

# Partisanship and Views about Immigration in Southern California: Just How Partisan is the Issue of Immigration?

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## ABSTRACT

Given the prevailing levels of elite partisan contentiousness over immigration issues, we expect to see mass attitudes towards immigration replicate this polarization. We explore the partisan implications of this issue by examining popular attitudes towards immigrants in California, where attitudes towards immigration and immigrants have formed central themes in a series of highly charged political campaigns and elite discourse on the issue is polarized. Yet even in California we find that many different kinds of voters share a surprisingly similar set of concerns about the flow of immigrants into the nation. We are particularly interested in whether Democrats and Republicans view the public policy consequences of immigration in similar or different ways. **We find that Republicans more likely indicate they think immigration will have harmful effects on social and policy outcomes in the United States, but Democrats tend to share similar concerns. One consequence of this pattern is that the US Republican Party – at least the party in California – may be able to use the immigration issue as a wedge to attract support from people who tend to support Democratic candidates, often thought friendlier to immigrants.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The political science literature explaining why Americans feel as they do about immigration tends to focus on whether individuals are positively or negatively disposed towards the groups of people immigrating to the United States, and whether they think levels of immigration should increase, remain the same, or be reduced. This question has been asked on the National Election Studies (NES) since 1992 and on other national and local surveys for decades (Simon and Lynch, 1999). Among scholars, explanations for people's views on immigration levels focus on the role of social context and patterns of contact (Hood and Morris, 1997) and personal economic situations (Citrin et al., 1997). However, to political pundits and many politicians, this is a primarily partisan issue with Republican leaders more likely to seek constraints on immigration and immigrants and Democratic Party elites more likely to oppose these kinds of restrictions.

We investigate partisan differences on the immigration issue. First, we are interested in learning more about how Democrats and Republicans differ on the immigration issue. Are Republicans more opposed to immigration than Democrats? Second, regardless of partisan differences in overall level of concern about immigration, do Democrats and Republicans think about the consequences of immigration in the same way? Are, for example, Republicans more concerned about taxes but Democrats about competition for jobs? Similarly, do Latinos and Anglos raise different concerns when thinking about immigration? If immigration is a multidimensional topic then different dimensions may be key to different people. Third, we are interested in the partisan implications of the immigration issue. Given our findings that Democrats and Republicans differ on their overall distress regarding immigration, but reason similarly about the issue, we conclude that Republicans could be positioned to gain political ground in California by promoting a stricter approach to immigration.

## PARTISAN POLITICS AND IMMIGRATION

Scholars find only occasional, weak empirical support for the argument that an individual's partisanship influences her position on immigration and the appropriate level of allowable immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). For example, in one study the authors find "the weakness of the connection between party affiliation and opinions about immigration is striking" (Citrin et al., 1997: 868). Public opinion tends to follow immigration levels, with negative views rising with immigration levels (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996).

Evidence that there is some connection between partisanship and an individual's desire to restrict immigrants relies on data from places such as California where immigration levels have been exceptionally high (e.g. Hovey et al., 2000). Investigating California's Proposition 187, Morris (2000) and Tolbert and Hero (1996) find relationships between partisanship and individual and aggregate support, respectively, for the anti-illegal immigrant measure. More recently, Arizona's voters used the initiative process (Proposition 200, the Arizona Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act) to reduce the possibility that undocumented immigrants could vote or apply for public benefits. Republicans supported Arizona's Proposition 200 by a 70 per cent margin, while only 42 per cent of Democrat voters supported it.<sup>1</sup>

In studies that link partisanship and immigration attitudes, the relationship is often explained as a function of ideological orientations (liberal or conservative leanings) rather than partisanship (Chandler and Tsai, 2001). The immigration issue "engages the enduring division between Democrats and Republicans over social spending" (Citrin et al., 1997: 872). Similarly, in their historical analysis of public opinion regarding immigrants, Huber and Espenshade (1997: 1048) conclude that the desire to limit immigration "seems motivated...by a desire to shrink the size of the federal government".

