

Sources of Support for Immigration Restriction: Economics, Politics, or Anti-Latino Bias?

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Abstract

Are attitudes toward Latinos associated with public views of immigration policies more generally? In this study, we examine whether measures of derogation, disrespect, and discomfort toward Latinos shape support for restrictive immigration policies. We analyze the opinions of Anglo (non-Hispanic White) and African American respondents from the 2000 National Opinion Research Center (NORC) General Social Survey (GSS), which contained a special module on ethnicity and diversity issues. Our findings reveal that prejudicial attitudes toward Latinos (as measured by the derogation, disrespect, and discomfort variables) are the most consistently significant factors in shaping opinions about the number of immigrants to admit and the consequences of immigration. However, individual-level economic factors and group threat measures are insignificant. In addition, personal contact with Latinos is insignificant in the models. This study suggests that support for immigration restrictions stems in large measure from a common source: negativity toward Latinos. Policy opinions are therefore not solely shaped by evaluations of policy *qua* policy but also by attitudes toward the group most commonly associated with immigration.

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Introduction

The Latino population in the United States has grown rapidly since the 1970s, and how such demographic change affects American politics is only beginning to be understood. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Latinos increased by 41 million between 1970 and 2010 (from 9.6 to 50.5 million), and their share of the overall U.S. population rose to 16.3% in 2010. Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States, having surpassed African Americans near the turn of the century. In addition, the population of other minority groups, particularly Asian Americans, has concomitantly increased (although with less media attention). Such demographic transformations, and the implication of considerable political, economic, and cultural changes, have not been welcomed by all Americans.

Although Latinos have a long historical presence in the United States, this recent growth is largely the result of renewed migration from Mexico and Latin America in the post-1965 period. Although there is some debate about whether the United States is in the midst of a nativist period, the last two decades have witnessed a politicization of the immigration issue. At the federal level, we have seen a growing emphasis on policies of enforcement and restriction, including the augmentation of the Border Patrol, the creation of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), an expanding border wall, a sharp rise in deportations, workplace programs such as E-Verify, and national-local enforcement partnerships such as 287(g) and Secure Communities.

In addition, some states and localities have passed laws that target unauthorized immigrants. Beginning in California in the 1990s, a number of states have approved ballot initiatives or enacted legislation that either expand enforcement efforts or otherwise seek to make life more difficult for the unauthorized. Such efforts are part of “enforcement through attrition” (Kobach, 2008) and advance the “self-deportation” approach that has been advocated by elected officials from Pete Wilson to Mitt Romney. Although the federal courts have blocked some of these provisions as encroachments on federal immigration prerogatives, the lives of many immigrants are touched by the laws left standing. In addition, some states have passed English-only laws and targeted bilingual education programs. Such actions reflect an increasing cognitive association between immigration policy and the growing Latino population (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Pérez-Escamilla, García, & Song, 2010; Ramakrishnan, Wong, Lee, & Junn, 2009). Insofar as the term *immigrant*

becomes associated with the term *Latino*, immigration policy may be influenced by public attitudes toward this population (Burns & Gimpel, 2000).

More generally, a range of public policies are thought to be influenced by discriminatory racial-ethnic attitudes. Although there are no explicit connections between race-ethnicity and policy issues such as welfare and crime, for instance, they have been linked to the stigmatization of specific minority groups. Research has shown that White stereotypes about the work ethic of African Americans (i.e., that African Americans are lazy) shape anti-welfare sentiment (Federico, 2004; Fox, 2004; Gilens, 1996, 1999; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Similarly, Whites who see African Americans as violent are more likely to support punitive policies that would apply to all Americans, such as longer prison terms and the death penalty (Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002).

The recent growth of the Latino population raises related questions about racial-ethnic relations and immigration policy issues. Immigration policy is the outcome of a political process through which competing interests interact to construct and implement legislation and rules that encourage, discourage, or regulate the flow of immigrants (see Massey, 1999). Support for restrictionist policies may come from negative perceptions and anxieties about the social and cultural effects of immigration on neighborhoods, such as alleged increased levels of crime, drugs, and disease (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996). For instance, when native-born Americans are concerned about crimes allegedly committed by immigrants, they are more likely to support greater spending on immigration control, particularly policies that target the U.S.-Mexico border (Butcher & Piehl, 1998; McDonald, 1997; Yeager, 1997).

