Is Immigration a Racial Issue? Anglo Attitudes on Immigration Policies in a Border County*

John W. Ayers, *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*

C. Richard Hofstetter, *San Diego State University*

Keith Schnakenberg, *Washington University in St. Louis*

Bohdan Kolody, *San Diego State University*

Objective. This study assesses the association between Anglo aversion to Latinos, physical proximity to Latinos, and contact with ethnic minorities, with expressed preferences for immigration policies. *Methods.* Data were drawn from a telephone survey of San Diego County, California, residents ($N = 549$ Anglos) using random-digit-dial procedures during 2005–2006 that was conducted by closely supervised professional interviewers. Descriptive reports, tau-b correlations, and multivariate logistic regressions were used for analysis. *Results.* Aversion to Latinos, as indicated by an adaptation of the Bogardus social distance scale, was related to more restrictionist attitudes about legal and Mexican immigration. Associations increased when respondents were primed to consider Mexican immigration, although aversion to Latinos was not related to attitudes about amnesty for undocumented persons. Contrary to some previous findings, proximity to Latino populations increased opposition to legal immigration and amnesty. Reported minority contact had minimal impact but increased support for amnesty. *Conclusions.* Attitudes about immigration may be motivated more by racial resentments than other considerations. Future research should identify racial factors that influence Anglo policy positions beyond the classic Anglo/African division that has dominated this research arena.

This study evaluated the effects of racial resentments, racial contexts, and minority contact on Anglo immigration policy preferences. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 drastically altered immigration patterns in the United States. Today, an estimated 33 million U.S. residents are foreign

born, most of which share Latino minority status (CBO, 2004). About 13.4 percent of the U.S. population is Latino, displacing African Americans as the second largest minority (Gay, 2006). The change from predominantly western European to predominantly Latino, and other minority, immigration may have revived nativism (Huntington, 2004), and may be partially motivated by racial resentments.

For instance, Colorado's Democratic Senator Ken Salazar stated, "I have no doubt that some of those involved in the [immigration] debate have their position based on fear and perhaps racism because of what's happening demographically in the country" (Calabresi, 2006). Similarly, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina explicitly stated "there's racism in this [immigration] debate" (Zeleny, 2007). Although political elites agree that racism is a possible factor influencing immigration preferences, empirical investigations have yet to fully document the role of racism in public opinion on immigration. Given the well-known importance of public opinion in policy formation (Page and Shapiro, 1992), identifying the racialized determinants of such beliefs is consequential.

Racial attitudes among Anglos have been associated with opposition to busing, affirmative action, welfare spending, and tax increases (Sears et al., 1997). This suggests that racial views may influence attitudes about immigration policy, particularly when immigrant groups differ by race from the host nation's dominant demography (Hood and Morris, 1997).

Loveman and Hofstetter (1984a, 1984b) argued that Latinos, especially Mexicans, were considered undesirable in the Southwest in comparison to European immigrants. In addition, the authors claimed that immigration policy preferences were largely driven by the ethnic/racial background of the most recent migrant group. More recently, Burns and Gimpel (2000) found that negative stereotypes of African Americans and Latinos were negatively associated with attitudes about general immigration allowance. Each of these suggests that a part of immigration policy preferences is a result of racist resentments held about incoming migrants. However, studies have failed to include robust measures of prejudice and have relied largely on secondary analysis of national data with limited measures not designed for their purposes.

Is immigration a racial issue? We propose a theory arguing that immigration policy preferences are strongly influenced by racial resentment toward the racial groups of incoming immigrants. Hypotheses about how racial resentment is manifested in Anglo immigration preferences are developed and evaluated using data from a San Diego County community study. Findings suggest that in the hearts and minds of some, immigration *is* a racial issue.

Theories of Immigration Attitudes

According to Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005), the primary impacts of immigration are on U.S. economic conditions and demography. Immigrants

generally compete in the lower job markets, are younger, poorer, less well educated, more likely to produce large families, and often share a minority status. These factors are also viewed as the principal motivations for citizen attitudes about immigration. Two major theories explaining citizen attitudes on immigration can be distinguished: (1) calculation of tangible benefits and (2) commitment to specific ideologies, like racial prejudice.

According to the tangible benefit camp, economic impacts influence immigration attitudes as citizens evaluate objective costs and benefits with regard to both societal and individual concerns (Citrin et al., 1997). Persons with lower social and economic status are assumed to be economically threatened by immigrants. These persons may compete with immigrants for jobs and as a result they develop negative attitudes concerning immigration. However, economic impacts are difficult to assess empirically. The threat posed by immigrants may exist only for specific subgroups, such as less well educated African Americans, and these groups are rarely measured in sufficient numbers to support extensive analysis (Citrin et al., 1997).