Despite the occasional appearance of a partisanship/immigration attitudes link, the preponderance of the scholarship demonstrates a lack of a relationship between partisanship and immigration policy attitudes.<sup>2</sup> In fact, a number of investigations of attitudes about immigration do not even include party identification as an individual-level correlate of these policy views, either in national studies (Hood and Morris, 1997, 1998) or at the local level (Binder et al., 1997; Stein et al., 2000). Gimpel and Edwards (1999) summarize the literature regarding the link between people's partisan orientations and views about immigration:

- Elites and partisan leaders tend to be more enduringly divided than is the general population over immigration issues, the latter generally being indifferent to immigration issues. However,
- Immigration is more likely to be a salient issue to members of the mass public in states where immigration rates are high, such as Florida, New York, California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Illinois, and New Jersey.
- Public opinion about immigration has tended not to be driven by partisan considerations.

As surprising as this lack of a role for partisanship may be elsewhere in the country, it would seem somewhat astonishing not to find partisan cleavages over immigration in a state like California because immigration is an especially

relevant issue for that state. As a Center for Immigration Studies study showed, California is the major recipient for immigration – especially Mexican immigration – within the United States (Camarota, 2001), and the bulk of those immigrants settle within a handful of counties in the south of the state (State of California, Department of Finance, 2003). As both a political issue and demographic trend, immigration remained highly visible, especially in the southern part of California, with political and electoral implications primarily felt in California (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999: 93). Even if parties elsewhere have downplayed questions of immigration and migrant rights, this has not been the case for California. Partisan elites in California have cast immigration as a contested issue since 1994. At that time, Governor Pete Wilson and the state’s Republican Party officially embraced Proposition 187, an anti-illegal immigration measure which included withholding of health care and public education to illegal immigrants and their children.

The issue in California continues to produce highly visible controversy. Propositions on affirmative action and English language instruction in school have become focal points for divisions grounded in attitudes towards immigration and strongly opposed by the state’s Democratic Party leadership. The immigration issue also became embroiled in the successful campaign to recall Democratic Governor Gray Davis and the subsequent legislative repeal of a state statute that provided the option of officially sanctioned driver’s licenses for illegal immigrants. Davis had vetoed previous versions of this bill but supported the law just before his recall in what critics called an attempt to curry favour with Latinos. Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger’s campaign promised that he would oppose any attempts to allow such licenses and he repealed the measure once in office.

Even after the recall, groups continued to try to make immigration a campaign issue. During summer and autumn 2004, John Kobylt and Ken Chiampou – popular talk radio hosts in the Los Angeles, California area – ran a “Political Human Sacrifice” contest on their KFI-AM radio show, encouraging listeners to nominate the Congressman they believed to have been too yielding on the immigration issue. They vigorously targeted two area members of Congress for defeat. More recently, Governor Schwarzenegger made comments on their show praising the appearance of the “Minutemen” on the US-Mexican border.

Does this elite-level partisan discourse affect voters? Given the partisan fights among candidates and elected officials from both parties, it would be reasonable to infer that immigration is a hot-button partisan issue dividing Democrats and Republicans, drawing the bulk of naturalized immigrants – overwhelmingly Latino – into the Democratic Party (Fetzer, 2000) while simultaneously galvanizing the

increasingly Anglo and native Republican Party base. Schwarzenegger's election notwithstanding, Republican failures in the state's electoral politics are sometimes tied to an assumed association between party identification and attitudes about legal and illegal immigration in California. Given the Republican Party leadership's past support for anti-immigrant legislative and initiative proposals, Republicans are thought to alienate potential new voters:

Governor Wilson's crusade against all immigrants, though later refined specifically to illegal aliens, alienated the bulk of California's fastest growing population, the Mexican slice of the state (Contreras, 2002: 2).

Many Hispanic voters still recoil at the memory of Wilson's television advertisements showing grainy scenes of the border. Fairly or not, they viewed the whole campaign as anti-Mexican. In explaining the near-total collapse of the Golden State GOP after 1994, many analysts understandably begin with Proposition 187 (Miller, 2002: 1).

A common interpretation of the events of the 1990s and subsequent position taken by the Republican Party is that by advocating Proposition 187, the Republican Party undermined its long-term interests by burning bridges with a large segment of California's population. During the 2003 campaign to recall Democratic Governor Davis, Republicans again raised questions concerning immigration and illegal immigration. Given the success of the recall, a revisionist view emerged. Republicans, it was held, are on solid moral ground when raising questions about the burden on California of its large legal and illegal immigration populations. In this view, the GOP campaign for Proposition 187 represents sensible policy and sound political strategy:

Proposition 187, while clearly no killer for Republicans, instead pushed the Democrats into a corner. Their refusal to distinguish between illegal and legal immigration put them at odds with the California mainstream (Saunders, 2003: 1).