Thus, racial stereotypes are generally believed to influence policy outcomes through the assignment of simple labels to outgroups that influence how the public views specific public policies (Bodenhausen & Wyer, 1985; Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens, 1997). For example, in their experimental studies, Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) showed that stereotypes function as judgmental "heuristics." Once stereotyped-based impressions about specific social or ethnic groups are formed, individuals interpret other information about members of that specific group in an attempt to confirm these initial impressions.

However, relatively few studies have directly examined how negative views of Latinos shape support for immigration restrictions in the United States. Although some research finds a relationship between anti-Latino sentiment and public opinion on immigration policies (Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, & Kolody, 2009; Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997), few have empirically tested these relationships while also controlling for the more standard array of factors found in the immigration attitudes literature.

This paper will therefore test a wide range of variables that might help explain support for restrictive immigration policies in the United States. Our specific focus is the role of discriminatory attitudes toward Latinos, but the models also control for demographic, economic, and contextual factors. The following sections will provide an overview of the theories used to explain American public opinion about immigration, discuss the unique 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) dataset, and present the regression results.

Background

Economic Interest Model

This model maintains that anti-immigrant attitudes are attributable to individual-level economic interests. Variables such as occupational status and wage levels are the most frequently employed indicators of labor market competition. Studies have shown that competition with immigrants tends to disproportionately affect native-born workers with relatively low socioeconomic status (SES), as they are more likely to compete with immigrants in the labor market (Borjas, 1999).

However, economic effects are difficult to assess because of the multiple potential measures and modeling strategies. These include individual-level and contextual factors such as income, employment, education, occupation, and skills. Sometimes, these variables are modeled individually, and sometimes they are interacted. Research sometimes focuses on one nation, but some studies examine dozens of countries. The time periods also vary, with some articles examining a single year while others study longer periods. We also see disciplinary differences in the literature; economists include fewer political variables, while political scientists include less complicated economic measures. In addition, there is a debate whether education measures economic skills or more general tolerance. Perhaps it is no surprise that the results of the literature are somewhat mixed, not to mention difficult to compare.

Quite a few scholars have found no economic effects, weak economic effects, or effects that were outweighed by other factors. Espenshade and Calhoun (1993) found only “weak” labor market competition effects; much stronger were the variables for education and cultural affinity. Fetzer (2000a) examined immigration attitudes in the United States, France, and Germany, similarly finding that cultural factors were much stronger predictors than economic self-interest. He concluded that “current battles over immigration [may] have as much to do with whose cultural values will triumph as with whose economic wellbeing will be protected” (Fetzer, 2000, p. 5). Hood and

Morris (1998) found no effects for family income or predictions of pocket-book and sociotropic economic outcomes over the next year. Instead, documented and undocumented immigrant context was important. Campbell, Wong, and Citrin (2006) examined voting for three California ballot propositions, finding only limited evidence of individual-level income and contextual unemployment and fiscal effects.

Nevertheless, some scholars have found evidence of economic effects. Scheve and Slaughter (2001) found that skills (measured by wages and education) are strongly associated with immigration policy preferences. In addition, these results did not vary according to contextual levels of immigrants. Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) found that higher income was generally associated with support for more immigrants, although the education effects were mixed. In Europe, Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers (2013) observed that low education, low incomes, and manual labor occupations were associated with negative views of immigrants and refugees, although national economic conditions were not (see also Coenders & Scheepers, 2003).

Sometimes, the relationships are not straightforward but must be considered in a broader context. For instance, in a cross-national study, Mayda (2006) found that the relationship between individual-level labor market position and restrictionist attitudes was conditional. Lower-skilled natives were more likely to oppose immigration in nations with a higher share of lower-skilled immigrants. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) also found that while lower- and higher-skilled natives (regardless of employment status) prefer migrants with greater skills, the lower skilled are more opposed when fiscal exposure is higher.

In addition to objective measures of economic status, the literature also tests indicators of more subjective perceptions. Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) observed that individuals with more negative views of the economy were more likely to favor fewer immigrants. Tucci (2005) found that German respondents who feared potential job loss were more likely to be hostile toward immigrants compared to civil servants with high levels of job security. This suggests that people with financial worries tend to have greater concerns about immigration flows. Voss, Kehrberg, and Butz (2013) similarly found that Americans with more optimistic assessments of their personal financial situation had more favorable attitudes toward immigration from Latin America.

Group Threat Model

This approach identifies interracial competition, particularly threats to the dominant group's position, as the primary source of antagonism toward

minority group members. According to the theory, racial groups compete over valuable but limited resources—such as status, values, and power as well as resources such as access to jobs, housing, and schools. As this is frequently a zero-sum struggle, conflict can arise between groups beyond that caused by traditional racial prejudice.

