

# Neighboring Groups and Political Attacks

## Overview

When politicians target a group using prejudicial negative rhetoric, how do neighboring groups respond? Using two survey experiments with ethnically distinct populations in the United States and Canada, this study shows that targeted and neighboring groups respond similarly to political attacks. The findings suggest that the effects of political attacks go beyond the directly targeted group.

## Concepts

### Targeted Group

An entity whose members experience threat, discrimination, or harm because of the shared characteristics or identities associated with those who belong

### Group Membership

An individual's identification with an organization or collective body that contributes to their social identity and feelings of belonging

### Neighboring Group

An entity that shares some characteristics and/or logical, social, or psychological links with a targeted group but not formal membership

## Research Design

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS



1. Do individuals respond in the same way to attacks on neighboring groups as they do to attacks on their own group?
2. Do members of panethnic groups, both immigrant and non-immigrant, respond similarly to anti-immigrant rhetoric?

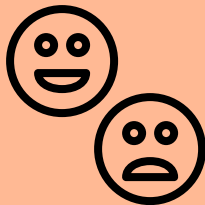
### EXPERIMENT



**Sample:** Native and foreign-born Latino Americans (n=1,308) and South Asian Canadians (n=815)

**Video:** Respondents watched one of three fictitious campaign ads. The treatments attacked either immigrants or the respondent's panethnic group; the control condition focused on the economy

### OUTCOME MEASURES



**Emotional response:** Does the ad bring forward positive or negative emotions?

**Candidate evaluation:** How do respondents rate the fictional candidate? And would they vote for them?

## Results

- Membership in a neighboring group generates political responses that are comparable in direction and strength to those of directly targeted groups.
- In both countries, native and foreign-born respondents react negatively to attacks on their respective panethnic groups.
- Native and foreign-born respondents in both countries also respond negatively to anti-immigrant messaging.

## Implications

The study nuances existing theory by showing that respondents who do not explicitly identify as members of an attacked group react in substantively similar ways to those who are directly targeted. We propose the concept of “neighboring groups” to capture this effect. One implication is that political messaging may have a broader impact than intended or assumed. Consistent results across national contexts and respondent samples indicate the findings are not unique to a specific ethnic group or political system.