parameters associated with A2 and A3 describe the trajectories of the outcome during the second and third time periods, respectively. We first report the results of separate piecewise growth models with no covariates to estimate general trends across the whole sample. Separate models were fit to investigate trajectories in negative affect, positive affect, depression, and anxiety separately. Then, we report models that include voting intentions as a moderator of the trajectory in each of the three stages.[[2]](#footnote-2). Last, to examine risk factors for increases in negative outcomes in anticipation of the election, we report the results of models exploring the effects of individual difference variables (e.g., ethnic identity, nativity) on Stage 1 trajectory.

Then, we examined the effect of news engagement from day to day using same-day and lagged multilevel models. To separate between-person and within-person effects, we used the disaggregation method (Curran & Bauer, ??), which involves created two separate predictors that capture the between- and within-person effects. The variable capturing the between-person effect is simply the mean level of news engagement for an individual across all days (no within-person variance). The variable capturing the within-person effect is the person-centered level of news engagement reported each day (since the mean for each person is zero, there is no between-person variance). These two predictors were entered as unique predictors in models that predicted the reported outcome (NA, PA, anx, depression) of each day, along with the following covariates: day of the week (to account for weekend effects) and the outcome on the previous day (to account for stability in affect from day to day).[[3]](#footnote-3) Lagged models were also used to examine the effect of news engagement on one day to predict outcomes on the following day.[[4]](#footnote-4) All the same predictors and covariates were used.

Results

**Multilevel Piecewise Growth Models**

First, we fit four separate piecewise growth models (one for each outcome of interest) with no covariates to estimate overall trends in each of the four stages. As Figure XX illustrates, depression and negative affect significantly increased in anticipation of the election (*b* = 0.08, 95% CIs [0.05, 0.11], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .02, and *b* = 0.06, 95% CIs [0.04, 0.06], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .03, respectively). Then, following the election but prior to the winner was announced, there was significant change in all four outcomes. Depression, negative affect, and anxiety significantly decreased, *b*s = -.07 – -0.15, *p*s < .001, *f*2 = .01 – .04, while positive affect significantly increased *b* = 0.06, 95% CIs [0.04, 0.06], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .03. Finally, following the announcement of the winner, all outcomes remained stable except for positive affect, which significantly decreased, *b* = -0.13, 95% CIs [-0.18, -0.08], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .02.

**Voting intention as moderator.** To examine the effect of voting intention and simplify across the different options, we created a binary variable that coded for whether participants intended (or had already) voted for Trump (1 = Intending to vote for Trump, 0 = Intending to vote for Biden or other candidate, undecided, not planning to vote).[[5]](#footnote-5) As before, we fit four separate piecewise growth models (one for each outcome of interest), but included the binary voting intentions variable as a moderator of the trajectory in each stage. As Figure XX illustrates, Trump supporters and non-Trump supporters differed significantly in their trajectories in anticipation of the election. Whereas Trump supporters did not demonstrate any significant change in any of the outcomes, non-Trump supporters reported significant increases in negative affect, *b* = 0.08, 95% CIs [0.06, 0.10], depression, *b* = 0.11, 95% CIs [0.08, 0.14], and anxiety, *b* = 0.03, 95% CIs [0.00, 0.06]. Following the election but prior to the announcement of the winner, again Trump supporters did not report any significant changes in any of the outcomes. Non-Trump supporters reported decreasing negative affect, *b* = -0.12, 95% CIs [-0.15, -0.09], depression, *b* = -0.18, 95% CIs [-0.22, -0.13], and anxiety, *b* = -0.08, 95% CIs [-0.12, -0.04], as well as increasing positive affect, *b* = 0.11, 95% CIs [0.07, 0.15]. Finally, following the announcement of the winner, the only significant change reported was by non-Trump supporters in positive affect, *b* = -0.14, 95% CIs [-0.20, -0.08]. Thus, unsurprisingly, support for different presidential candidates affected outcomes in all of the three periods of time, although the outcomes affect differed by time period.