Prior research has found that larger minority populations in counties and metropolitan areas are generally associated with increased negativity of the dominant racial group toward the subordinate group and to public policies relevant to that group. Much of this literature examines White opinion and African American context (Fossett & Kiecolt, 1989; Giles & Buckner, 1993; Giles & Evans, 1985; Glaser, 1994; Quillian, 1996; Taylor, 1998). However, Quillian (1996) and Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders (2002) also found that size of the foreign-born population was related to anti-immigration attitudes.

On the other hand, it is possible that larger minority populations lead to greater contact between racial-ethnic groups, which could serve to reduce conflict. A number of studies have shown that personal contacts tend to improve the attitudes of majorities toward minorities, which is the opposite conclusion drawn by the literature on aggregate-level context effects (Ellison & Powers, 1994; Ellison, Shin, & Leal, 2011; Emerson, Kimbro, & Yancey, 2002; Powers & Ellison, 1995; Sigelman & Welch, 1993).

Several scholars have tried to reconcile these apparently contradictory findings. For instance, Stein, Post, and Rinden (2000) tested how measures of both context (group size) and individual-level contact affect White attitudes toward Latinos and immigration policy. They found that both were at work, but an interaction term showed that context set the stage for contact, which then reduced negative group and policy opinions.

Oliver and Wong (2003) also looked for complexities in how context and contact shaped White orientations to minority groups. They similarly found that different types of contexts matter: “At a neighborhood level, racial diversity corresponds with less racial resentment,” while “at the metropolitan level, diversity corresponds with more racial stereotyping and feelings of competition” (Oliver & Wong, 2003, p. 580).

As in the economic competition literature, sometimes perceptions matter more than reality. Semyonov, Rajzman, Tov, and Schmidt (2004) examined how the actual and perceived size of an outgroup (in this case, the foreign-born population in Germany) shapes support for a range of economic and social rights for this group. They found that perceptions of size were associated with perceptions of threat, and therefore with support for exclusionary policies toward immigrants.

National Interest Model

Other researchers contend that restrictionist views are rooted not in narrow self-interest but in more general, sociotropic apprehensions that immigration poses a threat to national well-being. Sometimes, this threat is seen as economic. For example, Citrin et al. (1997) found that personal economic factors were much less important than more general evaluations of the economy. Similarly, Chandler and Tsai (2001) found that Americans with more pessimistic views of recent economic performance were more likely to oppose increased immigration to the United States (see also Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996). Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico (2008) found that perceptions that immigrants take jobs from American citizens were related to opposition to overall immigration and guest worker programs in particular, whereas individual-level income, education, and worries about job loss were not.

However, threat can also be seen in terms of national unity or security. Wilson (2001) found that personal economic circumstances had little effect on immigration policy opinion. Instead, the perception that immigration threatened national unity as well as jobs and economic growth predicted support for restriction.

Additional Perspectives on Immigration

While previous research provides important evidence about the determinants of immigration attitudes, it also has some limitations. In particular, the role of racial prejudice, and anti-Latino bias in particular, is only in the early stages of research. One reason is that the literature has traditionally focused on the economic determinants of public opinion. As noted above, negativity toward immigrants is often seen as reflecting perceived threats to economic interest, at either national or individual levels. However, racial prejudice may more directly shape public opinions, particularly when policies are perceived to benefit or unfairly advantage minority group members.

Kinder and Sears (1981; see also Sears, 1988; Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997), for example, argued that contemporary opposition to social policies designed to assist African Americans is rooted in symbolic racism. This is defined as a form of prejudice in which Whites ostensibly favor social equality yet portray minorities as violating core Protestant values of individualism and self-reliance, which then justifies opposition to these policies. Sears and Henry (2007) therefore argued that attitudes toward policies particularly relevant to minorities are driven less by a calculus of costs and benefits than by this new form of discrimination toward minority group members.

In addition, the political science literature indicates that opposition to immigration involves other factors related to race, such as individual dispositions for ethnocentrism (Kam & Kinder, 2007), authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009), and social dominance (Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001). This indicates that racial-ethnic prejudice needs to be considered as an important condition of perceptions of immigrants—and consequently immigration policies.

Ayers et al. (2009) examined the association between attitudes toward Latinos and immigration policy preferences in San Diego, California during 2005-2006. They found that Anglos who reported aversion to Latinos, as measured by respondent social distance from Latinos, expressed less support for legal immigration as well as legal Mexican immigration.