In contrast, the ideological model suggests that attitudes about immigration are driven by racism, among other political and social beliefs. As a result of immigrants' minority status, public attention may focus on the race/ethnicity of migrants and thereby elicit responses related to prejudices. Certain conditions are more likely to provide the opportunity to express racially motivated attitudes when groups are perceived as "violating cherished values," particularly those associated with U.S. civil Protestantism (Sniderman et al., 1991:424). Thus, when political issues such as immigration become intertwined with race, people are able to engage in racial/ethnic discrimination without being socially reprimanded (Sniderman et al., 1991; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1996; Sears, 1988).

A recent experimental study found that subjects were much more willing to accept negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants than of Canadian immigrants. The authors noted that "sharing a phenotype (Latino) with a stigmatized other (illegal Mexican immigrants) renders one more susceptible to prejudice and discrimination" (Short and Magana, 2002:703). This suggests that attitudes about immigration may partially be a reflection of citizens' racial resentments, specifically Latino aversion. These expectations lead to the following hypothesis about Latino aversion and immigration policy preferences.

H$_1$: *Anglos who report aversion to Latinos will harbor more restrictive attitudes on immigration.*

Contextual interaction hypotheses focus on a less specific mechanism: simply living near target groups. Early studies assumed that contact with minorities mitigated prejudice, since prejudices are based on easily falsified beliefs (Allport, 1954). In addition to a more accurate perception of reality, contact may introduce interdependence, common goals, and equal status.

On the other hand, realistic group conflict theory posits that increased proximity may amplify ideological and material competition, which in turn accentuates divisions (LeVine and Campbell, 1972). Empirical support for either view is inconsistent. Studies have shown that contextual interaction has increased prejudice (Allport, 1954), diminished prejudice (Hood and Morris, 1997), made no change (Welch and Sigelman, 2000), or had mixed effects (Taylor, 1998).

Contextual indicators have also been associated with attitudes about public policy, most likely because geographic proximity increases the likelihood of contact with benefiting groups. Hood and Morris (1997) reported that living in counties with concentrations of Latinos and Asians was associated with more liberal stances on immigration questions among Anglo respondents. A later study reported that living near Latinos at the county level reduced support for California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187 (Hood and Morris, 2000). However, county-level aggregation may allow for conclusions in the opposite direction. Stein, Post, and Riden (2000) using data from Texas found that Latino context measured at the county level was negatively associated with increased support for immigration. However, the high level of aggregation (counties) that these studies used did not permit precise estimates of actual segregation (Baybeck, 2006). In San Diego County, California, for instance, these procedures could indicate that a respondent living in a predominantly white and a respondent living in a predominantly Latino community had the same proximity to Latinos. It may be that measures of context at subcounty levels will reduce random measurement error and provide consistent results. Thus, the impact of social context on immigration preferences warrants more precise analysis. These expectations lead to the following hypothesis about Latino subcounty context and immigration policy preferences.

> H_2: *Anglos living in neighborhoods with larger proportions of Latinos will harbor more restrictive attitudes on immigration.*

It is also likely that reported contact is critical for immigration attitudes. McLaren (2003) concluded that reported individual contact with minorities reduced the willingness to deport immigrants. This expectation leads to the following hypothesis about minority contact and immigration policy preferences.

> H_3: *Anglos who interact more frequently with minorities will harbor less restrictive attitudes on immigration.*

The contribution of this study is that racial attitudes matter for immigration policy positions. Beyond the influence of Latino aversion, the impact of Latino context and minority contact are considered where previous studies have included only one or two of these factors, often based on high levels of aggregation in the case of context.

Method

Hypotheses are tested using data from a larger 2005–2006 study of racial attitudes and economic behaviors among San Diego County adults (18 years of age and older) conducted by Social Science Research Laboratory at San Diego State University using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facilities from July 7, 2005, to January 27, 2006 ($N = 1,929$). Interviews were conducted by professional interviewers and stratified by racial/ethnic self-identification using random-digit-dial procedures. This study included 549 self-identified Anglos. The AAPOR response rate for this study was 21 percent, the cooperation rate was 58 percent, and the refusal rate was 17 percent. Data were weighted to represent San Diego County demographic characteristics for Anglos based on current U.S. Census estimates. All analyses were computed using weighted data but no significant differences appeared in conclusions when analyses were replicated using unweighted values. All study procedures and analysis were approved by the Institutional Review Board of San Diego State University.

The Setting

San Diego provides a useful setting to evaluate the role of racial motivation for immigration policy preferences. San Diego County has a population of more than 3 million persons (about 1.3 million in the city) situated on the U.S.-Mexico border. About 26.7 percent of residents are of Latino origin, somewhat less than the California figure of 32.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It is an affluent area with a rich media environment and highly diverse population. Although California is characterized by staunch liberalism in the coastal cities, San Diego County is characterized by political moderation. The two San Diego-Tijuana border crossing points are the busiest in the world so that a great deal of interaction across borders occurs on a daily basis (Kiy and Kada, 2004). All this provides a study setting in which our hypotheses can be evaluated conservatively, as a priori expectations are that San Diego residents are less Latino averse, have had more minority contact, and had longer periods of integration than southeastern or northern U.S. county residents. Results are not assumed to be an effect of new phenomena, for example, recent contact with Latinos, but as indicators of a more consistent trend of behaviors and beliefs.