The state's health-care crisis is largely driven by immigrants. There are roughly 7 million people in California without health insurance. About 4 million of them are immigrants or the young children of immigrants. Half of all welfare usage in the state is from immigrant households...No wonder people voted for Proposition 187, including 31 percent of Hispanics. The GOP wasn't hurt by it (Lowry, 2003: 2).

Whether Republicans are ultimately harmed or helped by their support of policies aimed at restricting immigration or restraining immigrants once in the United States, these pundits and journalists widely agree that leadership Republicans are identifiably anti-immigration while Democratic leaders reflect a pro-

immigration perspective and opposition to Republican efforts on the issue. But how does this elite-level discourse affect voters, even political partisans?

Despite the persistent partisan divide among elites in California, it is not clear whether there is a partisan component to attitudes on immigration within the general population. Literature on attitudes towards immigration suggests a limited role for party. It is also unclear whether the GOP stance on immigration severely hurts the party in California. Conventional wisdom argues that it has, but a revisionist argument outlines the longer-term benefits to the Republicans. In the following section, we examine the questions of partisanship and partisan implications of the issue.

### STUDYING PARTISANSHIP AND IMMIGRATION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

We can see the impact of partisanship on attitudes in a number of ways. First, and most simply, as Table 1 indicates, in polling done by The Field Institute since 1994, when Californians are asked in an open-ended item what is the most important problem facing California, substantially higher proportions of Republican respondents indicate concern related to immigration and illegal aliens categories (California Opinion Index, 1995). This suggests that being a California Republican identifier is associated with higher negative outlooks regarding immigrants in general and illegal aliens in particular.

TABLE 1  
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING IMMIGRATION IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING CALIFORNIA, FIELD POLL

	All (%)	Democrat (%)	Republican (%)
May, 1994	15	13	24
September, 1995	15	13	24
September, 1998	11	7	21
March, 2003	6	3	11

Note: Respondents to the California Field Poll were asked the open-ended question "What is the most important problem facing California today?"

In a March 2005 California Field poll, moreover, it was reported that 71 per cent of the Republican respondents indicated opposition to allow "undocumented workers" without legal status to obtain a driver's license in California, while only 40 per cent of Democrats felt that way (The Field Poll, 2005: 2).

## Data and measures

These broad outlines notwithstanding, survey data collected by researchers at University of California, Riverside, and California State University, San Bernardino,<sup>3</sup> provide a richer set of public opinion measures relating to attitudes on these topics than are provided in general interest data sources like the Field Poll and the NES. The data for this project comes from a telephone survey that was implemented in December 2002. Respondents were adults, 18 years or older, located in several urban areas of Riverside County, a county experiencing high rates of growth and migration. The communities represented in the study have a combined population of 872,210 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), 53 per cent of the estimated county population of about 1,635,888. The sample was selected using an area probability sample and employing random digit dialling, including prefix filters designed to eliminate business and cell phone numbers. The sampling procedure was designed to incorporate respondents from a wide variety of community settings,<sup>4</sup> ranging from affluent retirement and resort communities, Hispanic enclaves, bedroom suburbs, as well as older medium-sized, urban cities. Several social and demographic characteristics of the study's respondents are summarized in the appendix.

The interview questionnaire included a wide variety of items dealing with how respondents felt about perceived levels of immigration, their perception of the consequences of immigration, and fairly specific probes concerning how respondents' assessments of how immigration might affect different social outcomes and public policies, such as education or welfare. Of course, background measures were also incorporated, including the usual items regarding education, social status, ideology, and partisanship. Also included were questions tapping such issues as personal economic security and qualities respondents think are important aspects of being an American.

These data allow us to examine both respondents' opinions about the openness of US immigration policy and their views on the consequences of immigration. For the former, we ask: "Do you think the number of new immigrants allowed into the United States each year should be increased a little, increased a lot, decreased a little, decreased a lot or left the same as it is now?" The frequencies of responses to this question among all survey respondents are reported in Table 2. A plurality of respondents (45.8%) in this southern California county would like to see the number of immigrants allowed into the United States decreased. Another large group of respondents (38.3%) are content to see immigration levels remain the same. Only 15.8 per cent would like to see the number of immigrants increased.