Burns and Gimpel used 1992 and 1996 American National Election Studies (ANES) data to model whether respondents preferred more, less, or the same level of immigration. They found that negative stereotypes of Latinos shaped Anglo immigration attitudes in both years.

Citrin et al. (1997) assessed feeling thermometers toward Latinos and Asian Americans as well as opinions about whether more Latino and Asian immigrants would have negative implications for jobs, taxes, and U.S. culture. Their analysis of the 1992 ANES found effects for all four variables, although they did not separately analyze attitudes about Latinos and Asian Americans. Instead, for each question, they created an index of responses about both groups.

We build on these studies in several important ways. First, we are able to use a national survey, whereas some research is based on local samples. Second, we move beyond the ANES and instead use the General Social Survey (GSS). Third, by using a special GSS module on immigration, we are able to model four immigration policy attitudes, whereas some studies can include only one dependent variable. Fourth, this GSS module allows us to test for multiple attitudes about Latinos, not just a single measure of feeling thermometers or stereotypes. This allows us to better understand how views of Latinos shape policy perspectives in a manner not seen in previous work.

Last, prior research does not always appropriately model the regional variations in immigration attitudes. We can observe a number of such dynamics relevant to immigration attitudes, including heterogeneity in migration patterns, racial composition, political dynamics, and labor market contexts. Regarding migration patterns, for instance, whereas Hispanic migration was previously concentrated in a few locales, recent decades have seen a geographic diffusion from traditional entry points to new destination states (Lichter & Johnson, 2009; Massey & Capoferro, 2008). This change may affect how the native born view immigrants and immigration policy.

Unobserved heterogeneity across regions—such as cultural and social environments, the political atmosphere, or economic factors that are caused by changing immigration patterns—could differentially influence attitudes by region. In the presence of such shared, but unobserved, regional characteristics, estimations with normal regression analyses would be biased. In this study, we use multilevel modeling to control for this unobserved regional heterogeneity.

Method

This paper uses the 2000 GSS, a national survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The GSS consists of in-person interviews and asks a wide range of opinions and demographic questions. The GSS design is a repeated cross-sectional survey of a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults who speak English (through the 2004 survey) and English or Spanish (from 2006 to the present; see http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2007/nsf0748/nsf0748_3.pdf). The GSS interviewed 2,817 individuals, and we analyze the views of self-identified Anglos (non-Hispanic White) and African Americans (a total of 2,589 respondents).

In addition to the core questionnaire, the GSS includes topical modules in select years. We chose the 2000 survey because of its “Multi-Ethnic United States” module, which includes questions about attitudes toward Latinos, immigration policies, and immigrants. While these data are from the turn of the century, they provide a rare opportunity to study how Anglo and African American views of immigration and immigrants are shaped by views of Latinos. In addition, the 2000 survey date—before the contemporary period of immigration politics began—provides an understanding of immigration attitudes in a time period when immigration was not a central agenda item. As such, any relationships in the models between views of Latinos and views of immigration are likely only stronger today.

Dependent Variables

The goal of this paper is to investigate Anglo and African American support for immigration. To measure this, we use the GSS question,

Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be *increased a lot* (1), *increased a little* (2), *left the same* (3), *decreased a little* (4), or *decreased a lot* (5)?

We also model three indicators of concern about the consequences of immigration. The GSS asked respondents, “What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country?” in terms of higher crime rates, job losses for the native born, and opening the nation to new ideas and cultures. Each question has four responses, ranging from *very likely* (1) to *not at all likely* (4).

Independent Variables

The models include several sets of potential explanations for positive and negative views of immigration. The first includes occupational and economic status variables, which help estimate the role of self-interest. To measure occupational status, we created a dummy variable for low-skilled occupations. Following the 1980 census occupational classification code, we coded as low-skilled labor the occupations of sales or personal services, farming, and some manual labor. We also consider perceptions of relative deprivation. Respondents were asked to compare their family income to that of the average American family on a 5-point scale (1 = *far below average* . . . 5 = *far above average*). Similarly, we include a variable for subjective evaluations of respondent personal finances; it is based on the question, “During the last few years, has your financial situation been getting better, worse, or has it stayed the same?” We recoded this variable, so that a smaller number indicates a worsening financial situation. Last, we added to the dataset a contextual variable for the unemployment rate at the metropolitan/county level; areas with greater than 3% unemployment in 2000 are coded 1. In these ways, we model the subjective, objective, individual-level, and contextual factors tested in the literature—although past research does not necessarily include all these types in the same models.