Generalization of our descriptive reports to other regions should be done with caution, as anti-immigration preferences may be greater on the border (Branton et al., 2007) and in California (Hood and Morris, 1997, 2000; Alvarez and Butterfield, 2000). It should be noted that increased anti-immigration preferences, if true, do not discount the importance of the underlying correlations among variables. Correlations among measures of racial resentment and immigrant policy should be generalizable to larger populations. The

theory suggests that racists in Connecticut or California prefer lower levels of immigration if their prejudice is targeted at immigrant ethnic groups.

Dependent Variables

Three items were used to assess attitudes about immigration policy. Attitude about legal immigration was measured by responses to: "Currently, U.S. immigration policies allow a certain number of people from different groups to enter the United States each year; Overall, do you think the U.S. should … the number of people allowed to immigrate here legally." Responses were coded 1 "decrease … ," 2 "maintain the current … ," and 3 "increase … ." Attitude about Mexican immigration was measured by responses to: "In general, should the number of people allowed to immigrate into the U.S. from each of the following geographic regions be increased, decreased, or remain the same? … Mexico." Responses of "decrease" were coded 1, "remain the same" coded 2, and "increase" coded 3. Using measures of legal and Mexican immigration allows for comparison of ethnic effects when respondents were primed to consider legal immigration versus when respondents are primed to consider ethnic attitudes. Attitude about amnesty was measured by responses to: "As you may know, in 1986 the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which granted amnesty to nearly two million persons who had lived continuously in this country for four or more years without proper documentation. This amnesty law allowed these immigrants to remain here as permanent residents and to apply for U.S. citizenship. At this time, do you think repeating this amnesty program would be a … good thing?" Responses were coded 0 for bad and 1 for good.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables evaluate respondents' aversion to Latinos (attitude about Latinos), Latino context (concentration in the same Census tract), and reported contact with minorities.

Following Parrillo and Donoghue (2005), aversion to Latinos was measured by an adaptation of the Bogardus social distance scale. The Bogardus scale in its original form (see Bogardus, 1922) is a composite index to detect "racial" attitudes based on responses that evaluate social distance from racial groups. Responses to: "Would you be comfortable having a Latino person as … a family member through marriage … a close personal friend … a co-worker or classmate … a next-door neighbor … or a resident of San Diego County?" were recorded and any "no" response was assumed to indicate aversion to Latinos. About 6 percent did not want a Latino family member, 0.9 percent a close personal friend, 1.8 percent a co-worker or classmate, 0.9 percent a neighbor, and 0.9 percent a San Diego County resident. Due to the limited number of respondents reporting aversive at-

titudes (and resultant skewness), a dummy variable was used to indicate Latino aversion, coded 1 for any aversion and 0 for no reported aversion. About 10.5 percent of Anglos reported some form of aversion to Latinos. According to Parrillo and Donoghue (2005), expression of Latino aversion measured by the Bogardus scale can be interpreted as overt racism.

Latino context was measured by the percent of Latino residents within each respondent's Census tract at the time of the interview using current population estimates (Census, 2000). Mean Latino context was 0.21 (S = 0.15), with values ranging from 0.02 to 0.80. Given the strong right skew, a natural log transformation was applied for analysis. About 11 percent of respondents' Census tracts could not be coded due to failure to report residential addresses or errors when recording addresses and were deleted from the analysis.

Following McLaren (2003), minority contact summarizes the actual interaction respondents reported with ethnic persons, measured by responses to: "Are your close friends ... At the social gatherings you attend, are the people ... Are the people you visit and who visit you ... If you could choose your children's friends, would you want them to be ... all from the same ethnic group as you [coded 1], more from the same ethnic group as you than from other ethnic groups [coded 2], both equally [coded 3], more from other ethnic groups than from your own ethnic group [coded 4], or all from other ethnic groups [coded 5]?" A composite scale was computed by first standardizing (mean = 0.0, S = 1.0) items so that each item in the composite weighed the same in the final index and then summing the scores. The resulting scale mean was 0.052, standard deviation 2.34 (Cronbach's α = 0.88).

Covariates

Covariates included self-reports of personal financial situation, family income, age, education, gender, and political ideology. Personal economic situation, a standard measure for economic threat (Citrin et al., 1997), was measured by responses to: "In terms of your personal economic situation, would you say that it has ... improved over the last 12 months, remained about the same, or gotten worse over the last 12 months?" About 33.9 percent reported improvement in financial well-being, 47.4 percent no change, and 18.7 percent stated deterioration in personal financial well-being.

Political ideology was measured by responses to: "Would you consider yourself to be politically ... conservative, moderate or middle-of-the-road, or liberal?" coded from a low (liberal) to high (conservative). About 29.7 percent reported being liberal, 39.7 percent moderate, 27.5 percent conservative, 0.8 percent other, and 3.1 percent not sure. Total family income, age, education, and gender were measured using self-reports. Mean family income was about $57,415 (S = $30,495) and education 15.1 years (S = 1.9). Mean age was 50.9 years (S = 15.9) and about 44.9 percent of the sample was male.