TABLE 2

## PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND PREFERENCES ON THE FLOW OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE UNITED STATES

	All (%)	Democrat (%)	Republican (%)
Number of new immigrants should be decreased a lot	26.1	17.4	31.5
Number of new immigrants should be decreased a little	19.7	21.3	21.2
Number of new immigrants should be left the same as it is now	38.3	38.1	34.0
Number of new immigrants should be increased a little	10.9	15.5	9.9
Number of new immigrants should be increased a lot	4.9	7.7	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Respondents were asked "Do you think the number of new immigrants allowed into the United States each year should be increased a little, increased a lot, decreased a little, decreased a lot or left the same as it is now?"

In addition to this frequently used item, we also asked respondents several questions about the implications of immigration for public policy and social issues in the United States: "Please indicate whether each of the following aspects of American life is improved or harmed by immigration: the economy, education, the environment, taxes, elections and politics, health care, crime rate, housing costs, social programmes like welfare, and your own personal income." Table 3 reports frequencies of responses to each of these items, ranked from the policy perceived to be most harmed by the presence of immigrants (social programmes "like welfare") to the social dimension least affected or harmed by the presence of immigrants (personal income).<sup>5</sup> Generally, policy areas with perceived redistributive consequences – social spending, health care, taxes, and education – appear to be thought of as most vulnerable to negative consequences associated with the presence of immigrants.

We create an indicator of net perceived harm or benefit of immigration in the social and policy sphere by summing responses to questions in this battery of items. We score "improved" responses as 1, "harmed" as -1, and all other responses as 0. This produces a score for each respondent ranging from -10 to 10, with -10 representing respondents who think immigrants will harm the provision of public services or social outcomes in each of the ten areas we discussed with respondents; a 10 represents respondents who think immigrants

will improve public services or social outcomes in all of these areas. The average respondent sees more harm than benefits in the presence of immigrants, at least with reference to the social and policy issues.

TABLE 3  
PERCEIVED SOCIAL AND POLICY EFFECTS  
OF IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Issue	Immigration harms (%)	Neither/DK/Refused (%)	Immigration improves (%)
Social programmes	64.5	24.4	11.1
Health care	57.3	26.2	16.5
Taxes	48.0	31.8	20.2
Education	47.1	31.8	21.1
Public safety	44.9	41.0	14.1
Economy	37.8	26.4	35.8
Environment	31.5	50.9	17.6
Housing costs	31.0	47.9	21.0
Elections and politics	30.0	47.3	22.7
Personal income	17.1	63.5	19.4

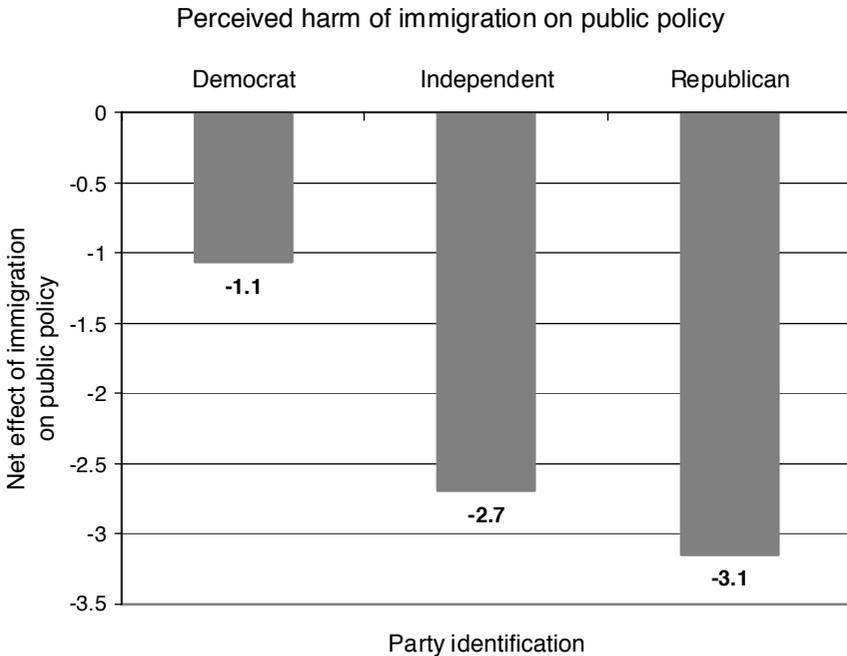
On the right-hand side of the models, we include several social, demographic, and psychological control variables beyond partisanship. We use two dichotomous indicators for respondent ethnicity, identifying Anglo and Latino respondents. We also control for views about what constitutes a true American, measured using the factor scores from an analysis of four items that ask respondents whether they agree or disagree that getting ahead on your own effort, belief in God, treating others equally, and speaking English are important aspects of being an American (Citrin et al., 1992). We control for political ideology, measured on a five-point scale from strong liberal to strong conservative, and perception of economic insecurity measured using a dichotomous indicator for respondents who said they felt they did not earn sufficient money each month to cover their bills and other obligations. Finally we include indicators for a respondent's country of nativity (United States or elsewhere), age in years, and respondent education measured using a three-point index (approximately one-third of respondents fell into each of these categories: high school degree or less, some college, and college degree or beyond). These variables are intended to provide a baseline for comparing the relative explanatory power of party identification, which is measured using a seven-point item ranging from strong Democrat (1) to strong Republican (7).