We also include the set of questions about how immigration affects the national interest, which are the dependent variables in our second set of analyses. The three items for crime, jobs, and ideas/culture range from *very likely* (1) to *not at all likely* (4), and they are separately modeled.

Next, and most importantly for this paper, we include three measures of anti-Latino bias. These include the “three Ds” of derogation (negative Latino stereotypes), disrespect (negative views of Latino culture and contribution), and discomfort (favoring social distance from Latinos). The GSS asked respondents to rate each racial-ethnic group (Anglos, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Jews) along several dimensions, scoring each group on a metric of 1 to 10. To measure the derogation of Latinos, we generated a new scale of racial stereotype using four aspects of these assessments: lacking commitment to strong families, poverty, laziness, and low intelligence. Because individuals will have unique rating styles, we standardize the

responses by subtracting the average score assigned to all other groups from the score for Latinos (see Ellison et al., 2011; Wilcox, Sigelman, & Cook, 1989). Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions of Latinos.

Disrespect of Latinos is specified by evaluations of the Latino contribution to American society. Each respondent was asked to assess whether racial-ethnic groups had made *one of the most important positive contributions to this country* (4), *an important contribution* (3), *some contribution* (2), or *little positive contribution* (1). We averaged the evaluations for Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans to create a mean value of respect for Latinos. As before, we subtracted the average rating for non-Latino groups from this Latino composite, and higher scores indicate more positive assessments.

The measure for Latino discomfort is created from the questions about respondent feelings of social distance from Latinos. Respondents were asked how willing they were to live in a neighborhood where half the population is Latino and how much they would support a close relative marrying a Latino. Each question has five responses, ranging from *strongly favor* (1) to *strongly oppose* (5). We calculated the mean of these two scales to arrive at a single variable for Latino discomfort.

We also include several measures for Latino contact. The first two are at the individual level and are based on the following GSS questions: “Do you personally know any Hispanics?” and “Are any of these Hispanics people that you feel close to?” We therefore created two variables for respondents who reported close Latino friendships and Latino acquaintances. In addition, we were able to include a third variable for respondents who reported a Latino relative. The fourth variable indicates whether the Latino population in a respondent’s metropolitan area or county exceeded the 12.5% national average in 2000 using SMSAs and non-metropolitan counties. This measure, which we added to the dataset, takes into account the more general Latino population context of a local community.

We also included a number of control variables. Partisanship is a categorical variable that ranges from *strong Democrat* (1) to *strong Republican* (6), and conservatism is ordered from *extremely liberal* (1) to *extremely conservative* (7). The models also take into account several potentially confounding demographic influences: age (in years), education (years completed), gender (1 = *female*, 0 = *male*), south (1 = *southern states*, 0 = *else*), race (1 = *African American*, 0 = *Whites*), and generational status (1 = *first or second generation*, 0 = *Whites*).

Last, we employed multiple imputation analyses to handle missing data. Several variables in our models (low-skilled job, perceived financial decline, relative economic perceptions, political conservatism, anti-Latino bias, Latino contribution, and social distance from Latinos) include non-trivial

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Immigration numbers (restrictive)	3.596	0.992	1	5
Increased crime	2.954	0.791	1	4
New ideas	2.963	0.821	1	4
Job losses	2.787	0.946	1	4
Female	0.560	—	0	1
African American	0.151	—	0	1
Age	46.192	17.686	18	99
South	0.360	—	0	1
First/second generation	0.143	—	0	1
Years of education	13.347	2.781	2	20
Ideology (conservative)	4.074	1.411	1	7
Partisanship (republican)	1.776	1.925	0	6
Low-skilled occupation	0.145	—	0	1
Relative economic perceptions (positive)	2.959	0.872	1	5
Perceived financial change (positive)	2.299	0.729	1	3
Latino population (higher than average)	0.275	—	0	1
Perceptions of Latino population	2.754	1.136	1	5
Unemployment (over threshold)	0.815	—	0	1
Latino stereotypes	2.507	3.767	-10	16
Social distance from Latinos	2.897	0.921	1	5
Few Latino contributions	0.486	0.488	-1.556	2.5
Latino acquaintance	0.355	—	0	1
Close Latino friend	0.345	—	0	1
Latino relative	0.116	—	0	1

missing cases, so this imputation minimizes the potential effects of the systemic selecting out of cases.

In Table 1, we include descriptive statistics for all of the variables in our models.