Findings

About 22.0 percent of Anglos reported a preference for increased legal immigration, 26.8 percent a preference for decreased levels, and 51.1 percent a preference for current levels of legal immigration. Opposition to immigration increased slightly when respondents were prompted to consider Mexican immigration specifically, as reported in Table 1.

Anglos appear to be opposed to contemporary amnesty policies similar to the 1986 law. About 42.5 percent considered amnesty a "good thing" compared to 57.5 percent contending amnesty is a "bad thing." On the whole, Anglo respondents were unwilling to accept amnesty as a solution to recent undocumented immigration.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2 displays the Kendall's tau-b correlation matrix among immigration policy preferences and predictor variables. General attitudes about legal immigration and specific attitudes about Mexican immigration were strongly associated (tau-b = 0.712), suggesting that respondents did not distinguish between general and specifically Latino immigration. It may be that respondents' "thought Mexican" when evaluating immigration. Attitudes about immigration were associated with attitudes about amnesty, but

TABLE 1

Immigration Policy Preferences Among Anglos, 2005–2006[a]

	Percent
Legal Immigration	
Decrease	26.8%
Maintain	51.1
Increase	22.0
	(436)
Mexican Immigration	
Decrease	29.9%
Maintain	49.7
Increase	20.4
	(504)
Amnesty	
"Bad thing"	57.5%
"Good thing"	42.5
	(502)

[a]Numbers in cells are calculated percentages of self-reported attitude with totals in parentheses for increasing, maintaining current levels, or decreasing legal and Mexican immigration; and repeating the 1986 amnesty program is a "good thing" or a "bad thing." List-wise deletion used for analysis.

TABLE 2

Immigration Policy Preferences Correlation Matrix Among Anglos, 2005–2006[a]

Indicator	LI	MI	AM	LA	LC	MC	EE	PI	ED	IN	AG
Legal immigration											
Mexican immigration	0.712**										
Amnesty	0.401**	0.412**									
Latino aversion	−0.171**	−0.222**	−0.151**								
Latino context	−0.132**	−0.125**	−0.101**	0.011							
Minority contact	0.014	−0.035	0.097*	−0.087*	0.164**						
Economic evaluation	−0.086*	−0.127**	−0.052	0.022	0.008	−0.036					
Political ideology	−0.188**	−0.173**	−0.186**	0.083*	0.052	−0.073*	−.075				
Education	0.246**	0.190**	0.091*	0.007	−0.222**	−0.163**	.010	−0.095*			
Income	0.131**	0.107**	−0.021	−0.027	−0.129**	−0.008	−.148***	0.027	0.239**		
Age	0.020	0.042	0.001	0.093**	0.030	−0.109**	.103***	0.166**	0.088**	−0.003	
Male	0.089	0.002	−0.033	0.056	−0.040	0.014	−.095*	0.049	0.106**	0.107**	−0.056

[a]Numbers in cells are Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficients and two-tailed probabilities.

* = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$. Pair-wise deletion used for analysis.

associations were weaker than those between legal and Mexican immigration (tau-b = 0.401 and 0.412).

Latino aversion was strongly associated with decreased levels of legal and Mexican immigration, and viewing amnesty as a bad thing. Similarly, Latino social context was associated with negative policy preferences for immigration. Latino aversion and context were among the strongest associations involving immigration policy preferences. Reported minority contact was inconsistently associated with immigration policies, but was associated with pro-amnesty preferences. In part this analysis demonstrated that support for immigration and positions on amnesty differ in their association with predictors.

Aversive attitudes may be a result of symbolic politics (Sears et al., 1980), social dominance (Sidanius, 1993), or biological processes (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1996). Some expectations specific to Latino aversion (Gay, 2006; Morris and Gimpel, 2007) suggest that economic evaluations of personal finances and aversion to Latinos should be associated; however, the data in this study do not support this assumption (tau-b = -0.052, $p > 0.10$). This is consistent with theoretical expectations that racial attitudes are a result of ideological development rather than a result of contemporary events. Aversion to Latinos appeared to be more common among older respondents and conservatives. Aversion was modestly, but significantly, associated with decreased minority contact.

Multivariate Analyses

Tests of hypotheses rest on the partial associations of predictors once social and attitudinal variables have been controlled. Analyses were computed using multivariate ordinal and binary logistic regression procedures to control for possible confounds. Results of the analysis are detailed in Table 3. Tests of collinearity were conducted since a series of possibly related predictors were included in each regression equation. Tolerances ranged from 0.80 to 0.97 with the lowest tolerances computed for education (0.80), income (0.85), and age (0.87). The standard errors for these variables were not excessively high, which suggested that multicollinearity was not a major problem in the analyses. Each column in Table 3 represents a regression on a distinct policy preference.

Attitudes About Legal Immigration

Attitude about legal immigration (coded decrease 1, maintain 2, and increase 3) was regressed on the respondent's aversion to Latinos, context, and minority contact with control variables. Results are reported in Column 1 of Table 3.