**Individual differences as moderators.** In an exploratory manner, we tested a number of individual differences and attitudes as moderators of the trajectories of the negative outcomes (negative affect, anxiety, and depression) during the time period before the election, where we see the greatest increases in negative outcomes. Specifically, we tested the moderating role of ethnic identity, nativity, three sub-scales of familism (support, obligation, referent), trait anxiety, and trait depression. Of these variables, all had some moderating effect, although not all on the same outcomes (see Table XX). Ethnic identity significantly moderated trajectories for negative affect, positive affect, and depression, such that higher levels of ethnic identity were related to steeper positive trajectories in anticipation of the election. Nativity significantly moderated trajectories for anxiety, such that immigrants had steeper positive trajectories than US-born individuals. Familism (but only the support sub-scale) significantly moderated anxiety, such that higher levels of familism support values were related to steeper positive trajectories. Trait anxiety significantly moderated trajectories for negative affect, anxiety, and depression, such that higher trait anxiety was related to steeper trajectories. Finally, trait depression significantly moderated trajectories for anxiety, such that high trait depression was related to steeper trajectories. We additionally examined attitudes associating ICE and Trump but found no moderating influence.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Ethnic identity | | | Nativity | | | Familism (support) | | | Trait anxiety | | | Trait depression | | |
|  | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* |
| Negative affect | *.*01 | **.018** | .05 | -.03 | .139 | .00 | .01 | .054 | .01 | -.02 | **.009** | .15 | -.01 | .117 | .07 |
| Anxiety | .01 | .169 | .00 | -.08 | **<.001** | .01 | .03 | .**004** | .01 | -.05 | **<.001** | .16 | -.03 | .**017** | .09 |
| Depression | .03 | **.021** | .05 | -.03 | .257 | .01 | .02 | .156 | .01 | -.03 | **.030** | .16 | -.01 | .615 | .08 |

**Table XX.**

**Impact of Daily News Engagement**

Multilevel models examining the effect of daily news engagement on same-day negative affect, positive affect, anxiety, and depression, included both between-person and within-person predictors along with covariates (day of the week and the relevant outcome on the previous day).

**Between-person variance.** Between-person variance in news engagement was positively related to same-day negative affect, *b* = 0.11, 95% CIs [0.04, 0.17], *p* = .002, *f*2 = .03 and depression, *b* = 0.17, 95% CIs [0.08, 0.27], *p* = .001, *f*2 = .03. In other words, individuals who engaged in more news overall reported higher levels of negative affect and depression.

**Within-person variance (same day).** Within-person variance in news engagement was positively related to all same-day outcomes. More news engagement on a particular day, relative to a person’s mean level of news engagement, was related to higher negative affect, *b* = 0.10, 95% CIs [0.07, 0.13], *p* = .001, *f*2 = .04, higher positive affect, *b* = 0.08, 95% CIs [0.05, 0.12], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .03, higher anxiety, *b* = 0.08, 95% CIs [0.04, 0.12], *p* = .001, *f*2 = .03, and higher depression, *b* = 0.14, 95% CIs [0.09, 0.18], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .04, on that same day.

**Within-person variance (next day)**. To examine the effect of news engagement on any particular day on outcomes on the following day, we used lagged multilevel models. These models included person-centered reports of news engagement on day N as the within-person predictor and reports of that same outcome on day N+1 as the outcome. The same covariates were included as the same-day models (day of the week and the relevant outcome on the previous day, day N-1). In these models, news engagement on day N only predicted positive affect on day N+1, *b* = 0.06, 95% CIs [0.03, 0.10], *p* < .001, *f*2 = .01, such that engaging in more news on a particular day, relative to one’s own average, predicted higher positive affect on the following day.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Same Day | | | | | | Next Day | | | | | |
|  | Between-person | | | Within-person | | | Between-person | | | Within person | | |
|  | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* | *b* | *p* | *f2* |
| Negative affect | *.*11 | **.002** |  | .10 | **<.001** |  |  |  |  | .04 | **.010** |  |
| Positive affect | .09 | .074 |  | .08 | **<.001** |  |  |  |  | .06 | **<.001** |  |
| Anxiety | .04 | .470 |  | .08 | **<.001** |  |  |  |  | .04 | .072 |  |
| Depression | .17 | **.001** |  | .14 | **<.001** |  |  |  |  | .06 | **.025** |  |

**Table XX.**

Discussion

Piecewise

* Talk about increases in negative outcomes in anticipation of the election
* Things that are usually protective had exacerbating effect
* ??

Daily multilevel models

* News engagement was related as expected to negative outcomes
* Not related as expected to positive affect
  + Positive same-day effect, carries over into next day (lagged effect)
  + Potentially that people who are more engaged in news feel more extremes? More negative during negative times, more positive during positive times?
    - Separate into before and after election?

References

1. Additionally, models would not converge when random slopes were included and so we used a random intercept only. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Outcome ~ VoteInt + A1\*VoteInt + A2\*VoteInt + A3\*VoteInt + (1|SubID). Note: Model only includes a random intercept as it would not converge when random slopes were included. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Outcome.sameDay ~ DailyNews.between + DailyNews.within + DayWeek.d + NA\_agg\_prevDay + (1|SubID) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Outcome.nextDay ~ DailyNews.between + DailyNews.within + DayWeek.d + NA\_agg\_prevDay + (1|SubID) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. We tested other coding schemes as well, including one that coded people intending to vote for Biden separately from all other categories. However, the coding scheme reported here showed the greatest contrast and was determined to be the most theoretically appropriate. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)