### Findings

Examining the bivariate relationship between immigration attitudes and partisanship, it appears that the California pundits are correct: Republicans have more negative attitudes about immigration and the effects of immigrants. Looking back at Table 2, substantially more Republicans than Democrats would like to see the number of immigrants allowed in the United States to decrease – 52.7 per cent among Republicans, compared to 38.7 per cent among Democrats. Beyond that, Republicans perceive much greater harm associated with immigration than Democrats, shown in the mean scores reported by party identification in Figure 1. On this indicator ranging from -10 to 10, Democrats perceive, on average, more harm than benefits associated with immigrants, given the mean of -1.1. Both the means for political independents and Republicans are roughly three times the Democratic mean: -2.7 for independents, and -3.1 for Republicans. This difference between Democrats and Republicans is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ,  $t = 4.50$ ).<sup>6</sup>

FIGURE 1

NET PERCEIVED SOCIAL AND PUBLIC POLICY IMMIGRATION EFFECTS, BY PARTY IDENTIFICATION



One other way of looking at the effect of party identification on attitudes relating to immigration is to estimate simple models of public opinion on immigration with and without party identification included, in order to assess its contribution to the fit of models of immigration attitudes, controlling for other political, social, and economic correlates. Table 4 reports OLS models of both of our measures of immigration attitudes – net perceived policy effects and preferences for levels of immigration. Each model is reported with a seven-point measure of party identification included and excluded from the analysis. In both models that include party identification, we see a negative relationship between partisanship and views on immigration – moving from Democrat to Republican, an individual becomes increasingly negative about the policy effects of immigration and desirous of decreased flows of immigrants.

In the case of the model in the first column – views about policy implications – party identification fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance ( $t=1.48$ ). In the second set of regression results, party identification is a statistically significant predictor of preferences for immigration levels. However, the substantive effect of partisanship is small – moving across the full range of the variable, from a strong Democrat (1) to a strong Republican (7), we see a change of .42 on the dependent variable (from -.07 to -.49): less than a half-step change in this five-step measure of views on immigration flow.

We also conducted F-tests to determine whether the inclusion of party identification incrementally improves the  $R^2$  statistic of each model and significantly improves our ability to predict an individual's immigration attitudes from their party identification. Again, the results are mixed. In the case of the first two models predicting the net positive or negative effect on public policy an individual associates with immigration, the F-statistic ( $F_{1,424} = 1.93$ ) suggests party identification does not significantly improve the overall fit of the model. However, in the second pair of models, party identification did improve the model fit ( $F_{1,412} = 6.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). That said, even the largest possible shift in partisanship is associated with relatively small shift in immigration preferences. The marginal impact of party identification seems quite weak, even in the case of California voters where we could reasonably expect a strong impact of party.

Do Democrats and Republicans share the same concerns about the effect of immigration on social and policy outcomes in the United States, or do they see immigrants affecting politics in different ways? As we explore below, large fractions of Democrats express concerns about harms associated with immigration. The difference between Democrats and Republicans – even in the polarized setting of California – is one of degree but not of kind. That is, Democrats have misgivings about immigration too and these misgivings are similar to those expressed by Republicans.