TABLE 3

Ordered and Binary Logistic Regressions of Immigration Policy Preferences on Respondents' Latino Aversion and Selected Predictors Among Anglos, 2005–2006[a]

Predictor	Legal Immigration	Mexican Immigration	Amnesty
Latino aversion	− 0.955**	− 1.734**	− 0.549
	(0.357)	(0.355)	(0.403)
Latino context	− 1.671[#]	− 1.332	− 2.359*
	(0.890)	(0.855)	(0.973)
Minority contact	0.057	− 0.021	0.084[#]
	(0.043)	(0.039)	(0.044)
Economic evaluation	− 0.202	− 0.319*	− 0.233
	(0.147)	(0.141)	(0.158)
Political ideology	− 0.535**	− 0.547**	− 0.707**
	(0.155)	(0.145)	(0.163)
Education	0.443**	0.249*	0.290*
	(0.127)	(0.117)	(0.131)
Income	− 0.026	0.025	− 0.128[#]
	(0.069)	(0.063)	(0.070)
Age	0.003	0.011[#]	0.008
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Male	0.176	0.019	− 0.345
	(0.215)	(0.199)	(0.225)
Cutpoint 1	− 1.701	− 1.761	1.470
Cutpoint 2	0.819	0.682	
Chi-square	52.138	60.649	48.567
Cox & Snell R^2	0.140	0.140	0.116
N	347	402	392

[a]Numbers in cells are ordered (legal and Mexican immigration) and binary logistic (amnesty) regression coefficients, associated standard errors, and two-tailed probabilities.
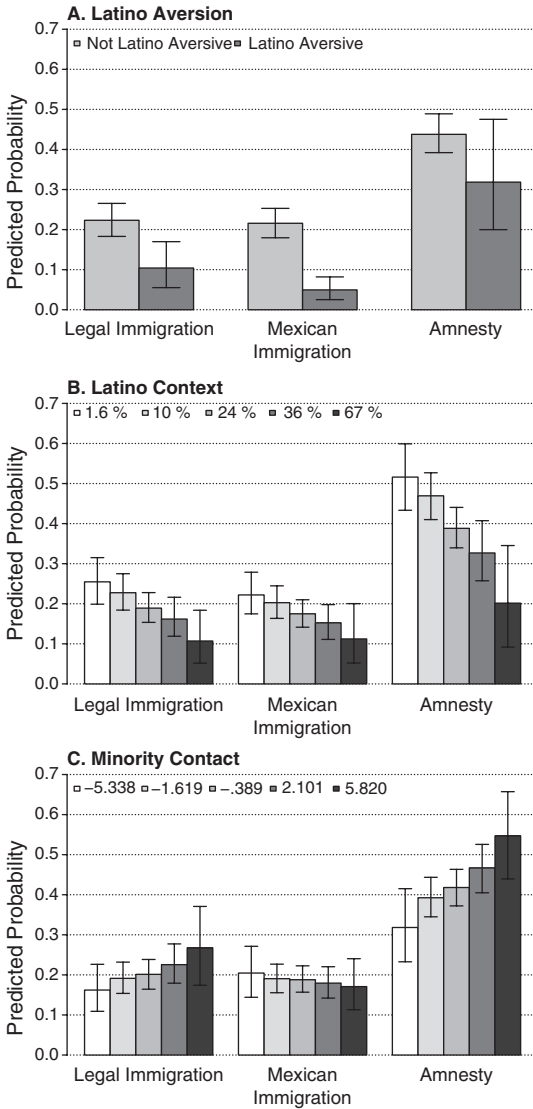
[#]$p < 0.10$; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$.

NOTE: Legal and Mexican immigration are derived from policy preferences for increased (3), current levels (2), or decreased immigration (1). Amnesty is derived from preferences for repeating the 1986 amnesty program, a good thing (1) or bad thing (0). List-wise deletion was used for analysis.

Aversion to Latinos significantly decreased support for legal immigration (B = − 0.955, $p < 0.01$). As displayed in Panel A of Figure 1, the probability of a nonaverse respondent preferring increased legal immigration was 23.3 percent (95 percent CI: 0.186, 0.264) compared to 10.3 percent (95 percent CI: 0.053, 0.171) for Latino-averse respondents, a large difference of 13 percent for the otherwise average respondent.[1] Living in neighborhoods

[1]To clarify the influence of the principal variables, predicted probabilities for favoring pro-immigration policies were calculated for varying levels of Latino aversion, context, and minority contact when all other predictors in the regression equations were set to their means. Probabilities were simulated following Imai, King, and Lau (2007a, 2007b). Values for aversion and unaversive respondents for Latino aversion and the quartile range of values for Latino context and minority contact were used to illustrate the influence of predictor vari-

FIGURE 1

Predicted Probability for Favoring Pro-Immigration Policies by Latino Aversion, Context, and Minority Contact Among Anglos, 2005–2006