Results

Table 2 presents the regression results for the first dependent variable: whether the United States should admit more immigrants. We see that six variables are statistically significant, while six are not. African Americans ($OR = 0.613, p < .005$) and the more educated ($OR = 0.897, p < .001$) are associated with more liberal views, while residency in the South ($OR = 1.547, p < .001$), age, immigration status ($OR = 0.587, p < .001$), and political

Table 2. Results of Logistic Regressions on Restrictive Attitudes Toward Immigration (N = 1,229).

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Female	-0.038	(0.110)	-0.031	(0.114)	0.018	(0.116)
African American	-0.490**	(0.164)	-0.457**	(0.171)	-0.383*	(0.173)
Age	0.008*	(0.003)	0.004	(0.003)	0.001	(0.003)
South	0.436***	(0.114)	0.280*	(0.121)	0.218	(0.122)
First/second generation	-0.533***	(0.162)	-0.292	(0.169)	-0.331	(0.169)
Years of education	-0.109***	(0.021)	-0.023	(0.023)	-0.019	(0.023)
Ideology	0.093*	(0.043)	0.014	(0.044)	0.015	(0.044)
Partisanship	-0.015	(0.032)	-0.009	(0.033)	-0.016	(0.033)
Low-skilled occupation	0.001	(0.157)	-0.030	(0.163)	-0.045	(0.164)
Relative economic perceptions	-0.055	(0.069)	0.044	(0.073)	0.033	(0.073)
Perceived financial change	0.023	(0.081)	0.012	(0.084)	-0.001	(0.086)
Unemployment (over threshold)	0.208	(0.138)	0.184	(0.146)	0.185	(0.147)
Latino population (higher than average)			-0.113	(0.139)	-0.020	(0.144)
Perceptions of Latino population			0.000	(0.052)	0.014	(0.053)
Increased crime			0.522***	(0.089)	0.488***	(0.089)
New ideas			-0.579***	(0.075)	-0.510***	(0.076)
Job losses			0.639***	(0.078)	0.575***	(0.079)
Latino stereotypes					0.014	(0.019)
Few Latino contributions					0.320*	(0.125)
Social distance from Latinos					0.259***	(0.071)
Latino acquaintance					0.019	(0.156)
Close Latino friend					-0.227	(0.168)
Latino relative					0.002	(0.194)
Constant	-4.431***	(0.478)	-2.447***	(0.653)	-1.821**	(0.691)
Constant	-3.291***	(0.457)	-1.247	(0.639)	-0.611	(0.677)
Constant	-0.506	(0.445)	1.987**	(0.640)	2.675***	(0.681)
Constant	0.543	(0.445)	3.260***	(0.643)	3.976***	(0.687)

*p < .01. **p < .005. ***p < .001 (two-tailed test).

conservatism ($OR = 1.097, p < .01$) are all associated with more restrictionist views. None of the economic variables is statistically significant; holding a low-skilled job, negative perceptions of personal financial status, and living in an area with higher than average unemployment were not associated with attitudes toward immigration numbers.

In Model 2, we add the variables for Latino population context, perceived Latino population, and assessments of the national effects of immigration. The two population measures are not statistically significant, but the three national interest variables were highly significant ($OR = 1.685, p < .001$ for crime rate, $OR = 0.560, p < .001$ for cultural optimism, and $OR = 1.895, p < .001$ for job loss). These assessments of the consequences of immigration helped shape views of whether more immigrants should be admitted, even after controlling for the other measures. In addition, the statistical significance of the economic variables tested in the previous model did not change.

The third model includes the “three D” items (derogation, disrespect, and discomfort) as well as the personal measures of contact. Respondents with more negative stereotypes of Latinos do not hold unique opinions, but the two other items are statistically significant. The greater the assessment of Latino contributions, the less restrictive the attitudes toward immigration ($OR = 1.377, p < .01$). In addition, social distance has a similar effect; restrictive attitudes toward immigration weaken as one feels more comfortable with Latino neighbors or relatives ($OR = 1.296, p < .001$).

In addition, adding the national interest variables and “three Ds” measures drops multiple variables (conservatism, education, generational status, and region) below our minimum level of statistical significance. To the degree that these factors shaped immigration attitudes, the actual effect was better captured by the national interest measures, and further by the three Ds and Latino contact measures.

Table 3 tests which factors shape respondent perceptions of the three specific potential consequences of immigration (crime, jobs, and culture). The models use the demographic, economic, Latino population, contact, and “three D” independent variables shown in Table 2.