TABLE 4

MODELING THE IMPACT OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION  
ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION AND ITS EFFECTS

	Perceived net effect of immigration		Preference for level of immigration	
	B (s.e.)	B (s.e.)	B (s.e.)	B (s.e.)
Party identification	-0.167 (0.113)	-	-0.070 <sup>+</sup> (0.029)	-
White respondent	-1.441* (0.699)	-1.708* (0.676)	0.441* (0.176)	0.328† (0.170)
Latino respondent	-0.074 (0.776)	-0.103 (0.777)	0.530** (0.195)	0.518** (0.196)
Americanism	0.875 <sup>+</sup> (0.360)	0.929 <sup>+</sup> (0.359)	0.232 <sup>+</sup> (0.092)	0.252** (0.093)
Ideology	-0.398 <sup>+</sup> (0.220)	-0.559** (0.191)	-0.060 (0.055)	-0.128** (0.048)
Economic insecurity	-0.674 (0.581)	-0.633 (0.581)	-0.143 (0.148)	-0.129 (0.149)
Native (US-born)	-1.939** (0.642)	-1.939** (0.643)	-0.606*** (0.165)	-0.604*** (0.166)
Age	-0.249 (0.278)	-0.206 (0.277)	-0.149 <sup>+</sup> (0.071)	-0.129 <sup>+</sup> (0.071)
Education	0.017 (0.280)	-0.003 (0.280)	0.063 (0.071)	0.054 (0.071)
Constant	0.970 (1.499)	0.775 (1.495)	-0.183 (0.377)	-0.261 (0.378)
N	433	433	421	421
R2	.122	.118	.116	.103
Incremental F-test, party identification	F <sub>1,424</sub> = 1.93		F <sub>1,412</sub> = 6.05*	

Notes: \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; †p<.10.

We might reasonably expect Republicans and Democrats to have different views of the kinds of problems or costs associated with immigration. That is, Democrats may not have substantially lower hostility towards immigrants than Republicans but may be concerned about different kinds of things. Immigration is a multifaceted issue (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999; Chandler and Tsai, 2001). When we consider specific aspects of immigration (costs to the taxpayer, crowding

for public services, and so on), Democrats may be concerned more about competition for jobs than tax costs. If it is the case that Democrats and Republicans have different patterns of concerns then this would be yet another way of uncovering how partisanship drives attitudes towards immigration policy.

When we examine the kinds of concerns we find that Democrats generally share the concerns of Republicans about the effects of immigration on public policy. Table 5 reports the ranked concerns of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. To simplify the table, only the percentage of each partisan subgroup indicating they think immigration harms a given policy matter is reported. As with the general population, Republicans, Democrats and Independents are primarily concerned about the effect of immigrants on social spending programmes and other redistributive policies. A majority of Republicans think that immigrants harm social programmes, health care, education, tax policy, and public safety. A majority of Democrats share those concerns with social programmes and health care; a plurality of Democrats is concerned immigrants will harm the educational system and taxes.<sup>7</sup>

Note that one potential cost of mobilizing around immigration for Republicans, as mentioned by several of the California political observers above, is the alienation of Latinos. But that does not appear to happen either; even Latinos generally express concerns about immigrants similar to those expressed by the Republicans we surveyed. As shown in Table 6, a majority or plurality of Latinos agrees that new immigrants will harm social programmes, taxes, and health care. Interestingly, Latinos are more concerned than the partisan subgroups we examined about the implications of new waves of immigrants on housing costs.

## CONCLUSION

We do not find much evidence of a partisan divide on questions surrounding immigration among California voters. Despite some evidence of party effects, California's experience can be interpreted as being in line with the general thrust of the literature, which discounts the importance of partisan differences on immigration issues. A deeper look suggests the reason for the limited role of party: non-Republicans share a great many opinions on immigration with Republicans. There is no glaring party effect because large numbers of voters – Democrats, Independents, and even significant numbers of Latinos among them – simply agree with Republicans about the implications of immigration for the state and nation.

TABLE 5  
RANKED HARMFUL EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION,  
BY PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Issue	Immigration harms (%)
Republicans	
Social programmes	76.1
Health care	71.8
Education	59.2
Taxes	55.9
Public safety	54.7
Elections and politics	41.3
Economy	38.0
Environment	31.9
Housing costs	28.3
Personal income	16.0
Democrats	
Social programmes	58.8
Health care	53.8
Education	41.9
Taxes	40.0
Public safety	36.9
Economy	31.9
Environment	28.9
Housing costs	28.8
Elections and politics	20.1
Personal income	15.1
Independents	
Social programmes	66.7
Health care	57.9
Taxes	50.9
Public safety	47.8
Education	44.7
Economy	43.9
Environment	40.4
Housing costs	38.6
Elections and politics	28.9
Personal income	22.8