A. Latino Aversion

Not Latino Aversive · Latino Aversive

B. Latino Context

1.6 % · 10 % · 24 % · 36 % · 67 %

C. Minority Contact

−5.338 · −1.619 · −.389 · 2.101 · 5.820

NOTE: Panel A shows the predicted probabilities (with 95 percent confidence intervals) of a respondent expressing attitudes in favor of increasing legal immigration, increasing Mexican immigration, and amnesty for respondents with no Latino aversion and respondents with Latino aversion, with all other variables held constant at their means. Panel B shows the same probabilities for respondents with the minimum, 25th percentile, median, 75th percentile, and maximum values for Latino context, with all other variables held constant at their means. Panel C shows the same probabilities for respondents with the minimum, 25th percentile, median, 75th percentile, and maximum values for minority contact, with all other variables held constant at their means.

with larger Latino concentrations decreased support of "legal" immigration (B = − 1.671, $p < 0.06$). Considering the predicted probabilities displayed in Panel B, the otherwise average respondent living in an typical Census tract (median Latino context 24 percent) was 18.9 percent (95 percent CI: 0.150, 0.230) likely to favor increased legal immigration, but if the Latino context was adjusted to the 75th percentile value of Latino context (36 percent), the probability of favoring legal immigration decreased modestly to 16.1 percent (95 percent CI: 0.117, 0.212). This finding contradicts earlier studies in California that use county-level measures to show positive effects for living near Latinos (Hood and Morris, 2000), which may have been a result of aggregation bias. Conservative political ideology and lower education were associated with opposition to legal immigration ($p < 0.01$). Minority contact, though positively associated with increased legal immigration and economic considerations, had no independent influence on attitudes about legal immigration.

Attitudes About Mexican Immigration

Turning our attention to Mexican immigration (coded decrease 1, maintain 2, and increase 3) captures the influence of Anglos' Latino resentments on policies specifically targeting Latinos. Respondents who reported greater aversion to Latinos were much more likely to favor decreasing levels of Mexican immigration than those who reported no aversion to Latinos (B = − 1.734, $p < 0.01$). As displayed in Figure 1, the predicted probability of favoring increased Mexican immigration for a Latino-averse respondent was 4.8 percent (95 5percent CI: 0.025, 0.082) compared to 21.5 percent (95 percent CI: 0.181, 0.250) for a nonaverse respondent. Latino context and minority contact were not statistically related to attitudes about Mexican immigration.

Contrary to the case for legal immigration, poor personal economic conditions decreased support for Mexican immigration (B = − 0.319, $p < 0.05$). It may be those who report their personal economic condition had worsened during the prior year also perceived a greater threat from Mexican labor due to the beginning of the collapse of the local housing industry. Lower levels of education, younger respondents ($p < 0.05$), and conservative political ideology ($p < 0.01$) were associated with preferences for decreased Mexican immigration.

In the case of immigration policies targeting Mexicans, it appears that the influence of Latino context was supplanted by the influence of attitudes toward members of Latino populations. This finding supports the hypothesis that increased aversion to Latinos promotes restrictionist policies concerning Mexican immigration. Attitudes about Mexican immigration appear

ables. The change in probabilities can be interpreted as the influence of change in each predictor for the otherwise "average" respondent (Long, 1997).

to have been more influenced by Latino aversion than by material factors such as Latino neighborhood context or minority contact.

Attitudes About Amnesty

Measures of Latino aversion were not statistically related to preferences for amnesty, although the average differential in probability of supporting amnesty was large. Greater Latino neighborhood presence was related to viewing amnesty as a "bad thing," according to data in the third column of Table 3 (B = -2.359, $p < 0.05$). As reported in Panel B of Figure 1, the predicted probability of viewing amnesty as a good thing for a respondent in a Census tract with the median percentage of Latinos was 38.8 percent (95 percent CI: 0.338, 0.436), compared to 32.5 percent (95 percent CI: 0.253, 0.399) for respondents in Census tracts with the 75th percentile value for Latino context (36 percent). On the other hand, it appears that interaction with minorities resulted in Anglos taking supportive stances on amnesty; however, this association only approached statistical significance (B = 0.084, $p < 0.06$). As reported in Panel C of Figure 1, the predicted probability of viewing amnesty as a good thing was 41.6 percent (95 percent CI: 0.371, 0.464) for respondents reporting the median level of minority contact (-0.389) compared to 46.7 percent (95 percent CI: 0.404, 0.529) for respondents reporting the 75th percentile value of minority contact (2.101). On the whole, these findings suggest that interaction with vulnerable minority populations may have slightly reduced the willingness to expel immigrants, but when contact was explicitly linked to Latinos, the impact of possible interaction was negative. Although Latino aversion was consistently linked to a preference for limiting future immigration, it was not associated with a desire to push out undocumented immigrants.