Focusing first on the “three D” variables, we see consistent significance across all models. Respondents who doubt that Latinos made significant contributions to this country are more likely to believe that immigration increases crime ($OR = 1.484, p < .005$) and unemployment ($OR = 1.809, p < .001$). Such individuals are also less likely to see immigrants as bringing new culture and ideas to America ($OR = 0.731, p < .01$). A parallel dynamic exists for those who agree with the Latino stereotype and social distance questions. Individuals who feel less comfortable with Latinos are more likely to see connections between immigration and crime ($OR = 1.439, p < .001$) and

Table 3. Results of Logistic Regressions on Consequences of Immigration.

Variables	Increased crime		New ideas		Job losses	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Female	-0.055	(0.112)	-0.126	(0.112)	0.025	(0.109)
African American	-0.160	(0.171)	-0.015	(0.167)	0.282	(0.170)
Age	-0.002	(0.003)	-0.002	(0.003)	0.002	(0.003)
South	0.139	(0.120)	-0.051	(0.118)	0.250*	(0.116)
First/second generation	-0.078	(0.164)	0.247	(0.162)	-0.538***	(0.159)
Years of education	-0.132***	(0.022)	0.096***	(0.023)	-0.147***	(0.022)
Ideology	0.129***	(0.045)	-0.096*	(0.043)	0.113**	(0.044)
Partisanship	-0.054	(0.032)	-0.039	(0.032)	-0.025	(0.032)
Low-skilled occupation	0.277	(0.161)	0.201	(0.158)	0.038	(0.156)
Relative economic perceptions	-0.216**	(0.069)	-0.053	(0.069)	-0.209**	(0.067)
Perceived financial change	0.120	(0.080)	0.029	(0.079)	-0.049	(0.078)
Unemployment (over threshold)	0.145	(0.143)	-0.171	(0.144)	0.061	(0.138)
Latino population (higher than average)	-0.189	(0.140)	-0.017	(0.137)	-0.068	(0.134)
Perceptions of Latino population	0.036	(0.051)	-0.032	(0.051)	0.055	(0.049)
Latino stereotypes	0.023	(0.017)	-0.069***	(0.016)	0.054**	(0.017)
Few Latino contributions	0.395***	(0.127)	-0.314*	(0.128)	0.539***	(0.138)
Social distance from Latinos	0.365***	(0.069)	-0.355***	(0.067)	0.387***	(0.066)
Latino acquaintance	0.015	(0.151)	0.031	(0.149)	0.013	(0.147)
Close Latino friend	-0.153	(0.169)	0.154	(0.180)	-0.185	(0.161)
Latino relative	0.223	(0.193)	-0.145	(0.187)	0.128	(0.186)
N	1,240		1,255		1,260	

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .005$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test).

unemployment ($OR = 1.468, p < .001$) and to express negative perceptions of immigrant cultural contributions ($OR = 0.703, p < .001$). Those who believe Latino stereotypes tend to think that immigrants reduce employment for native-born Americans ($OR = 1.055, p < .005$) and to doubt the cultural contributions of immigrants ($OR = 0.933, p < .001$).

On the other hand, the individual-level contact variables are consistently insignificant. Latino relatives, close friendships, and acquaintances do not affect any of the three perceptions of immigration consequences. This is consistent with the regression results in Table 2, where the contact measures were not associated with opinions about changing levels of immigration.

Table 3 also provides little evidence of economic dynamics. Among the four measures that we included in our models, only relative economic perception was significant in any model. Those with more pessimistic views were more likely to connect immigration to unemployment ($OR = 0.811, p < .005$) and to increased crime ($OR = 0.806, p < .005$). The other measures—holding low-skilled occupations, perceiving recent financial declines, and the local unemployment context—were statistically insignificant in all three models. In addition, two other variables were significant only in the unemployment model—the native born ($OR = 0.584, p < .1$) and the South ($OR = 1.284, p < .01$). In both cases, they were associated with agreement that more immigration will lead to job losses.

The education variable was significant in three models, revealing that higher education was associated with more tolerant attitudes, as we might expect from previous research on the political consequences of education. Political conservatism was also consistently significant, as it was generally found to be in Table 2. Conservatives were more likely to associate immigration with crime ($OR = 1.138, p < .005$) and unemployment ($OR = 1.120, p < .005$) and to disagree that immigration brings new cultural ideas ($OR = 0.908, p < .01$). Last, the partisanship, gender, and age variables were never significant.

