

**Studying Public Opinion in a Racially Diverse Polity:
U.S. Political Attitudes on Immigration**

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Abstract

This paper theorizes the formation of immigration attitudes by identifying key antecedents and specifying a model which predicts positions on immigration policies. We begin this paper by providing an overview of existing literature on immigration opinion and racial attitudes more generally in order to identify the range and influence of explanatory measures. In so doing, we analyze the limitations of existing explanatory frameworks, arguing that conventional scholarship does not sufficiently take into account the positionality of individuals in the American racial order. Equally as important, we argue for a comparative relational approach when analyzing public opinion in a racially-diverse polity. With respect to public opinion research utilizing large-N datasets, sufficient numbers of members of racial minority groups must be included for analysis and analyzed separately and then in comparison with one another. We use data from the 2006 *Faces of Immigration* Survey and employ the comparative relational approach we described in the beginning of the paper. By estimating the model separately for each racial group, we are better able to determine whether and the extent to which different antecedents – particularly the distinctive effect of the social identity measures – influence immigration attitudes in different ways for Americans classified by race and ethnicity.

Powerful as the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act has been in both negating the national origins quotas of decades past as well as diversifying the racial composition of the population, the politics of immigration in the United States remain intimately intertwined with racial categorization, stereotypes, and social hierarchy. Immigration policy, along with many other contemporary social and political issues, is not post-racial. Instead, the consequences of the continued existence and power of the racial hierarchy in U.S. politics can be observed in the variation in racial attitudes in general and public opinion on immigration in particular. For example, when asked how concerned they were about the “rising number of immigrants in the United States,” 77% of white respondents reported being somewhat or very concerned. In contrast, systematically smaller proportions of African Americans (57%), Asian Americans (57%) and Latinos (52%) replied similarly.¹ A 2010 Pew survey found that 73% of whites favored the recent Arizona immigrant profiling law (S.B. 1070) while 51% of blacks approved.²

Systematic public opinion data document a divergence in attitudes between Americans who are classified as white, African American, Latino, and Asian American. When asked whether the number of immigrants to America should be reduced, remain the same, or increased, Asian Americans and Latinos are the least likely to say that the number of immigrants should be reduced a little or a lot compared with the proportion of African Americans and whites responding similarly. Figure 1 displays the proportions for each response category by racial group. For this question on immigration, attitudes among African Americans look more similar to white opinion than to other minority groups.

[Insert Figures 1 and 2 here]

For other aspects of immigration policy such as eligibility for social services, a different pattern of opinion among Americans classified by race is apparent. When asked if all immigrants who are in the U.S. should be eligible for social services provided by state and local governments – an issue approved by a majority of California voters when they passed Proposition 187, the “Save Our State” initiative in 1994 – well over 80% of whites nationally voice opposition. In contrast, Figure 2 shows that three times the proportion of Asian Americans, Latinos, and more

¹ Data are from the 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey. This survey was designed by the authors and implemented on a national sample of Americans in 2006. This survey is advantageous over other surveys because it included oversamples of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos which allow us to compare attitudes across racial groups.

² <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1591/public-support-arizona-immigration-law-poll>, accessed August 8, 2010.

than twice the percentage of African Americans compared to whites agree that all immigrants should be eligible for social services.

Making sense of the differences across specific issues within immigration and naturalization policy and across groups of Americans is challenging at best. One potential explanation for the racial divide in contemporary opinion on immigration is the significance of partisanship. Whites might be more favorable toward restrictionist immigration policies because they are more Republican than African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. But as with other polarizing issues such as campaign finance or welfare reform, the politics of immigration has often spawned “strange bedfellows” – alliances of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats created out of necessity. Indeed, immigration policy reform since the 1965 Act has always been a bipartisan affair, resulting in federal legislation such as the Simpson-Mazzoli Act (also known as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986), which both criminalized hiring undocumented workers and provided a path to citizenship for some unauthorized immigrants. At the same time, policies of restriction, opposition to amnesty for illegal aliens, and withholding public education and social services are most closely associated with the Republican Party. While Democratic politicians are more likely to favor progressive policies such as the DREAM Act, they do not do so in lockstep, and Democrats joined Republicans in support of stronger border control and deportation enforcement aimed primarily at Latino immigrants under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA, 1996). In these important ways, elite cues about Democratic and Republican Party positions on immigration are not always clear-cut.

Understanding public opinion in a diverse polity is a complex task, and attitudes on immigration have been described in a 2009 Pew Charitable Trusts Report, *Where the Public Stands on Immigration Reform* as conflicted: “When Congress and the president abandoned efforts to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2007, public opinion was quite conflicted. Underlying the public’s attitudes about specific reform proposals is a set of contradictory and conflicted perceptions about attitudes about immigrants” (Keeter 2009). In other words, it is difficult to make sense of what the public thinks about political belonging, who should be allowed to enter and become a member, and how immigrants should be treated once they are in the United States by using traditional approaches to the study of racial attitudes. In a nation far beyond the black-white binary, models of public opinion built so heavily on that racial

distinction are not well-suited to explaining variation in political attitudes in a diverse polity. Even perspectives that include Latinos in the analysis fall into many of the same holes that render existing approaches insufficient to the inferential task. These “traditional” strategies are characterized by estimating a multivariate model using dummy variables for being black, Latino, or Asian American, along with a categorical measure of partisanship (or a set of dummy variables for party affiliation) in addition to other relevant controls. The results often yield significant coefficients on the race dummies, given that the excluded category of white is the reference category to which all of the other groups are compared.

But absent stronger theoretical priors, showing a positive coefficient on a race dummy variable says little about the relevance of race for political attitudes. These empirically-driven approaches can only demonstrate that the relationship is significant, but they do not generate either expectations or explanations about why the patterns are visible. Using a control variables strategy in the absence of interaction effects specifies only differences in intercept rather than systematic variation in slope, where race is treated as an individual-level trait to control for instead of a structural feature that provides potentially differential gains or losses as a function of categorization. For example, labor economists know that formal educational attainment is positively related to income earnings in much the same way that political scientists can demonstrate strong Republican Party identification is related to support of restrictive immigration policies at the individual level. But economists also know that education has weaker effects on income for women. Women still earn \$0.78 on the dollar compared to men, and not only do female workers earn less to start, but the rate at which income earnings are observed to increase with levels of education is not as steep for women it is for men. Economic models of income earnings therefore either estimate models separately or specify interaction effects to account for intercept and slope differences between relevant categories of analysis. Political scientists studying public opinion, on the other hand, rarely take steps to specify a theoretical position of the basis of expected group differences.

In contrast, we advocate a comparative relational perspective to the study of racial attitudes that explicitly accounts for the structural contextual influence of racial positionality on individual-level opinion. Our identification of the implications of the racial hierarchy for political attitudes on immigration represents an important departure from traditional public opinion scholarship both for its consideration of the implications of racial group positionality and

for its engagement in comparative analysis across groups. Leading models of public opinion and attitude formation – on issues of race as well as many others – are either silent about the context of power that structures individual agency, or control away racial differences in the estimation of inferential models. In contrast, we begin with the recognition of a racial hierarchy in the United States, and documents how this structural feature of intergroup relations manifests itself in racial attitudes and public opinion on immigration. In this way, it is unquestionably the case that race is privileged as a category of analysis, and the reasoning and implications of this analytical choice are discussed in detail in forthcoming sections. While race is identified as the organizing category of primary importance to attitudes on immigration, we embrace both ends of the continuum and positions in-between with respect to the characterization of race as a fictive social construction versus race as a category with real political, social, and economic consequences. It is clearly both, and our analysis demonstrates the utility of viewing racial categorization in myriad ways to help understand the dynamics of the politics of belonging.

We begin this paper by reviewing the literature and outlining how public opinion studies have handled the race variable in their evaluations. We present this discussion in order to demonstrate a primary weakness in the literature: the tendency for scholars to only evaluate data at the individual-level and ignore the macro-level structural constraints affecting individuals classified by race. We build from this discussion and outline alternative strategies for studying racial group differences in political attitudes. We then review the literature on public opinion and immigration attitudes and argue that one of the key missing variables in models predicting immigration attitudes is how individuals define their group boundaries and the correspondence between these group identities. We conclude by presenting findings from the estimation of a series of models predicting antecedents to attitudes on immigration across three dimensions of policy. The analysis and discussion treats racial groups separately.

“Controlling for Race:” Traditions in the Public Opinion Literature

With the assistance of speedy telecommunications and other advances in technology, the study of public opinion has been greatly enhanced by our ability to collect data about an individual respondent in a small amount of time. Moreover, sophisticated econometric techniques have been developed and are applied to the study of public opinion. Collectively, these advances have offered us the opportunity to learn even more about the formation of individual political

attitudes. A typical public opinion study focuses on the individual level antecedents to attitude formation on a particular topic. Most commonly, scholars attempt to identify one particular factor that explains the majority of variance found on the dependent variable of interest.³ In order to do this, scholars specify a multivariate model which includes all the most relevant individual-level factors that play a role in opinion formation. Those independent variables that obtain statistical significance represent the factors that explain attitude formation.

The public opinion field is rich in studies on both the inner workings and influence of certain individual level characteristics like partisanship, political knowledge and other personality traits on political attitudes. However, less is known about the opinion differences that exist between subpopulations characterized by a particular social category like race, gender or even social class.⁴ The historical and persistent opinion divide between whites and blacks, particularly on issues pertaining to racial inequality, has long supported the assumption that race acts as a clear factor in the development of political attitudes (see Schuman et al 1997). Yet, we find a tension in how scholars analyze racial differences in public opinion. Scholars understand the importance of race in the formation of political attitudes and attempt to document the effects of race. Most often, public opinion scholarship has tried to uncover how racial prejudice influences white political attitudes. These studies focus on identifying and operationalizing the individual predisposition to hold racial prejudice as well as the role of prejudice on individual policy preferences (see for example Gilens 2000; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Valentino 1999).

Alternatively, there is less focus on explaining why attitudes vary among individuals within racial groups. The most prevalent strategy for studying racial differences is to include a control variable for race in a multivariate analysis which predicts a particular attitude (or behavior). In this strategy, being black, Latino or Asian is operationalized as a dummy variable, and whites are designated as the comparison group, the deviation from which is measured by the

³ Although we raise an alternative strategy in this paper, political scientists have learned much from focused studies on independent variables. Clearly, the independent variable that has been the focus on significant attention in political science is partisanship (see Campbell et al 1960[1980] and Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2004). Examples of these types of studies include those that focus on an attitudinal or psychological variable such as Hetherington and Weiler's (2009) study on authoritarianism., Kinder and Kam's (2009) study on the role of ethnocentrism, or Delli Carpini and Keeter's study on political knowledge.