TABLE 6  
RANKED HARMFUL EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION,  
LATINO/HISPANIC RESPONDENTS

Issue	Immigration harms (%)
Social programmes	53.5
Taxes	44.4
Housing costs	39.5
Health care	38.4
Economy	38.4
Public safety	36.0
Education	31.4
Environment	30.2
Elections and politics	26.7
Personal income	22.8

The fact that there are several million non-immigrant Latinos and non-Latino immigrants in the state does not make it easier to address a topic that is often dominated by discussions of Latino immigration. These definitional issues are plainly contentious, if only because the new electoral demography of the state means that it is in the interests of the Republicans to keep a clear conceptual gap between Latinos and immigrants while it is in the interests of Democrats to close that gap. One strategy among Republicans might be to sharpen the focus so that it is “illegal immigration” or protecting current, lower-income workers (often immigrants themselves) from the competition of unbridled immigration, particularly illegal immigration. The recent enactment by voters of Proposition 200 in Arizona, with substantial Latino support – 47 per cent supported Proposition 200 – and the beginning of a similar drive in Colorado, suggests that Republican activists have indeed narrowed their campaign to managing the “illegal” immigration problem.

Issues – and elite positions on them – have the capacity to affect long-term changes in US politics. Carmines and Stimson (1989: 11) defined the idea of “issue evolutions”:

...issues capable of altering the political environment within which they originated and evolved....The crucial importance of this issue type stems from the fact that its members can lead to fundamental and permanent change in the party system....they may result in voting defections among partisans, but more important, they also alter the fundamental link between citizens and party. They have the ability to alter the party system from which they emerged.

For immigration to become such an issue for California politics or in other regions or states of the country, two preconditions must be met. First, immigration must remain salient for large numbers of voters. We know from existing literature that stagnant economic conditions and anti-immigrant sentiment are correlated. Continued poor economic conditions could help produce a similar correlation in California or in other states. Second, and just as important, Republicans need to make a clear distinction between being anti-immigrant and being anti-Latino. Assuming that the Republicans can maintain the distinction, they may have a powerful political issue that attracts Independents and even some Democrats to the GOP and permanently affects the partisan balance in California.

## NOTES

1. CNN poll, reported online at: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/AZ/I/01/epolls.0.html><http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/AZ/I/01/epolls.0.html>.
2. As Gimpel and Edwards (1999: 27-59) discuss, surveys conducted in 1981 by ABC News/*Washington Post* and in 1986 by CBS News/*New York Times* found virtually no evidence for a partisan link on immigration issues. They also point out that the National Election Studies of 1992, 1994, and 1996, while revealing broad support for *reducing* immigration, found that “Divisions of opinion certainly were not forming along partisan and ideological lines in the early 1990s. Republicans are only slightly more likely to favor reductions in legal immigration than Democrats and Independents. The difference by party is not statistically significant in numerous multivariate tests” (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999: 37).
3. Interviews for the survey were conducted 2-16 December 2002, in the computer-assisted telephone interviewing facility at the Institute of Applied Research and Policy Analysis at California State University, San Bernardino.
4. The cities were Cathedral City, Coachella, Corona, Desert Hot Springs, Indio, La Quinta, Lake Elsinore, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage, Riverside, and Temecula. Nearly all of the respondents (588 out of 612) came from these cities. Approximately 24 respondents were inadvertently included from unincorporated adjacent areas.
5. While the prompt asks respondents to indicate whether they think immigration harms or improves life in the United States in relation to each of these issues, they were allowed to volunteer a response that immigration neither harms nor improves the issue in the United States, as well as indicate they do not know what effect immigration has, or refuse. All of these non-directional responses – neither, don’t know, and refused are summed together in Table 3. During the fielding of the survey project, the list of items (the economy, education, etc.) in this battery was rotated, as were the prompt categories “improved” and “harmed”.

6. The difference between Democrats and Independents is also statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ,  $t = 2.84$ ), however the difference between Independents and Republicans was not significant ( $t = 0.90$ ).
7. On the issues and within the subgroups we examined, nowhere did we find a majority of respondents saying immigration improves a given social outcome or policy area. While the majority of many subgroups perceived that immigrants neither improve nor harm several social and policy outcomes, respondents who said that immigrants improved a given social or policy dimension consistently found themselves in the minority of opinion. However, we did not consider expressive social dimensions such as the arts and culture.