Discussion

Many studies have examined the determinants of public opinion about immigration policy. As this literature has developed, it has examined some factors more thoroughly than others. For instance, the research on economic effects has made progress in identifying the individual-level characteristics and larger economic contexts that shape attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. However, there is less clarity in understanding how attitudes are influenced by the racial-ethnic composition of contemporary immigrants themselves.

In particular, the growing Latino population over the last few decades requires additional research on how discriminatory attitudes and individual-level contact have implications for broader policy views. While some studies have included racial-ethnic contextual variables, such measures are blunt and open to contradictory interpretations. Research that attempts to take discriminatory attitudes into account can typically test only a single variable (such as a feeling thermometer rating). This paper therefore examines a dataset that allows us to include a wide range of measures relevant to racial and ethnic attitudes. These include three types of discriminatory attitudes toward Latinos, three measures of individual-level contact, regional Latino population context, and assessments of the national impact of immigration. This approach allows a more fine-grained understanding of which racial-ethnic factors are relevant after controlling for a wide range of standard demographic, political, and economic variables.

The four models indicate that anti-Latino biases have largely consistent effects. Respondents who disregard Latino social and cultural contributions and are uncomfortable with Latinos as neighbors or relatives are more likely to oppose increases in immigration. While the dependent variable does not refer to Latinos specifically, many respondents appear to view immigration through a Latino lens. This supports previous research arguing that the American public is conflating immigration generally with Latinos specifically.

In addition, respondent perceptions of the consequences of immigration are closely related to derogation, disrespect, and discomfort toward Latinos. All three variables are associated with a greater fear that increased immigration would lead to more crime, increase unemployment, and not bring new cultural ideas to America. Again, the dependent variables do not mention Latinos. Instead, some respondents are drawing connections between Latinos in particular and immigration effects more generally.

By contrast, the Latino contact variables are not significant in any model. Latino acquaintances, friends, and even relatives do not shape how the respondents viewed an increase in immigration numbers or the consequences of immigration. If we believe that such relationships have the potential to affect attitudes, it may only occur to the degree that such personal contacts help shape other variables—particularly the “three Ds.” Researchers have found that intimate interethnic and interracial relationships reduce negative attitudes toward outgroups (Dixon, 2006; Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004; Ellison & Powers, 1994; Eric Oliver & Wong, 2003; Sigelman & Welch, 1993). For instance, a recent study by Ellison et al. (2011) suggests that such contacts are the strongest predictors of racial stereotypes and prejudice.

The results also show that individual and contextual economic factors play only a limited role in attitudes toward immigration. Occupational status, perceived financial change, and regional unemployment are never statistically significant, and the relative economic perception variable is significant twice. Based on these findings, we conclude that immigration attitudes are affected by relatively few factors involving individual self-interest.

In addition, the demographic variables are rarely significant. Gender is never significant; the variables for age, southern region, and race (African American) are each significant only once or twice; and generational status is ultimately significant only in the model of attitudes about immigration numbers. The most consistently significant demographic variable is education, which is associated with more positive views of immigration. This can be interpreted in two ways: First, as with occupational status, education level is associated with more prestigious jobs and skills. Second, education also socializes students to have more liberal or pro-outsider views and increases their tolerance level for outgroups (Citrin, Reingold, Walters, & Green, 1990; Sniderman, Brody, & Kuklinski, 1984).

Politically, partisanship is not significant in any model, which may reflect the cross-cutting cleavages that have often characterized this debate. This might particularly apply during times when immigration is not on the national policy agenda. And while conservatism is consistently significant in the first two models shown in Table 2 and in all models in Table 3, the inclusion of the contact and “three D” measures drops it to statistical insignificance. This same pattern also applies to the education measure—significant in the early models, but not when the discrimination and contact measures are added. This suggests that it is not education and conservatism themselves that affect immigration attitudes but rather the degree to which they are associated with attitudes that exhibit derogation, disrespect, and discomfort toward Latino.

As we noted earlier, scholars have found that discriminatory racial-ethnic attitudes can influence opinions about public policies. Even when there are no clear connections between race and policy issues, some individuals may nevertheless associate minority groups with specific policies. The best known example is attitudes toward social welfare policies (Federico, 2004; Fox, 2004; Gilens, 1996, 1999; Kluegel & Smith, 1986) and criminal justice (Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002), which are shaped by White stereotypes about African Americans. In this paper, we similarly find that stereotypes about Latinos are the most consistent determinants of attitudes toward immigration.

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