⁴ While research focusing on the role of gender and class in the area of public opinion is relatively small, we also recognize that the focus on these characteristics does have a long tradition in political behavior more broadly. For informative discussions on the structuring of behavior caused by, please see for example Burns (2005)

coefficient on the minority dummy. Specified in this way, multivariate models offer the opportunity to identify cases when being categorized as a racial minority results in different attitudes than whites. In this case, white is understood to represent the default category and racial minorities are evaluated in relation to whites.⁵ Because race is recognized to be an important factor for politics, the inclusion of race as a control variable has become standard practice in statistical studies on public opinion. Like factors such as age and socioeconomic status, political science students are taught that race is a basic factor to be included in a model of political attitudes. Given this socialized practice, scholars tend to offer little justification for why race is expected to influence opinion but instead include measures to acknowledge the standard procedure in modeling political attitudes.

The control variable strategy has advantages but also significant disadvantages that have stunted theoretical development in explanations for why we expect differences to exist between whites and minority Americans. The primary advantage to the control variable strategy is that it offers the opportunity to quickly identify whether there are differences between Americans classified by race. The racial control variable consistently obtains statistical significance in most opinion models that have been tested, adding evidence to the claim that racial categorization plays an important role in attitude formation. Moreover, because the control variable strategy is inherently comparative in nature – the coefficients on minority dummy variables are compared against the reference category of white – it is possible to observe the differences between whites and a particular racial minority group. In this way, scholars can collect a running tally of the measures for which racial group categorization matters and when it does not.

However there are many disadvantages to the control variable strategy. The control variable presents race as a figurative black box. Race is operationalized as a dichotomous dummy variable indicating only whether you are racially categorized as, for example, African American or not. Thus, when the race variable reaches statistical significance, it is clear what it is about racial categorization that explains variation on the dependent variable. More problematically, and particularly when the model specifies no interaction terms with racial categorization, the control variable strategy implies that all other individual-level characteristics function the same for members of all racial groups. When we control for race in a multivariate model, we are empirically holding race constant, which means that we make the theoretical

⁵ Similar critiques have been made by Harris-Lacewell 2003 and Junn and Brown 2008.

assumption that all respondents are of the same race. Because whites are the default category, this means we assume that all respondents are white. To simplify this, say we have a multivariate model predicting candidate vote choice that includes as independent variables, race and party identification. When we try to interpret the party identification coefficient in this model, we assume that race has been controlled for. Thus, the party identification coefficient reflects the impact of party identification on candidate choice, assuming all respondents are white. It is likely that both the race and partisanship variables would be statistically significant in this model which would tell us that race and party identification each have unique effects on candidate choice. However, what is not shown in this analysis is whether partisanship has the same magnitude of effect on the dependent variable for blacks as it does for whites.

Minority Public Opinion: Identifying the Unique Experiences Attributed to Race

The rise in research on minority public opinion was a response to some of these very oversights. The general perspective promoted by this research agenda is that the basic model used to describe white public opinion is misspecified for minority respondents. Most importantly, existing public opinion research did not appropriately account for those specific factors unique to the experiences attributed to racialization in the United States. For black respondents, models must appropriately account for those factors attributed to race and racial marginalization that likely influence the formation of both one's ideology and other political attitudes (Dawson 1994; Tate 1994). Research on Asian Americans and Latinos suggested that factors related to group identity, national origin and immigrant acculturation are also important to account for (see for example de la Garza et al. 1992; Fraga et al 2010; Hero 1996; Lien Conway and Wong 2004; Wong et al 2011). To explore these differences, scholars who sought to study minority opinion and behavior followed a two-stage process. The first was to implement specialized surveys targeting a particular minority population and specifying a model using a minority sample population. Next, the objective was to identify particular factors that had been overlooked or omitted from the existing opinion model that accounts for the particular experiences of a minority group. This research offers insight into the distinctive processes that lead to the formation of minority public opinion by identifying those unique factors specific to a racial group's experiences that influence attitudes and behavior.

The most important theoretical development offered in the minority public opinion and behavior literature is that one's racial background is more influential to the formation of individual political attitudes than what was accounted for in the existing public opinion literature. This led to two distinctive assumptions about minority public opinion. First, racial considerations are more chronically accessible to minorities than they are for whites. Race is intimately interconnected with how minorities experience the world whereas for whites, race is only a consideration when a relevant issue makes race a salient topic. Second, since race is more likely to influence minority life chances, group-based identities are just as, if not more, relevant to the formation of politics than the individual distinctions that characterize the self. In multivariate models, racial identification, particularly those measures that capture a sense of politicized group identity, are found to be powerful predictive variables for attitude formation particularly on issues pertaining to race (Barreto 2007; DeSipio 1996; Jones-Correa and Leal 1996; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Sanchez 2006). Other scholars focus on specific perceptions of alienation or marginalization to account for the unique experiences of racial minorities. In this case, racial group identification is assumed to represent a social group identity that is separate from perceptions of marginalization. Explicit attitudes about the existence of discrimination and personally experiencing discrimination are used as measures which account for the respondent's recognition of racial group alienation (Garcia-Bedolla 2005; Lien 2001; Schildkraut 2005; Chong and Kim 2006).

In depth analyses on specific racial groups also suggest that the standard factors used in public opinion may not operate the same for racial minorities as they do whites. Party identification, which is assumed to account for both an individual's position on political issues and also used as a schematic shortcut to make decisions, may not have as strong of an effect on the formation of black attitudes compared to for whites. As is widely known, blacks are not broadly distributed across the party identification spectrum. American National Election Study estimates indicate that at least 75% of black respondents self-identify as Democrat and a nearly all (95%) voted Democratic in 2008 election.⁶ Blacks have been consistent supporters of the Democratic Party since the New Deal and became solidly Democratic since the Reagan administration (Tate 1994). Although party identification is found to be an important political cleavage that splits

⁶ Data for the 2008 election results are from exit polls reported by CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/president/>

white Americans, it does not distinguish the political positions within the black population and so does not serve as a salient source of division. It is also unclear what party identification substantively represents for blacks. Paul Frymer (1999) argues that blacks are supporters of the Democratic party because there is no other viable alternative available. Thus, in practice blacks may not feel a strongly attached to the Democratic party but rather identify as Democratic for practical and political purposes (see also Philpot 2007).

Although blacks are not evenly split between the two major political parties, there are still differences in political orientations within the black community. As Dawson (2001) explains, blacks rely on a distinctive set of political ideologies that have developed from the historic black experience. Traditional American political ideologies which outline the importance of individualism and role of government are those typically utilized to describe the formation of American attitudes. Dawson argues that black political thought is both rooted in these ideological traditions as well as the historic black experience. Black political thought challenges the assumption that actors interact on a level playing field and place greater concern on issues of equality, self-determination and investment of the state. Black ideologies challenge the idea that individuals are politically free and autonomous, as well as the notion that equality is not a given. As such, the distinctive ideological strains seek to outline how blacks should perceive and behave in the American political system. Accounting for distinctive ideologies among minority populations is difficult, particularly since, as Dawson concedes, scholars have not come to agreement as to how many strains of black political ideologies are present. Thus, the ideological structure that has been traditionally used to analyze the contours of American public opinion, may not represent the full range of ideological perspectives held by all Americans.

Research on Asian and Latino populations also suggests that political attitude formation processes may be different for racial minorities. Because Asian and Latino populations are closer to the immigrant experience, development of the civic skills necessary for participation as well as the ways in which they perceive their political positions on issues may be traced through different processes from whites and blacks whose families have been in the United States for generations (see Fraga et al 2010; Wong et al. 2011). For example, the role of partisanship and party identification is less certain for Asians and Latinos who are less likely, compared to whites and blacks, to identify with a particular political party. Hajnal and Lee (2011) find relatively

higher rates of independent and unaffiliated responses among Asian and Latino respondents. Since minority voters may be perceived as unnecessary for a winning voting coalition, political parties may be less willing to mobilize voters, which then diminishes the role of party attachment among Asians and Latinos (Wong 2006). Moreover since partisanship requires significant knowledge about the party system, partisanship may be more of an indicator of political incorporation or cultural assimilation than taking an actual political position (Tam Cho 1999).

However, for many factors, it is simply unclear how they will influence political attitude formation for groups whose populations are increased by new immigration. Continuing immigration of both Asians and Latinos leads to dynamic community boundaries and population shifts. As immigration leads to changes in demographic makeup of each group, so will the role of individual-level traits on the formation of attitudes. Socioeconomic status is one important example. Changes in migration patterns which introduce new inflows of particular occupational groups will change the class makeup of a population. Currently, Asian Americans are perceived to be relatively advantaged since most immigrants from Asia arrive with resources such as high levels of education. At the same time, it is also possible that a large influx of poor refugees from Asia could alter the makeup of the Asian American population. Unlike primarily native-born populations who interact within one national culture and one political system, immigrant Americans today are more likely to be transnational and so are exposed to more diverse and international norms. These contexts interact so we are less likely to use theories found to describe the politics of primarily native-born populations to those that are influenced so strongly by the experience of recent immigration.

Research on minority public opinion has successfully highlighted the concern that political attitude formation may vary across racial groups. Indeed, distinct experiences and factors attributed to specific racial groups were being overlooked and omitted from evaluations of public opinion. However, there are some concerns regarding the development of minority opinion research. The original objective to study specific racial groups was driven out of the perception that the existing theory and research was not encompassing enough and did not recognize how systems of social stratification, such as race, could create different attitudinal or behavioral pathways into politics. In short, existing theories lacked the theoretical complexity that could effectively account for the diversity found in the population. In order to first identify the unique factors that account for the minority experience, racial minority groups were targeted

and studied as separate cases. As a result, the attitudes and behaviors of each racial group were originally studied in isolation from one another.