Income was also positively but not significantly related to viewing amnesty as a "bad thing" ($p < 0.10$). The variables that consistently influenced restrictionist immigration policies were conservative political ideology and lower levels of education ($p < 0.05$). For some respondents, immigration may be a racial issue, but for others it is a partisan one.[2]

---

[2]The analysis may mask associations that exist under specific conditions but are not true of the entire sample. For instance, Anglos who report aversion to Latinos may respond to proximity to Latinos (Latino context) differently than those who do not report aversion to Latinos. An interaction term was formed by multiplying Latino context with Latino aversion, and a second was formed by multiplying Latino context with contact. The impact of living in heavily Latino neighborhoods among those who reported aversion to Latinos was to produce even more negative attitudes about immigration, while the impact of living in heavily Latino neighborhoods among those who reported contact with minorities was to produce more positive attitudes about immigration. However, neither relationship achieved statistical significance ($p > 0.10$). Future research should investigate conditional effects beyond these, but it appears that these moderated effects did not confound our earlier conclusions regarding main effects.

Discussion

Immigration attitudes may be political but scholars should not ignore the racialized portion of the immigration debate. Reported Latino aversion or overt racism, in general, negatively influenced immigration policy preferences, supporting the claim that attitudes about race are consequential for Anglo attitudes about immigration.

Just as Anglo opposition to busing, welfare, and taxes are affected by racial attitudes toward African Americans, the influence of Latino aversion on immigration policy preferences appears to be consistently greater than economic calculation, though this has been a source of intense investigation (Citrin et al., 1997).

Anglo respondents who expressed aversion to Latinos consistently applied racial dispositions to immigration allowance policies. To the extent that respondents were influenced by social desirability and underreported racial prejudice in this study, aversion to Latinos would be expected to play an even larger role in attitudes about immigration than reported here, *not less*.

Recent research has begun to suggest the racial undertones of immigration policy. A study by McClain and contributors (2006) found strong racial antagonism toward recent southern Latino immigrants. The authors argued that a part of this antagonism may be explained by the short timeframe in which southerners had contact with Latino immigrants. However, the present findings indicate that racial prejudices still remain an important contributor to attitudes about immigration posthistorical interaction. Even in the case of San Diego County, about one in ten respondents reported aversion to Latinos and the presence of Latino concentrations in respondents' Census tracts was associated with negative attitudes about immigration more often than not. Only for the case of amnesty did reported minority interaction result in favoring a pro-immigrant policy, although the effect was marginal.

Realistic group conflict theories suggest these results are consistent with competition for scarce resources, such as jobs. However, claiming Anglo respondents are in competition with an ethnic underclass may not be the most appropriate interpretation, particularly when economic competition should have been mitigated by decades of interaction. Political competition provides an equalizer of one person-one vote for citizens, and increased concentrations of Latinos may exacerbate divisions. The impacts of Latino aversion and context represent a general fear among majority populations of "strength in numbers" (Morris and Gimpel, 2007) and the qualities of these groups characterized by racial resentments.

Future Research

We addressed a basic question and provided a simple answer—at least in San Diego County, immigration is a racial issue. Our initial findings lay out

opportunities for much needed research in this arena. Primarily, future research should seek to explain attitudes about immigration by investigating contingencies under which hostility increases or decreases beyond what was possible in this analysis. For instance, the conditional effects of Latino aversion on other indicators await conclusive analysis. In addition, evaluating the impacts of multi-level contextual indicators on immigration policy should be considered. In this study, we estimated the effects of Latino context within Census tracts but were unable to consider the macro contexts that reinforce or compete with local contexts at the county, congressional district, or state level. It may be that the effects of local context are dependent on the larger contexts in which they are embedded, but this awaits analysis. Although this study was limited to residents of San Diego County, a county situated differently than many other locations such as Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC, we see no reason why the fundamental mechanisms of racism, competition for resources, proximity, and other factors would operate differently. Yet it is left to future research to test the generalizability of our findings beyond the borders of southern California. Longitudinal studies permitting correlates of individual change will also be immensely helpful in drawing more accurate conclusions about the dynamics of racial resentment and attitudes about immigration.

REFERENCES

Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Alvarez, R. Michael, and Tara L. Butterfield. 2000. "The Resurgence of Nativism in California? The Case of Proposition 187 and Illegal Immigration." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1):167–79.

Baybeck, Brady. 2006. "Sorting Out the Competing Effects of Racial Context." *Journal of Politics* 68(2):386–96.

Bogardus, Emory S. 1922. *A History of Social Thought*. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California Press.

Branton, Regina, Gavin Dillingham, Johana Dunaway, and Beth Miller. 2007. "Anglo Voting on Nativist Ballot Initiatives: The Partisan Impact of Spatial Proximity to the U.S.-Mexico Border." *Social Science Quarterly* 88(3):882–97.

Burns, Peter, and James G. Gimpel. 2000. "Economic Insecurity, Prejudicial Stereotypes, and Public Opinion on Immigration Policy." *Political Science Quarterly* 115(2): 201–25.

Calabresi, Massimo. 2006. "Is Racism Fueling the Immigration Debate?" *Time/CNN* May 17. Available at ⟨http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1195250,00.html⟩.

CBO. 2004. *A Description of the Immigrant Population*. Washington, DC: Congress of the United States, Congressional Budget Office. Available at ⟨http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/60xx/doc6019/11-23-Immigrant.pdf⟩.