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ALLÉGEANCE PARTISANE ET POINTS DE VUE SUR L'IMMIGRATION  
EN CALIFORNIE DU SUD : LA QUESTION DE L'IMMIGRATION  
EST-ELLE ASSOCIÉE À UNE ATTITUDE PARTISANE ?

Étant donné les divisions partisans qu'affichent les élites politiques sur la question de l'immigration, on peut s'attendre, sur ce même sujet, à voir l'attitude des masses reproduire les mêmes clivages. Nous étudions l'incidence de l'attitude partisane sur cette question en analysant les attitudes populaires à l'égard des immigrants en Californie, où le regard porté sur l'immigration et les immigrants a été au centre de campagnes éminemment politiques. Pourtant, même en Californie, nous constatons que des types très différents d'électeurs partagent des préoccupations étonnamment semblables face à l'immigration. Nous nous intéressons tout particulièrement à la question de savoir si les démocrates et les républicains perçoivent de façon semblable ou différente l'incidence de l'immigration sur l'action des pouvoirs publics. Nous constatons que, comme on pouvait s'y attendre, les républicains ont davantage tendance à penser que l'immigration aura des effets néfastes sur les plans social et politique aux États-Unis, mais aussi que les démocrates tendent à partager les mêmes préoccupations. Cette tendance a pour conséquence que le Parti républicain – tout du moins en Californie – pourrait être en mesure d'utiliser la question de l'immigration pour obtenir l'adhésion de personnes qui soutiennent habituellement les candidats démocrates, censés être plus ouverts à l'égard des immigrants.

## EL PARTIDISMO Y LAS OPINIONES SOBRE LA INMIGRACIÓN EN EL SUR DE CALIFORNIA: ¿HASTA QUÉ PUNTO INCIDE EL PARTIDISMO EN EL TEMA DE LA INMIGRACIÓN?

Dada la prevalencia de la confrontación partidista de las élites sobre los temas de inmigración, cabría esperar que las actitudes de las masas hacia la inmigración reflejasen esta polarización. Analizamos las implicaciones partidistas de esta cuestión examinando actitudes frecuentes hacia los inmigrantes en California, donde el trato con los inmigrantes y la inmigración ha sido un tema central en una serie de campañas políticas extremadamente cargadas y los discursos de la élite sobre el tema están polarizados. Sin embargo, incluso en California observamos que muchos tipos de votantes distintos comparten una serie de preocupaciones sorprendentemente similares sobre la llegada de inmigrantes al país. Nos interesa especialmente saber si los demócratas y los republicanos consideran las consecuencias de las políticas públicas de inmigración de formas similares o diferentes. Descubrimos que los republicanos son más proclives a señalar que creen que la inmigración tendrá efectos perjudiciales sobre los resultados sociales y políticos de los Estados Unidos, aunque los demócratas tienden a compartir inquietudes similares. Una consecuencia de este patrón es que el Partido Republicano de los Estados Unidos –al menos en California– puede utilizar la inmigración como punta de lanza para atraer el apoyo de personas que tienden a apoyar a los candidatos demócratas, considerados con frecuencia como más favorables a los inmigrantes.

APPENDIX  
OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Characteristics		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	61%	(N=375)
Hispanic	26%	(N=157)
African-American	4%	(N=27)
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	9%	(N=55)
High school	27%	(N=163)
Some college	35%	(N=211)
College	19%	(N=115)
Post-graduate	10%	(N=63)
<b>Partisanship</b>		
Republican	36%	(N=213)
Democrat	27%	(N=160)
Independent	20%	(N=115)
Other/DK	17%	(N=100)
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$25,000	22%	(N=108)
\$25,000 to \$35,999	14%	(N=68)
\$36,000 to \$49,999	16%	(N=81)
\$50,000 to \$65,999	11%	(N=57)
\$66,000 to \$79,999	12%	(N=61)
\$80,000 to \$110,000	13%	(N=67)
Over \$100,000	12%	(N=61)
<b>Place of Birth</b>		
United States	81%	(N=490)
Mexico/Latin America	14%	(N=82)
Other country	6%	(N=35)
<b>Children &lt;18 years of age in home</b>		
Yes	44%	(N=270)
No	55%	(N=337)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	42%	(N=259)
Female	58%	(N=352)

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