Comparative Relational Analysis: Understanding *Why* Racial Differences Exist

From this review of the public opinion literature, it is clear that there are two perspectives which aim to uncover the role of race on the formation of political attitudes. While these two perspectives do appear to be focused on similar goals, they have not yet been fully synthesized. The established method is the control variable approach which is used to verify that racial group differences in opinion exist. The control variable approach is useful for first identifying along what topics or issues race is an important cleavage. On the other hand, research on racial minority populations raises concerns with the control variable approach. Research in this subject area has pointed out that models describing the formation of white opinion are misspecified when are applied to minority populations. In addition, research has found that standard factors are used to describe white opinion do not necessarily have the same effect on minority respondents as they do for white respondents. At the same time, however, research on minority populations has generally focused on one group at a time in isolation from others. Studies do not situate their findings comparatively across racial groups, but rather focus primarily on the one chosen group, often with the unspoken comparison group assumed to be white Americans.

An integration of ideas found in these two perspectives will be the most effective strategy for explaining why racial group differences in opinion exist. We advocate moving away from the control variable strategy to examining antecedents for each group separately. It is important to be clear on how we should use to the control variable approach. This approach should only be used to establish that there are significant differences in opinion between groups and as verification that further research is necessary. Public opinion scholarship has indeed demonstrated that differences between racial groups exist on many political issues, including immigration (Bowler and Segura 2011; Schuman et al 1997). Thus, the primary scholarly goal should be to explain *why* these differences exist. To do this, we must disaggregate respondents into their respective racial groups and analyze these populations separately and comparatively.

In order to explain why racial group differences exist, we must figuratively “unpack” the black box of race. The scholarship on minority populations demonstrates that racial categorization has a powerful impact on individual lives that moderates the effect of even the

standard individual-level factors such as age, education and partisanship on individual political attitudes. In this way, we can understand race as a structural feature that constrains variance on individual-level traits. Therefore, we cannot expect a set of individual-level antecedents to political attitude formation to influence members of all racial groups in the same manner. Because race moderates the formation of individual-level traits, we expect that the effect of each individual-level antecedent on political attitude formation can vary both in terms of the direction and magnitude across racial groups. Furthermore, we must also consider how the construction of each racial category results in the creation of unique experiences or individual-level traits that must be taken into account. Important but often excluded individual factors such as racial group identity formation are key to accounting for the unique perspectives developed from one's racial categorization. By estimating separate models for respondents in each racial group, we recognize that one's racial position creates a distinct configuration of relevant individual traits as explanatory variables for attitude formation.

Finally, we join many other scholars (Emirbayer 1997; Kim 1999; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008; Chong and Kim 2006; Leighley 1999) in raising scholarly awareness to the fact that any comparative analysis of race usually assumes that white Americans are the default or comparison group. Indeed, most public opinion data have historically been collected on a white population sample. Because of this, most theoretical development on the antecedents to public opinion has been built from empirical data on white Americans. To be sure, when scholarship on minority populations began to first develop, the most important comparison to be made was between the existing research and new research on minority populations. In practice, this meant persistent comparisons between whites and minorities. With increasingly more accurate data on minority populations, we now have developed substantial knowledge on the politics of minority populations. As such, we advocate for more rigorous attention to establishing theoretical justification for that group selected to act as the reference group. For example for immigration attitudes, it is plausible that the more appropriate comparison should be those groups who are targeted in discussions on immigration (Latinos and Asian Americans) with those whose views largely reflect the native born (whites and blacks).

Identifying Antecedents to the Formation of Immigration Attitudes

Now that we have determined the strategy for analyzing racial group differences in opinion, we turn to identifying the antecedents to the formation of attitudes on immigration. Like other studies on public opinion, scholarship on immigration attitudes has aimed to both identify the effect of established variables like socioeconomic status and ideology as well as identify factors that may be unique to the issue of immigration.

Baseline Model: Demographics, Cognition and Political Preferences

The established model that is specified in the public opinion literature includes three basic categories of indicators that account for the individual's demographic profile, sophistication and awareness about politics, and political predispositions. Including demographic characteristics as explanatory variables reflects the hypothesis that one's life position and the experiences that occur as a result of it influence the formation of attitudes. For example, age is identified as an important factor because of life cycle, generational effects, and period effects. Older individuals hold different attitudes than the young because of their life experience and particular events that occurred during a person's "coming of age," such as war or an economic depression, may influence one's political outlook for the rest of their life (Jennings and Niemi 1975; Miller 1992). Other characteristics such as gender and class are also assumed to account for a different perspective on politics due to their distinct experiences and interactions with others. To be sure, like race, characteristics such as gender and class are also structural characteristics which moderate individual choices. These characteristics also interact with one another creating unique experiences for those individuals found at the intersection (Hancock 2006; Cohen 1999; Crenshaw 1991). Traditionally, all of these structural variables have been accounted for in public opinion studies as control variables in a regression model.⁷

The second dimension, cognitive sophistication and political awareness, presumes that individuals hold an adequate level of awareness about the topic in order to make a reasoned assessment and develop a position that is consistent with one's values and interests. Indeed, it is unlikely that respondents will report stable or ideologically consistent opinions on issues they have little exposure to. However, while awareness of an issue does impact the substantive answer provided by a respondent, high attention to media sources and political events may also

⁷ Structural characteristics such as gender and class are clearly important beyond their role as control variables but beyond the scope of this project.

indicate extensive exposure to elite messages. Indeed, politically aware individuals may know the issues but are also more likely to develop similar positions as those political elites they follow in the media (Stimson 2004; Zaller 1992). In conjunction with awareness and exposure to current events, individuals must be able to process that new information. Education, which is an important mechanism for both learning about the political system but also the normative ideals and values embraced by a country, has consistently been identified as a critical antecedent to the formation of political attitudes (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Verba and Nie 1972). Furthermore, policy topics involve a number of complex solutions and trigger a variety of competing values, making the type of information provided to a respondent as well as the ability to sort through that data are important factors to account for when trying to explain attitude formation.⁸

Finally, although personal preferences are clearly outcomes of both psychological and experiential processes, politics is an important consideration in determining the positions individuals choose to take on an issue. Political elites and parties are those who ultimately have the most access to decision-making in the policy process. In addition, these actors have a clear interest to convince the public to support their respective positions. As such, their goal is to advocate for their position and mobilize voters to support their causes. Since the average individual pays minimal attention to politics, the influence of elite opinion and party identification serve as useful cues for individuals to use when formulating an opinion. Political factors such as partisanship has been found to significant predict the direction and magnitude of individual opinion (Green Palmquist and Schickler 2004; Stimson 2004).

However, one of the challenges to studying the role of partisanship on immigration attitudes is that elite positions on the issue have been historically inconsistent (but see Neiman Johnson and Bowler 2006). Tichenor (2004) documents the unusual political coalitions formed around immigration reform legislation throughout American political history. For example, and in the contemporary period, libertarians and pro-business Republicans who would normally be

⁸ Attention and sophistication are not simply attributes necessary to complete survey questions, but also influence how respondents choose to answer those questions. As Carmines and Stimson (1980) argue, there is a relationship between attention and sophistication on the one hand and the type of survey question on the other. “Easy” questions regarding attitudes towards groups or valence issues are those that encourage affective or immediate “top of the head” responses do not require attention or high levels of sophistication. Alternatively, “hard” questions ask for opinions on specific policies or events and so require high levels of knowledge. Because the issue of immigration tends to trigger ideas about groups, citizenship and belonging rather than encourage evaluations of particular laws, survey questions on immigration would likely be classified as “easy” questions.

more closely aligned with conservative politics have aligned with liberals to support more progressive policies on Mexican migration to the U.S. Like many other issues, parties have over time changed positions on immigration depending on the historical context and which party identified new immigrant voters as central to their winning coalition of voters. Since the major changes of the 1965 immigration Act, both Democratic and Republican elites have supported policies to reduce immigration, including legislating employer sanctions and increasing border control on the U.S.-Mexico border. However, since the mid-1990's Republicans have publicly represented themselves as the restrictionist party and are more likely to be attached to extreme restrictive policies than Democrats (Nevins 2010; Newton 2008). The party divide on the immigration issue has been most prevalent during election years compared to non-election years especially as the Republican party has increasingly catered to conservative white voters (Jacobson 2008; Schrag 2011).

Antecedents Unique to the Politics of Immigration

Variables in the baseline model are commonly included in multivariate models used to explain attitude formation on all political issues. However, given that there are unique properties to the issue of immigration, scholars have theorized the existence of other individual-level factors that influence political attitudes on immigration. Since immigrants are inherently considered outsiders to the nation, Kinder and Kam (2009) argue that we must take into account the general human tendency to by wary of out-groups. Social psychologists have argued that humans have the predisposition to be ethnocentric and quickly divide others into members of one's own in-group versus those of out-groups. Ethnocentrism is considered a basic cognitive process and described as a kind of mental habit by Kinder and Kam.

Although ethnocentrism may reflect a general human predisposition, scholars have posed a variety of theories on how Americans choose to define the out-group. Because immigrants differ from Americans by national origin, some scholars have focused on the role of national identity on immigration attitudes. Americans who feel strong attachments to the nation will view immigrants negatively since they were born in a country outside the United States (Wong 2010; Schildkraut 2011). In this way, the group boundary is divided between Americans and non-Americans. According Theiss-Morse (2009), those who perceive strong national group boundaries are more likely to reject those individuals who are not yet fellow citizens of their

nation. Alternatively, as Burns and Gimpel (2000) write “of course it is well known that the term ‘immigrant’ is increasingly associated with ‘ethnic minority’ in both the United States and Europe” (pg 204). Thus, race is another way in which respondents can define the out-group. Burns and Gimpel found that among white respondents, negative antipathy toward racial minorities, which they defined as racial prejudice, drives negative attitudes toward immigrants.

Along the same vein, there is also a group of scholars who have applied group contact theory to explaining the formation of immigration attitudes (Ha 2010; Hopkins 2010).⁹ While most scholars accept that humans hold the general tendency to dislike out-groups, others argue that a person’s surrounding context strongly shapes reactions to out-groups. There are two contradicting hypotheses that have developed out of contact theory. On the one hand, contact with out-groups is expected to make an individual more tolerant of that group (Oliver and Wong 2004; Welch et al 2001). This position posits that lack of contact encourages negative and dehumanized portrayals of out-groups while more intimate contact increases positive affect. The contrasting hypothesis argues that increased contact encourages stronger negative perceptions of out-groups (Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958). According to this version of contact theory, contact with out-groups is argued to increase awareness of that group, and negative experiences with members of an out-group can also be used to substantiate existing negative stereotypes about that group. Application to the formation of immigration attitudes has provided mixed results. Hopkins (2010) found that while those white Americans historically exposed to large immigrant populations are no more anti-immigrant than others, however whites living in new immigrant destinations report significantly stronger negative attitudes about immigrants. Morris’s (2000) study on black attitudes towards California’s proposition 187 found that inter-minority contact between blacks and other minority groups had no effect on black political attitudes.