Citrin, Jack, Donald P. Green, Christopher Muste, and Cara Wong. 1997. "Public Opinion Toward Immigration Reform: The Role of Economic Motivations." *Journal of Politics* 59(3):858–81.

Cornelius, Wayne A., and Marc R. Rosenblum. 2005. "Immigration and Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 8:99–119.

Dovidio, J. F., and S. L. Gaertner. 1996. "Affirmative Action, Unintentional Racial Biases, and Intergroup Relations." *Journal of Social Issues* 52(4):51–75.

Gay, Claudine. 2006. "Seeing Differences: The Effect of Economic Disparity on Black Attitudes Toward Latinos." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4):982–97.

Hood III, M. V., and Irwin L. Morris. 1997. "¿Amigo o Enemigo?: Context, Attitudes, and Anglo Public Opinion Toward Immigration." *Social Science Quarterly* 78(2):309–23.

———. 2000. "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? Racial/Ethnic Context and the Anglo Vote on Proposition 187." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1):194–206.

Huntington, Samuel. 2004. *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Imai, Kosuke, Gary King, and Olivia Lau. 2007a. *Zelig: Everyone's Statistical Software*. Available at ⟨http://GKing.harvard.edu/zelig⟩.

———. 2007b. *Toward a Common Framework for Statistical Analysis and Development*. Available at ⟨http://gking.harvard.edu/_les/abs/z-abs.shtml⟩.

Kiy, Richard, and Naoko Kada, eds. 2004. *Blurred Borders: Transboundary Issues and Solutions in the San Diego/Tijuana Border Region*. International Community Foundation. Available at ⟨http://sandiegohealth.org/border/blurredborders.pdf⟩.

LeVine, Robert A., and Donald T. Campbell. 1972. *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior*. New York: Wiley.

Long, Scott J. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Loveman, Brian, and C. Richard Hofstetter. 1984a. "American Perceptions of Undocumented Immigrants: Political Implications." *New Scholar* 9:111–18.

———. 1984b. "Public Opinion, Public Policy and Mexican Immigration: A View from the Border." Pp. 259–86 in Harrell R. Rodgers Jr., ed., *Public Policy and Social Institutions*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

McClain, Paul D., Niambi M. Carter, Victoria M. DeFrancesco Soto, Monique L. Lyle, and Jeffry D. Grynaviski, et al. 2006. "Racial Distancing in a Southern City: Latino Immigrant's Views of Black Americans." *Journal of Politics* 68(3):571–84.

McLaren, Lauren M. 2003. "Anti-Immigration Prejudice in Europe: Contact, Threat Perception, and Preferences for the Exclusion of Migrants." *Social Forces* 81(3): 909–36.

Morris, Frank, and James G. Gimpel. 2007. "Immigration, Intergroup Conflict, and the Erosion of African American Political Power in the 21st Century." *Backgrounder: Center for Immigration Studies* February.

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Parrillo, Vincent N., and Christopher Donoghue. 2005. "Updating the Bogardus Social Distance Studies: A New National Survey." *Social Science Journal* 42(2):257–71.

Sears, David O. 1988. "Symbolic Racism." In Phyllis A Katz and Dalmas A Taylor, eds., *Eliminating Racism: Profiles in Controversy*. New York: Plenum Press.

Sears, David. O., Richard R. Lau, Tom R. Tyler, and Harris M. Jr. Allen. 1980. "Self-Interest vs. Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting." *American Political Science Review* 74(3):670–84.

Sears, David O., Colette Van Laar, Mary Carrillo, and Rick Kosterman. 1997. "Is it Really Racism? The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61(1):16–53.

Short, Robert, and Lisa Magana. 2002. "Political Rhetoric, Immigration Attitudes, and Contemporary Prejudice: A Mexican American Dilemma." *Journal of Social Psychology* 142(6):701–12.

Sidanius, James. 1993. "The Psychology of Group Conflict and the Dynamics of Oppression: A Social Dominance Perspective." Pp. 183–219 in S. Iyengar and W. McGuire, eds., *Explorations in Political Psychology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sniderman, Paul M., Thomas Piazza, Philip E. Tetlock, and Ann Kendrick. 1991. "The New Racism." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(2):423–47.

Stein, Robert M., Stephanie Shirley Post, and Allison L. Riden. 2000. "Reconciling Context and Contact Effects on Racial Attitudes." *Political Research Quarterly* 53(2): 285–303.

Taylor, Marylee C. 1998. "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count." *American Sociological Review* 63(4):512–35.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. *Census 2000 Summary File 1 100-Percent Data*. Available at ⟨http://factfinder.census.gov⟩.

Welch, Susan, and Lee Sigelman. 2000. "Getting to Know You? Latino-Anglo Social Contact." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1):67–83.

Zeleny, Jeff. 2007. "Immigration Bill Prompts Some Menacing Responses." *New York Times* June 28. Available at ⟨http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/28/washington/28calls.html⟩.