Other theories besides ethnocentrism have also been applied to studies on immigration attitudes. Some scholars hypothesize that personality traits, and in particular authoritarianism, predispose people to perceive more rigid group boundaries than others (Feldman 2003; Feldman and Stenner 1997; Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Personality theories focus on the inner workings and predispositions in the individual. Although individual behaviors are generally understood as responses to one’s surrounding environment, how one is predisposed to react is

⁹ The role of immigrant contact is not only used to understand the formation of immigration policy attitudes but also to analyze intergroup conflict. See for example, McClain et al 2006.

assumed to be a key source that dictates response. The authoritarian personality was originally used to explain why individuals were willing to commit violence against other human beings during World War II (Adorno et al 1950). Those high in authoritarianism are characterized as holding high levels of submissiveness, glorification of superiors and place strong emphasis on obedience and so are more supportive of punitive punishments against deviant behavior. As a result, high authoritarians are more likely to have strongly positive views of the in-group and highly prejudiced towards out-groups. Authoritarianism thus orients a person's sense of what is normatively right and wrong which in turn inform one's individual political preferences and normative positions. Hetherington and Weiler (2009) found that, in addition to other factors, high levels of authoritarianism lead to stronger restrictionist attitudes toward immigration.

In addition to social psychological theories on personality, scholars have also hypothesized that American responses to immigrants can be explained through economic interests. Negative attitudes toward immigrants are rooted in the reality that immigrants alter the nation's economy. George Borjas (1991) has argued that immigration is a drain on the national economy because it introduces low-skilled workers into the workforce. These low skilled workers not only lower citizen working wages but also are more likely to need public welfare assistance. Although other economists have strongly criticized Borjas's analysis (see for example, Card 1990), it is a common American perception that immigrants are detrimental to the national economy. One of the most common hypotheses is that immigration attitudes are linked with an individual's economic outlook. Thus, those individuals who feel that the economy is faltering are more likely to have negative perceptions about new immigrants (Citrin et al 1997).¹⁰ Economists such as Borjas suggest that groups struggling most economically, such as blacks, are most likely to support restrictive immigration policies.¹¹

Structuring by Race: Antecedents to Immigration Attitudes by Racial Group

We acknowledge that existing studies on immigration attitudes has been able to identify relevant antecedents to opinion formation on the topic. Indeed, studies on each of the identified

¹⁰ While Citrin and colleagues show that the connection between economic outlook and immigration attitudes is weak, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) provide further evidence that economic threat does not directly influence immigration attitudes.

¹¹ Factors such as economic outlook and even authoritarianism are what social psychologists consider "explicit" attitudes. In other words, these are the attitudes respondents verbally communicate to the researcher. However, compelling evidence suggests that there are also implicit attitudes – or automatic thoughts that are not consciously communicated to the researcher – that influences immigration attitudes. For further exploration, see Perez 2010.

antecedents have been exhaustive, using clear empirical evidence to explain how factors are related to immigration attitude formation. Given this, we recognize the empirical rigor applied to public opinion studies and accept that those variables identified by prior work should be specified in a multivariate model predicting immigration attitudes. However, we also point out the clear weakness in the existing literature due primarily to the fact that few studies include evaluation of minority attitudes. In an exhaustive search of the literature as of 2011, we found only one published empirical article focusing on black immigration attitudes, approximately seven articles focused on Latino immigration attitudes and no published articles on Asian American immigration attitudes.¹² Therefore, while we may have understanding of the antecedents to immigration attitudes among white Americans, existing theories have not been tested on minority populations.

The focus on white public opinion has caused serious oversights in specification of models predicting immigration attitudes by assuming that all Americans hold the same social group identities, hold the same preference structure and view politics through the same lens. Take for example the hypothesized role of ethnocentrism on immigration. Native-born Americans are assumed to share the same in-group both in terms of shared nationality and shared racial group. Thus, since immigrants are constructed as outsiders in terms of nationality and race, the response to immigrants is anticipated to be negative. However, many native-born Americans do not see that their national and racial identities as completely aligned. In fact, the asymmetry between the two group identities has led to racial minorities being portrayed as peripheral or marginal members of the nation. As a result, the group boundaries which define immigrants as outsiders are more complex for racial minorities than it is for white Americans.

We agree with scholars such as Kinder and Kam (2009) who argue that those who perceive strong boundaries defining one's in-group are more likely to hold negative perceptions of those perceived to be members of out-groups. However, how the "in-group" is defined is more complex than it has been previously outlined (see also Wong 2010). Previous scholarship defines group identities as relatively one dimensional. For example, given the historical importance of race, some would argue that the primary group identity is racial: individuals are

¹² We conducted a search using Google Scholar using search terms "immigration attitudes" and "immigration public opinion." We counted any article that analyzed a representative sample of blacks, Asians or Latinos. Although more studies mentioned black, Latino or Asian respondents than what we list here, minority attitudes were not the focus of those studies. Rather, these types of studies employed control variables to eliminate racial variation. Thus, we excluded any article which only included minority respondents as control variables in a regression.

loyal to those of the same racial group. This is normally accounted by measures of racial prejudice such as negative stereotyping of racial minorities. Alternatively, in the context of immigration, scholars most often point to the role of national identity: Americans perceive a clear sense of difference from non-Americans. This is normally accounted for by including some measure for strength of national identity. Most often, only one form of group identity is specified in a model of immigration attitudes.

A historical analysis would show that immigration in the United States has been constructed as both an issue of national belonging and racial difference. Correspondence between one's national identity and racial classification has determined experiences of citizenship and belonging in the United States. For whites, belonging to the nation and whiteness align such a way that the group-based difference between themselves and immigrants is obvious. However, for racial minorities, racial and national identities are not aligned; one of the foundations of citizenship has until the late 20th Century been whiteness. Full citizenship and belonging for non-white Americans has been incomplete in comparison to white Americans. Therefore, what is missing in the model specification of existing research on attitudes on immigration is an accounting of the complexity and multiplicity of relevant group identities. Americans rely on both their racial and national identities to inform their preferences on policies targeted at new members of the polity. As such, both forms of group identities must be accounted for in any model describing the formation of immigration attitudes.

We hypothesize that since race and nation align for whites, strong racial and national identities encourage more restrictive attitudes towards immigrants. In the minds of white Americans, immigrants are clearly different: they hold different nationalities and typically framed as non-white, and usually speak a language other than English. Given the general human tendency for out-group antipathy and because the group differences between white Americans and immigrants are perceived to be unambiguous, we anticipate that both of these group identities are strong predictors of immigration attitudes. Alternatively, the role of group identity is less obvious for racial minority groups. Because the issue of immigration can present citizenship and belonging in different ways, a proposed immigration policy can emphasize the importance of distinctive group loyalties. Of course, racial minorities can and do hold strong loyalties to the United States, and those racial minorities who hold strong national identities will be more likely to reject policies favorable to immigrants. Moreover, policies such as English

only requirements for example, which emphasize a national identity and culture, encourage individuals to emphasize their national identity. Therefore, we anticipate that on these policies that emphasize importance of American distinctiveness, all racial minorities will rely on their national identities to determine their preferences on those policies.

Alternatively, policies that deal with membership and the equitable division of rights allocated to members, such as admission policies and allocation of social services, are likely to emphasize the historic American tendency to create a hierarchy of membership. By emphasizing the idea that some individuals are more deserving than others, immigration policies can highlight the clear inequalities that exist in the United States. As a result, these types of policies prime racial group identities. Those racial minorities who hold strong racial group identities are those who most clearly recognize the importance of race in their daily lives. Minorities with strong racial group identities are thus more likely to oppose policies that support a hierarchy of citizenship. Thus, we expect that strong racial group identities among racial minorities will encourage stronger rejection of restrictive immigration policies.

It is not our attempt to create a simple division in those outcomes that are found for whites and those found for racial minorities. Indeed, the racial categories of African American, Latino, and Asian American have been constructed in distinctive ways, leading to particular forms of racial group identities. The most obvious differences found across racial minority groups is the degree of racial group attachment found within each group. Given blacks' construction at the bottom of the racial order, they are more dependent on their racial group than either Asian Americans or Latinos. In terms of the effects of racial group identity on immigration attitudes, we also do anticipate variation across racial minority groups. In particular, given that individuals classified as either Asian American or Latino are constructed as foreign, we anticipate their racial group identity to be more relevant to immigration attitude formation than for blacks. While blacks can be easily made aware of discrimination and group-based disparities, at the first take, blacks may emphasize the difference between being native-born and foreign-born.

Racial group identification is the most effective indicator for a person's awareness of her or his racial position because racial categorization structures individuals' lives. Yet, while this is the case, not all individuals can and do recognize the influence of race, and fail to do for different reasons. Those individuals at the top of the hierarchy do not experience their race to constrain

their agency, and so race is not a salient construct used to understand the world. Alternatively, there are those at the bottom of the racial order who experience the disadvantages of race but choose to explain those disadvantages as a product of individual action such as unwillingness to work hard. Indeed, there is variation in the degree to which individuals emphasize their race and its relationship to structural inequality. By accounting for racial identity in our model specification, we assert that being a racial minority does not directly imply that racial group identity is salient. Moreover, we also want to recognize that whites do indeed hold a racial group identity: whites with strong racial group identities are those who are strongly aware of their position at the top of the racial hierarchy and who wish to stay there.

While racial group identification is an indicator of a person's awareness of her or his racial group status, the influence of race cannot simply be estimated by an individual level variable. Indeed, the impact of race on individual behavior has far more serious implications beyond formation of a group identity. Most public opinion studies fail to recognize the constraints imposed on individual-level features by structural characteristics such as race. Indeed, every individual, regardless of their race, can be described by characteristics such as socioeconomic status, partisanship, personality and other attitudinal predispositions. Yet, because one's racial categorization determines the degree of personal agency a person is afforded, not all individual level factors function in the same manner for all racial groups. Thus, it is likely erroneous to assume that the effect of say, personal economic outlook on the formation immigration attitudes is the same across all racial groups. Social mobility is experienced quite differently across racial groups, with some groups experiencing what appear to be quicker gains than others due to their racial position. Since perceptions on economic outlook will be strongly informed by one's experiences in the economic sector, positive economic outlook may indicate distinctive attitudes across racial groups. For example, positive economic outlook for Asian Americans is likely indicative of their perceptions about immigrant assimilation while for blacks it may be indicative of clear societal change in race relations (see Chong and Kim 2006).

Our second major expectation is that once we analyze the attitudes of racial groups separately, we will find distinctive sets of antecedents predicting immigration attitudes for each group. This said, we also expect the antecedents identified by previous research could be applied to all Americans. There is no justifiable reason, for example, to say that authoritarian personality

is only relevant for white public opinion on immigration and not for racial minorities. So as we develop a model for understanding immigration attitude formation, we will apply the same model to all racial groups but we do not expect the results to be the same across all four groups. Indeed, it is likely that one factor would significantly predict immigration attitudes for all four groups but the direction and magnitude of the effect will vary across groups. To simplify, we could anticipate that a variable such as economic outlook is a statistically significant predictor of immigration attitudes for all racial groups. However, negative economic outlook could be directly related to restrictive immigration attitudes for whites while be indirectly related to restrictive immigration attitudes for blacks.

Results: Estimates of Models of Attitudes on Immigration by Race

To examine the formation of immigration attitudes, we estimated a series of linear regression models that includes all those factors identified by previous research. As independent variables in this model, we first included variables that account for the baseline model.¹³ The first dimension of variables that are accounted for in this model are the demographic characteristics of the respondent including *age*, *gender (female)* and *family income*. Because the share of foreign-born immigrants varies within each racial group, we also controlled for being *foreign born*. The second dimension of variables is included to measure the role of sophistication and political awareness. To account for sophistication, we include a variable measuring the respondent's highest level of *education*. For political awareness, we included the variable *media attention*, which represents the respondent's reported amount of attention to national news and politics. Third, because political attitudes are strongly influenced by partisanship, we also included a variable taking account the respondent's *party identification*.¹⁴

Our model includes the specific attitudinal and personality factors hypothesized to influence immigration attitudes. The variable *economic outlook* measures the respondent's perception about her own personal finances. The highest value on this measure represents those respondents who believe that their finances will be worse off in the next two years. We also include a proxy measure for authoritarian personality. Although authoritarianism can be

¹³ For purposes of consistency, we coded all variables so that they range on a scale of 0 to 1. See Appendix A for question wording of measures.

¹⁴ Party identification was measured on an ordinal scale with 0 representing those who are strongly Democratic and the maximum value, 1 representing those who are strongly Republican. Those solidly Independent (i.e. those who do not lean Democrat or Republican) represents the median value on the scale.

measured in various ways (see Hetherington and Weiler 2009), we measure it through responses to the statement: “It is better to live in an orderly society in which the laws are vigorously enforced than to give people too much freedom.” Those with a strong authoritarian personality are those who strongly agree with this statement.¹⁵

Outside of individual level factors, we account for the respondent’s surrounding context. To do this, we considered both the respondent’s exposure to racial diversity as well as high exposure to immigrants. It is plausible that exposure to large numbers of immigrants encourages more restrictive opinions on immigration policy. However, given the fact that immigration also creates increasing ethnic diversity, we consider if rejection of ethnic diversity rather than simply immigration that encourages restrictionist attitudes. The variable *diverse neighborhood* accounts for those respondents who live in a racially diverse neighborhood as opposed to an ethnically homogenous neighborhood. The variable *immigration state* represents those respondents who live in a high immigration states: those states with the largest immigrant populations in 2006.¹⁶

Finally, and most importantly, we account for important group boundaries that inform responses to immigrant groups. Since immigration encourages recognition of strong national boundaries, we account for perceptions of American identity. Those respondents who perceive rigid boundaries that differentiate native-born Americans from the foreign-born are most likely to reject open immigration policies. For the *American boundary* variable, we employ the classic battery on American identity: “How important do you think each of the following is for being truly American? a) To have been born in America; b) To have American citizenship; c) To have lived in America for most of one’s life; d) To be able to speak English; e) To be a Christian; f) To respect America’s political institutions and laws?” We created an index variable which denotes the number of ascriptive characteristics respondents agreed is important to being an American. High scores on the *American boundary* variable thus reflect those respondents who perceive a set of clear characteristics that make up an American. To account for strong awareness and attachment to one’s racial group, we employ a measure of *linked fate*. High scores on the *linked*

¹⁵ Although the most commonly employed measure for authoritarianism is the child-rearing battery, Hetherington and Perez found that there are serious measurement problems when applying the child-rearing battery to black respondents. They find that while the child-rearing battery does account for authoritarian personality among whites, it is indicative of other traits for black respondents. We use a measure which directly accounts for a key dimension to authoritarianism: preference for social order.

¹⁶ According to the U.S. Census, immigration states represent the top five states that have historically experienced the most immigration in decreasing order: California, New York, Texas, Florida and Illinois.

fate variable reflect those respondents who strongly believe that their individual life chances are connected to those who share the same racial group.¹⁷

In terms of the dependent variable of immigration attitudes, we consider responses to three questions on different policies. The variable *Decrease immigration* measures respondents' attitudes towards immigrant admissions that ask respondents their opinion on the number of immigrants coming to the United States. The variable *Social services* measures whether the respondent believes that immigrants should be eligible or ineligible for social services provided by government. Finally, the variable *English only* measures the respondent's level of support on an amendment making English the official language of the U.S. All three of these variables were coded so that the highest value reflects the more restrictive position on immigration – fewer immigrants in the United States, immigrants should be ineligible for social services, and English should be the official language. These questions represent reform proposals at both the state and national level, as well as reflect a range of policies related to immigration that Americans debate. The *Decrease immigration* measure accounts for respondents' more general attitudes about immigration while the *Social services* and *English only* variables represent policies aimed at more specific areas. Consistent with previous studies on immigration attitudes, we chose to include one policy area tapping cultural concerns and another that addresses economic concerns in order to examine whether immigration attitudes might vary depending on the type of perceived threat.

To identify those factors that influence the formation of immigration attitudes, we use multivariate regression. As we discussed above, the first strategy is to analyze racial groups separately and then estimate a regression model for each of the three dependent variables. By comparing the same regression model across the four racial groups, we can determine which factors influence the formation of immigration attitudes for all groups and which may only be relevant for particular groups. Because two of the dependent variables, *Decrease immigration* and *English Only*, are measured as categorical variables, we employ ordered logit analysis to calculate the results. The variable *Social services*, is a dichotomous variable and so we employ logit analysis. Unlike ordinary least squares analysis in which we can easily understand the

¹⁷ Because there was an embedded experiment included in this survey, we also included controls that eliminated the effect of the experimental treatments. The results from these controls will be excluded from the analysis in this paper but will be presented in future work using this dataset.

results directly from the table, we caution that logit and ordered logit analyses require additional calculations of predicted probabilities to aid in interpreting the results.

Distinctive Effects of Antecedents by Race on Immigration Attitudes

Identifying Antecedents to Immigration Attitudes

We focus first on the results for the measure *Decrease immigration*. The results shown in Table 1 support our hypothesis that the same factors do not predict preferences for decreasing immigration for all groups. One factor - *American boundary* –has the same effect on preferences for decreasing immigration for all racial groups. Regardless of one’s racial categorization, those who perceive hard boundaries defining what an American is are more likely to favoring decreasing immigration. In addition, all individuals who are foreign-born, regardless of racial categorization, are less likely to support decreasing immigration. There are also factors that significantly predict preference for decreasing immigration for all racial groups, but the effect of those factors varies for each group. For example, party identification is a significant predictor for decreasing immigration for all groups but the effect of this factor varies; for whites, Asian Americans and Latinos, those who strongly identify as Republican are significantly more likely than Democrats to support decreased immigration. For blacks, the result is the reverse: black Republicans are less likely than black Democrats to support decreased immigration. Finally, *linked fate* is statistically significant for all groups but the effect is opposite from whites than it is for racial minorities. Whites with a strong racial identity are more likely to support decreasing immigration while African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans with a strong sense of racial linked fate less likely to support decreasing immigration.

[Insert Table 1 here]

There are also factors that influence a preference for decreased immigration for one racial group but are not significant for other groups. Many of these differences are enlightening. For whites, living in a diverse neighborhood and having an authoritarian outlook encourages a preference for decreasing immigration. For blacks, there were no other factors that were significant in the model. For Asian American and Latino respondents, education is a key factor: those with higher levels of education are less likely to support decreasing immigration. For Asian Americans, a number of other factors were significant including gender, income and surrounding context.

Estimates of the models predicting attitudes on policies on government providing social services to immigrants and English as the official language of the United States are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Again it is confirmed that different factors predict immigration policy attitudes for each racial group. Unlike the model for *Decreasing immigration*, not as many factors consistently predicted attitudes for all groups. Indeed, no one factor in the *Social services* model was significant across all groups, and only *American boundary* is significant across all groups in the *English only* model. However, our main purpose for including the *Social services* and *English only* was to identify if restrictive immigration attitudes are driven out of perceptions of cultural or economic threat. Of all four groups, we find that immigration attitudes among blacks are most likely to be influenced by perceptions of direct threat. Although personal economic outlook is not connected to immigration attitudes, upper-income blacks are more likely to believe that immigrants should be ineligible for benefits than poorer blacks. Alternatively, those blacks who are most exposed to diversity and immigration are those more likely to support an English-only amendment. Furthermore, an English-only amendment appears to prime both forms of group identity for blacks in terms of racial linked fate and national identity as measured by the American boundary questions. Alternatively, the identity measures are not relevant to attitudes on social services among African Americans.

[Insert Tables 2 and 3]

For whites, Asian Americans and Latinos, restrictive positions on the *Social services* and *English only* questions are not influenced by perceptions of cultural or economic threat. But both party identification and American boundary national identity predict attitudes for these three racial groups. Whites, Asian Americans and Latinos who identify strongly as Republican and perceive strong national boundaries are more likely to support restrictive stances on the *Social services* and *English only* questions. Interestingly, authoritarian outlook is a significant predictor for all three racial groups on the *English only* question. Thus, authoritarianism may drive nativist responses rather than perceptions about government redistribution. This is particularly the case for whites; authoritarian outlook encourages support for both decreasing immigration as well as support for an amendment specifying English as the official language of the United States. However the antecedents of immigrations are not the same for whites, Asian Americans and Latinos. Racial group identity is a positive predictor of restrictionist positions for whites across all three questions. Conversely, strong Latino linked fate encourages more progressive

attitudes towards immigration on all three measures. For Asian Americans, racial group identity is not a significant predictor on either the *Social services* or *English only* measures.

Exploring the Impact of Group Identity on Immigration Attitudes

As anticipated, how a respondent defines group boundaries is a strong determinant of immigration attitudes. However the role of group identity varies across racial groups. In the regression analysis, we found that for whites, strong racial group identity and strong national identity encouraged more restrictive immigration attitudes. Alternatively, for racial minorities, it is a significant difference: a strong racial group identity encouraged more open attitudes while a strong national identity encouraged more restrictive attitudes. Moreover, we also found that while racial group identity and perception of rigid national boundaries are consistent factors across all measures for whites and Latinos, only certain dimensions of immigration are influenced by group identity for blacks and Asian Americans. As such, in the above analysis, we found preliminary evidence to demonstrate the differences between those group defined by race and those groups provided the option of ethnicity.

Yet, while logit and ordered logit models can offer information about what factors are significant predictors of a dependent variable, the coefficients alone are not sufficient to interpret the magnitude of the effect. Moreover, these models only offer the opportunity to understand the singular effect of each independent variable while holding all else constant. We can identify if either racial identity or national boundaries are significant predictors but cannot directly infer how these identities may interact with one another. For example, we know that, regardless of race, those who perceive more rigid American boundaries in a sense of national identity are more likely to hold restrictive preferences on immigration policies. Yet it is not clear how the role of racial group identity moderates the role of national boundaries. To what extent does racial group identity increase restrictive preferences?

To examine these questions, we focus on our first model for *Decreasing immigration* and calculate predicted probabilities over changes in levels of racial group identification. We used the SPost program created by Long and Freese to calculate the likelihood that a specific type of respondent strongly prefers a decrease in immigration. Figure 3a calculates the predicted

probabilities for a respondent who perceives strong national boundaries.¹⁸ The level of racial group identity alters the probability that a respondent will support decreasing immigration. Whites who hold strong racial group identities are 27% more likely to support decreasing immigration than whites with weak racial group identities. As seen in Table 1, the effect of racial group identity for racial minorities is opposite from that of whites. We also find that the effect of racial group linked fate is even stronger for racial minorities. Blacks who hold strong racial group identities are 26% less likely to support decreasing immigration. Asian Americans who have a strong sense of racial linked fate are 16% less likely to support decreasing immigration. The effect of racial group identity is strongest for Latinos. Those with strong racial group identities are 41% less likely to strongly prefer a decrease in immigration.

[Insert Figures 3a and 3b]

At the same time, the influence of perceptions of national boundaries of American identity on preference for decreasing immigration is strong. Figure 4 calculates the predicted probabilities for respondents who perceive weak American boundaries.¹⁹ If we compare the findings presented in Figure 4 with the data from the previous figures, we can see that perception of strong American boundaries explains much of the variance on the dependent variable. For example, the probability that whites with strong racial identities and who perceive strong national boundaries will strongly support decreasing immigration is 68% while the probability of whites with strong racial identities but who perceive weak national boundaries is only 16%. Thus, as one would expect, the first group boundary employed by white respondents is that between Americans and foreigners. Those who perceive weak national boundaries will be more likely to support more progressive immigration policies.

[Insert Figure 4]

Even among those respondents who do not perceive strong national boundaries, there are still differences influenced by level of racial group identity. The effect of racial group identity is smaller among those who perceive weak national boundaries compared to those who perceive strong national boundaries. As one should expect, those respondents who draw weak national

¹⁸ To calculate these predicted probabilities, we set the respondent to be native born and male. All other factors were held at their means. To ensure that sample sizes were large enough, for the American boundaries variable, strong boundaries includes all respondents who scored in the top third of the distribution. Weak boundaries includes all respondents who scored in the bottom third of the distribution.

¹⁹ Like the calculations performed for strong national boundaries, we also set the respondent to be native born and male. All other factors were held at their means.

American boundaries have a low likelihood of supporting restrictive immigration. Indeed, the probability of supporting increasing immigration is small regardless of one's racial background. Thus, among those who perceive weak national boundaries, the effect of racial identity has little influence a respondent's openness towards immigrants. In contrast, among those who do draw strong national boundaries, race is an important moderator of immigration attitudes.

We also find that there are differences across the four racial groups. For white and Asian American respondents, the differences between strong racial group identifiers and weak racial group identifiers are the smallest. At the same time, the probability that a white or Asian American respondent who perceives weak national boundaries will support decreasing immigration is very low. Alternatively, there is a larger effect of racial group identity among black and Latino respondents who perceive weak national boundaries. For these two groups, recognition of their racial group linked fate is an important factor. Among those who perceive weak American national boundaries, the probability that blacks and Latinos with low racial identities will support decreasing immigration is relatively high, at least 30%. A strong sense of linked fate reduces the probability by 19% for blacks and 25% for Latinos.

One finding that does deviate from our hypotheses is that racial group identity appears to have the weakest effect for the Asian American respondents. Consistent with our expectations, a strong racial group identity does decrease the probability of supporting decreasing immigration among Asian American respondents. As such, those who are clearly aware of their racialized status are more likely to support progressive policies towards immigrants, even when they emphasize strong national boundaries. However, we anticipated that of all four racial groups, white racial group identity would have the weakest effect on immigration policy attitudes. For whites, race and nation generally overlap and so both provide white respondents with the same group lens to view immigrants. Yet we found that the effect of racial linked fate among whites was stronger than among Asian Americans. These results are consistent with the fact that Asian American respondents already hold more open opinions toward immigrants than whites and thus these attitudes were less likely to be influenced by degree of racial group attachment compared to the other three racial groups.

[Insert Figure 5]

The effects of racial group identity are strong, interacting not only with how respondents view American national boundaries but with other important political variables such as party

identification. Indeed the results of the estimations show that party identification is a strong predictor of immigration policy attitudes particularly for whites, Latinos and Asian Americans. The Republican party agenda appears to be clearly connected with restrictive immigration policy in 2006 when this survey was implemented. Nevertheless, when the predicted probability that Republican affiliation will strongly support decreased immigration was calculated, the outcome was strongly influenced by respondents' level of racial group identity (see Figure 5).²⁰ Strong sense of racial group linked fate increased the probability that white Republicans will support decreasing immigration by 20%. Alternatively, strong racial group identity decreases the probability that blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans identified with the Republicans Party will support decreasing immigration.²¹ These results confirm the hypothesis that racial group identity for American minorities moderates the effect of many other individual-level factors on immigration policy attitudes.²²

Identifying the Constraints of Race on Public Opinion

As a structural feature, race is not simply a characteristic used to describe one's identity but should rather be understood as a powerful social force which presents opportunities and constraints afforded to an individual's agency. Each racial category is imbued with particular meanings and so is burdened with particular stereotypes which govern the expectations of others. So how an individual is treated in American society is strongly dictated by that racial category in which she is classified. In this paper, we sought to empirically demonstrate *how* race structures individual attitudes on public opinion by identifying and comparing those relevant antecedents which predict an individual's position on immigration across racial groups. Indeed, by examining each racial group separately, we find that there are distinct factors which predict immigration attitudes for each racial group. This tells us that individuals do not all form their opinions about immigration out of the same processes.

The analysis in this paper showed that the type of analytical strategy used to analyze public opinion must be informed by the type of research question asked. If a scholar intends to

²⁰ To calculate these probabilities, we also set the respondent to be native born and male. All other factors were held at their means. For this analysis, we recoded party identification into a categorical variable: Democrat, Independent and Republican. Each of these three categories includes both strong partisans and leaners.

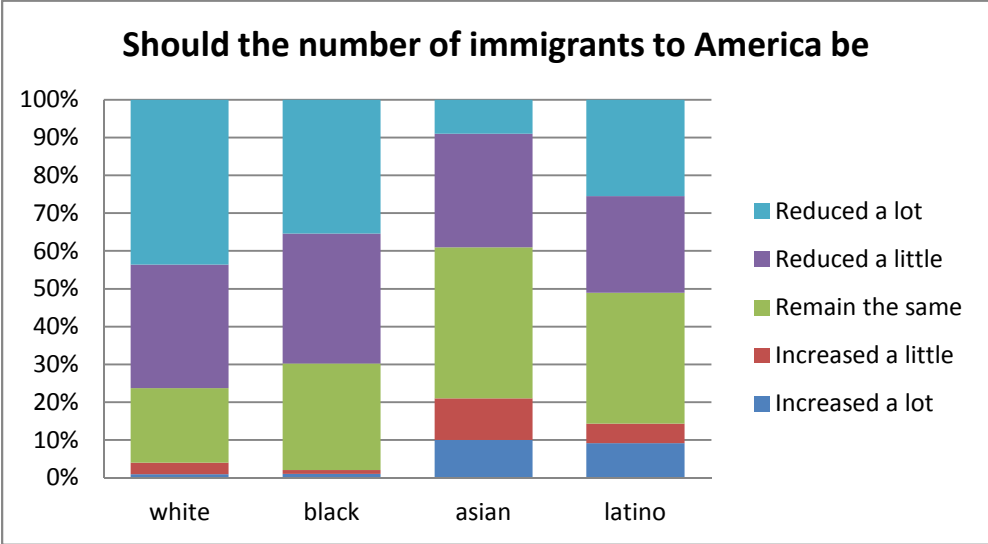
²¹ Because the total number of black Republicans is less than 30 respondents, the predicted probabilities for the black respondents is statistically insignificant.

²² This is also the case for Democrats. See Appendix B for results.

simply identify whether race alone has an impact on public opinion, then the appropriate strategy is to use the control variables approach. This approach is useful because it invalidates a claim that other individual-level characteristics, in particular class, explains racial group differences in attitudes and behavior. However, the control variables approach cannot explain *why* race matters unless that strategy is informed by other historically grounded perspectives. In contrast, if we want to understand how a certain individual-level factor, take education, influence the formation of public opinion, we must use a comparative relational analysis. Scholars must take into account the possibility that race is a moderating variable which will alter the direction and strength of the relationship between an independent and dependent variable.

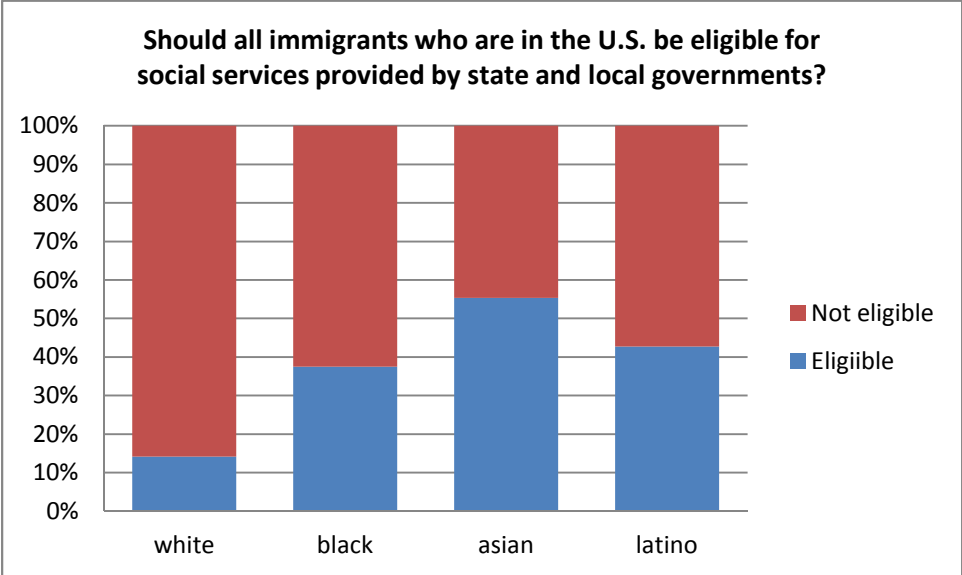
Finally, we demonstrate that models which seek to describe the formation of immigration attitudes have omitted an important factor: awareness of the racial hierarchy. In this analysis, we used the linked fate variable which captures an individual's awareness of both her racial status and the influence of racial status on individual life chances. This variable is distinct from simply racial group identification as it does not only imply a sense of group identity but also awareness of the implications of that identity. Racial status designates where a person is ranked on the racial hierarchy. Those at the top of the hierarchy will be more willing to exclude others who are not perceived as desirable or prototypical members in order to uphold the status quo. In contrast, those at the bottom of the hierarchy are more aware of those ascriptive characteristics which are used to define a prototypical member. Those at the bottom also develop a racial group consciousness that is strongly related to perceptions of discrimination and marginalization. As a result, members of low-status groups are less exclusive in their attitudes. These individuals who thus have a strong sense of their racial position will thus be more open to newcomers.

Figure 1: Attitudes about Increasing Immigration by Race and Ethnicity



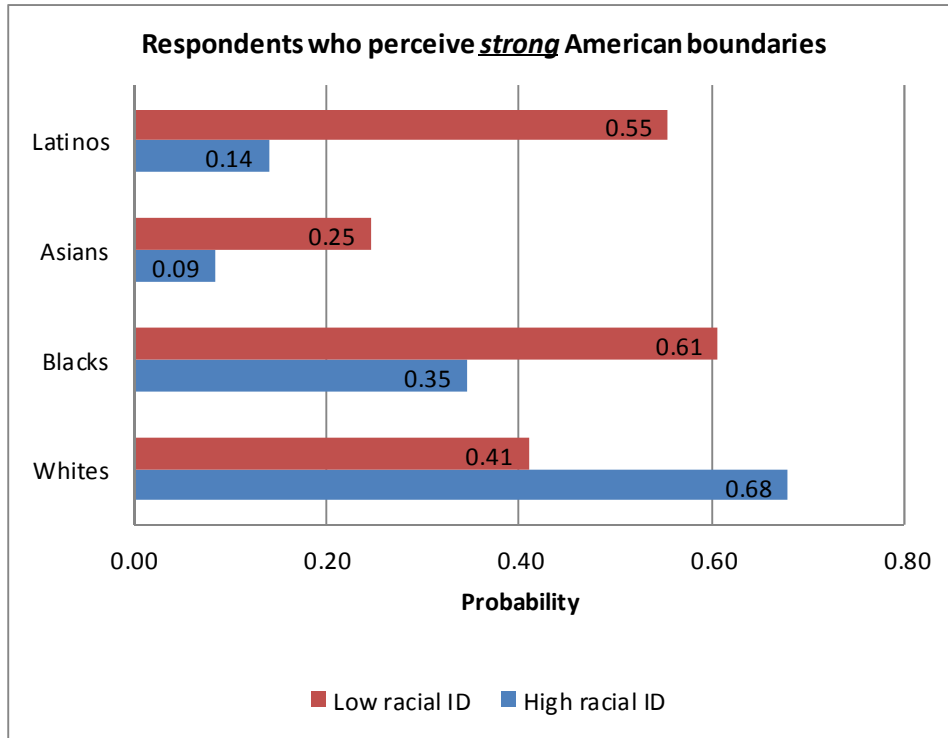
Source: 2006 Faces of Immigration Study

Figure 2: Attitudes about Immigrant Eligibility for Social Services by Race and Ethnicity



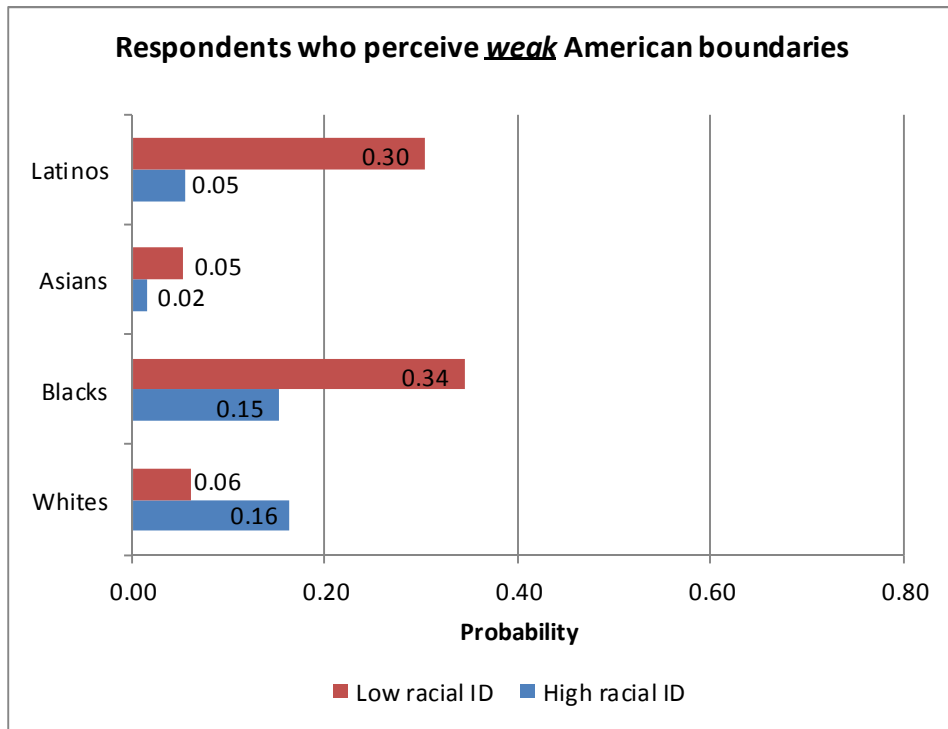
Source: 2006 Faces of Immigration Study

Figure 3a. Predicted Probabilities for Strong Preference for Decreasing Immigration



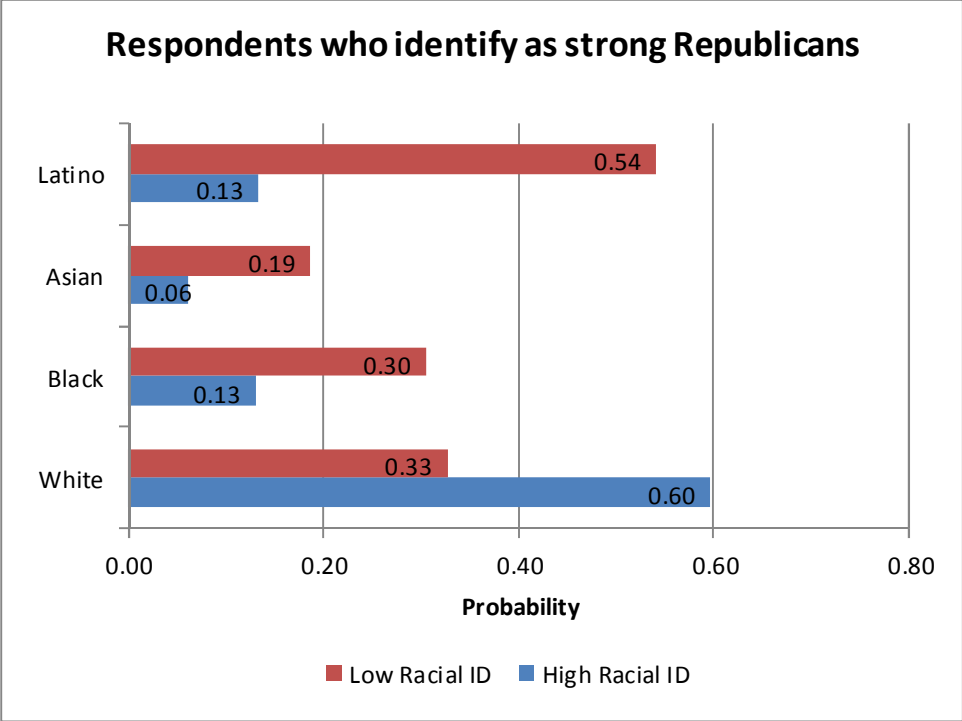
From 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey

Figure 3b.



From 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey

Figure 4. Predicted Probabilities for Decreasing Immigration



From 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey

Table 1. Factors Predicting Preference for Decreasing Immigration

	White	Black	Asian	Latino
	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	.09 (.39)	.14 (.40)	1.3 (.49)***	1.1 (.40)***
Income	-.60 (.46)	.63 (.48)	1.0 (.46)**	.12 (.44)
Female	.05 (.20)	-.09 (.19)	.64 (.21)***	-.04 (.20)
Foreign born	-1.1 (.49)**	-2.0 (.56)***	-.64 (.22)***	-.91 (.26)***
<i>Sophistication and Attention</i>				
Education	-.52 (.37)	.24 (.42)	-1.1 (.45)**	-.63 (.36)*
Attention to Media	.03 (.40)	-.34 (.38)	.03 (.43)	-.15 (.38)
<i>Politics</i>				
Party ID (Republican)	.51 (.28)*	-1.2 (.46)**	.68 (.33)**	.52 (.30)*
<i>Context</i>				
Diverse neighborhood	.50 (.24)**	-.01 (.20)	-.41 (.21)*	-.02 (.21)
Immigration state	-.05 (.22)	.11 (.21)	-.38 (.21)*	.20 (.20)
<i>Attitudes and Personality</i>				
Economic outlook	.38 (.32)	-.13 (.32)	.30 (.35)	.05 (.31)
Authoritarianism	.70 (.37)*	.17 (.34)	.14 (.41)	.43 (.36)
<i>Group boundaries</i>				
Linked fate	1.1 (.43)**	-1.1 (.38)***	-1.2 (.55)**	-2.0 (.43)***
Amer boundary	2.4 (.41)***	1.1 (.37)***	1.7 (.39)***	1.0 (.36)***
<hr/>				
N	401	386	349	376
Log Likelihood	105.81	41.14	87.97	82.66
Percent Predict Corr	.51	.43	.42	.44
Prop Reduct of Error	.16	.15	.03	.15

* p< 0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

From 2006 Face of Immigration Survey. Results calculated using ordered logit analysis.

Table 2. Factors Predicting Preference for Immigrant Ineligibility for Social Services

	White	Black	Asian	Latino
	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	1.1 (.60)*	.14 (.48)	1.2 (.56)**	1.5 (.54)***
Income	-.40 (.66)	2.3 (.59)***	.13 (.53)	.33 (.59)
Female	-.22 (.28)	-.11 (.24)	.45 (.24)*	-.29 (.27)
Foreign born	-.68 (.62)	-.05 (.70)	-.35 (.25)	-1.1 (.31)***
<i>Sophistication and Attention</i>				
Education	-.64 (.53)	-.88 (.51)*	.04 (.51)	-1.1 (.47)**
Attention to Media	.54 (.56)	-.11 (.43)	.20 (.49)	-.81 (.49)*
<i>Politics</i>				
Party ID (Republican)	1.5 (.46)***	-.49 (.55)	1.1 (.38)***	1.8 (.43)***
<i>Context</i>				
Diverse neighborhood	.15 (.34)	.31 (.24)	-.82 (.25)***	.37 (.28)
Immigration state	-.04 (.31)	.05 (.25)	-.06 (.24)	.30 (.27)
<i>Attitudes and Personality</i>				
Economic outlook	-.61 (.45)	.30 (.37)	-.06 (.38)	-.13 (.39)
Authoritarianism	-.25 (.55)	-.44 (.40)	-.24 (.47)	.18 (.47)
<i>Group boundaries</i>				
Linked fate	1.0 (.61)*	-.31 (.44)	-.67 (.60)	-1.6 (.51)***
Amer boundary	1.8 (.57)***	.52 (.43)	.76 (.43)*	1.2 (.46)***
Constant	-.46 (.77)	.37 (.61)	-.91 (.75)	.12 (.70)
<hr/>				
N	398	385	346	372
Log Likelihood	56.12	24.19	37.43	84.59
Percent Predict Corr	.82	.70	.64	.76
Prop Reduct of Error	.06	.071	.26	.23

* p< 0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

From 2006 Face of Immigration Survey. Results calculated using logit analysis.

Table 3. Factors Predicting Support for English Only Amendment

	White	Black	Asian	Latino
	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)	β (s.e.)
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	.27 (.53)	.44 (.47)	.40 (.56)	.67 (.44)
Income	-.09 (.58)	.90 (.56)	-.33 (.51)	.35 (.48)
Female	.22 (.25)	.04 (.23)	.52 (.24)**	.02 (.22)
Foreign born	-.51 (.58)	-1.1 (.60)*	.36 (.24)	-.03 (.27)
<i>Sophistication and Attention</i>				
Education	-1.5 (.46)***	-.19 (.50)	-.42 (.51)	-1.1 (.38)***
Attention to Media	1.0 (.50)**	.53 (.43)	-.04 (.49)	-.58 (.41)
<i>Politics</i>				
Party ID (Republican)	1.0 (.37)***	-.29 (.51)	1.6 (.39)***	1.5 (.35)***
<i>Context</i>				
Diverse neighborhood	-.13 (.28)	.40 (.24)*	-.04 (.24)	-.01 (.23)
Immigration state	.26 (.28)	.72 (.26)***	-.03 (.23)	.06 (.22)
<i>Attitudes and Personality</i>				
Economic outlook	.02 (.40)	.51 (.38)	.26 (.37)	-.03 (.33)
Authoritarianism	.95 (.47)**	.32 (.40)	2.2 (.47)***	1.3 (.40)***
<i>Group boundaries</i>				
Linked fate	1.5 (.56)***	1.2 (.42)***	.70 (.60)	-1.3 (.45)***
Amer boundary	2.6 (.48)***	1.3 (.40)***	1.5 (.42)***	1.6 (.39)***
N	401	387	350	374
Log Likelihood	116.74	56.12	87.47	92.34
Percent Predict Corr	.70	.64	.59	.60
Prop Reduct of Error	-.01	.00	.06	.08

* p< 0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

From 2006 Face of Immigration Survey. Results calculated using ordered logit analysis.

Appendix A. Question Wording for Survey Measures

Decrease Immigration

Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be: Increased a lot

- a) Increased a lot
- b) Increased a little
- c) Remain the same as it is
- d) Reduced a little
- e) Reduced a lot

Social Services:

Should all immigrants who are in the U.S. be eligible for social services provided by state and local governments?

- a) Eligible
- b) Not eligible

English only:

Would you support or oppose a constitutional amendment to make English the nation's official language?

- a) Strongly oppose
- b) Somewhat oppose
- c) Somewhat support
- d) Strongly support

Economic Outlook:

Looking ahead, do you think that two years from now you will be better off financially, worse off, or just about the same as now?

- a) Better off
- b) About the same
- c) Worse off

Linked fate: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "as things get better for [respondent's racial group] in general, things get better for me."

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Agree
- d) Strongly agree

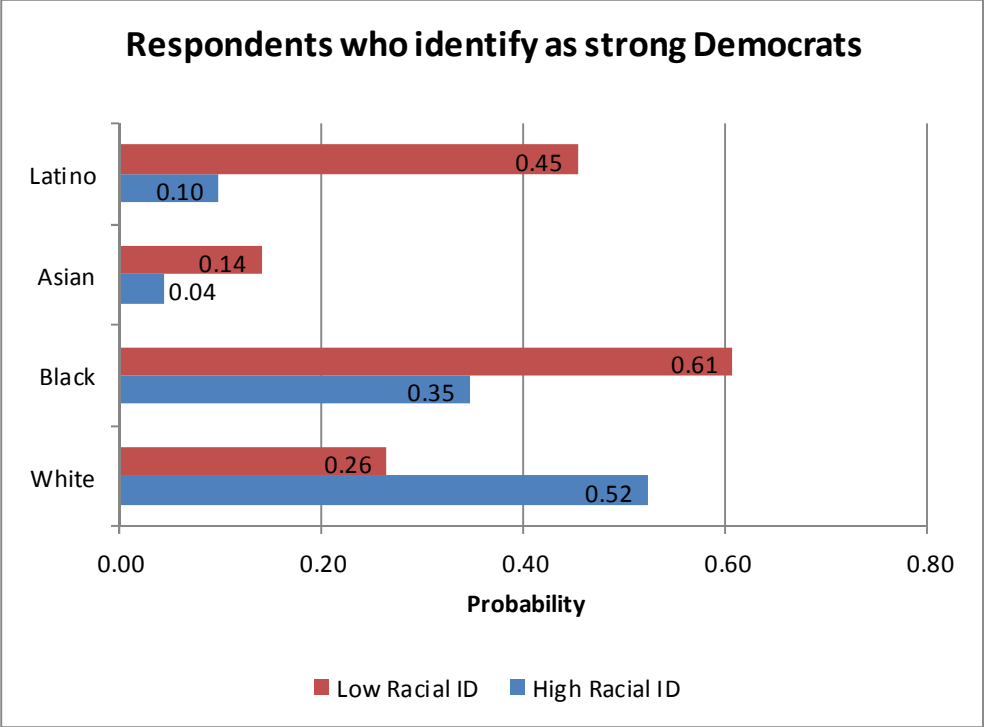
American boundary: How important do you think each of the following is for being truly American? a) To have been born in America; b) To have American citizenship; c) To have lived in America for most of one's life; d) To be able to speak English; e) To be a Christian; f) To respect America's political institutions and laws. Index variable combining all characteristics

- a) Very important
- b) Somewhat important
- c) Not very important
- d) Not at all important

Authoritarianism: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “It is better to live in an orderly society in which the laws are vigorously enforced than to give people too much freedom”

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Agree
- d) Strongly agree

Appendix B. Additional Tables



Distributions on Immigration Policy Questions and Identity Variables in the 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey

Decrease Immigration				
	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Latinos
Increased a lot	2%	3%	6%	8%
Increased a little	33%	2%	14%	5%
Remain the same as it is	24%	31%	39%	35%
Reduced a little	32%	32%	29%	25%
Reduced a lot	39%	32%	12%	27%
Social Services				
	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Latinos
Eligible	20%	38%	54%	37%
Not eligible	80%	62%	46%	63%
English Only				
	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Latinos
Strongly oppose	6%	3%	7%	10%
Somewhat oppose	7%	13%	8%	8%
Somewhat support	16%	23%	26%	26%
Strongly support	70%	60%	58%	57%
Linked fate				
	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Latinos
Strongly disagree	8%	5%	4%	9%
Disagree	40%	21%	20%	42%
Agree	45%	47%	64%	66%
Strongly agree	7%	27%	13%	13%
American boundary (rescaled)				
	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Latinos
Low	2%	4%	5%	6%
Medium	39%	29%	49%	38%
High	60%	67%	46%	57%
Mean on raw scale (SD in parenthesis)	.73 (.18)	.77 (.19)	.65 (.17)	.71 (.19)

Source: 2006 Faces of Immigration Survey. Results are weighted to reflect the national population