Warmth of the Welcome: Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy

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Abstract

Natives' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy are important factors in the context of reception of immigrants since they contribute to a warm or chilly welcome, which potentially shapes immigrant and ethnic identities and inter-group relations. Public opinion polls show a recent "warming" of Americans' traditional ambivalence about immigration. Empirical research on attitudes toward immigrants and racial groups formed by recent waves of immigrants resonate with the dynamic nature of Blumer's (1958) theory of prejudice as a sense of relative group position. To better understand this dynamism, research that intentionally contrasts study sites on conflict and contact conditions and the presence of absence of symbolic politics, as well as research with different native-born racial and ethnic groups, would reveal a broader range of natives' attitude formation processes and the role they play in immigrant reception.

Keywords

prejudice; group threat; contact theory; symbolic politics; social identities; context of reception

Introduction

Current research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy dates to the 1970s, when the effects of two immigration policies were manifesting in increased immigration by Latin Americans and Asians. First, in 1964, the United States terminated the Bracero Program, a seasonal guest worker program established during World War II to provide farmers with a substitute labor force after millions of American men were drafted into military service. Agricultural producers continued to employ Mexican farm laborers, but instead of being guest workers they were now unauthorized immigrants. Then, in 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which replaced restrictive immigration policies giving preference to Western and Northern European countries with quotas for countries in both hemispheres, allowing entry of more immigrants from non-Western countries. Consequently, between 1970 and 2010 the number of foreign-born residents of the United States grew from 9.6 to 40.0 million, an increase from 4.7 to 12.9 percent of the total population (Gibson and Jung 2006; U.S. Census 2013).

As the population's racial and ethnic origins diversified, social scientists asked whether native-born whites would develop prejudices against immigrants that resembled anti-Black prejudice. So I begin the review by describing trends in attitudes toward immigrants and

immigration. Then I review classic theories of racial prejudice before turning to how those and newer theories explain attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. My goal is to assess the relevance of classic theories of prejudice – group threat and contact – and newer theories – symbolic politics and social identity theory – for contemporary research on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy.

Although the causes of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration are the focus of this review, it is motivated by the consequences of these attitudes for immigrants. Most research shows that immigrants' reception depends on current immigration policies, demand for immigrant labor, and the presence of a co-ethnic community, overlooking the effect of natives' attitudes toward immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 92-101). When natives hold prejudices that emphasize cultural, phenotypical, and other real or imagined differences between themselves and immigrants, their welcome is cooler. Such prejudices inform preferences for exclusionary and punitive immigration policies. Together, natives' attitudes and national policies shape the warmth with which immigrants are received and potentially shape immigrants' identities – with a chilly reception producing reactive identities – as well as the ethnic identities of their children (Alba and Nee 2003; Alba 2009; Bashi Treitler 2013; Deaux 2006; Massey and Sanchez 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Schildkraut 2011). Hence, attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are influential in producing and reproducing the tone of inter-group relations.

I limit my review of this literature by focusing mostly on U.S.-based research by sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists. Further, I concentrate on research building on Blumer's (1958) theory of prejudice as a sense of relative group position and Allport's (1954) contact theory. Research in these traditions is mainly based on surveys and experiments, although when relevant I also reference ethnographic research. While attitudes towards immigrants and immigration are closely related to nativism and inter-group relations, I do not review those literatures since they focus on behaviors as much as attitudes, stereotypes, or prejudices.

Trends in Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration

Historically, Americans have favored limiting immigration, either by placing qualitative limits on the types of immigrants allowed to enter the country or quantitative limits on their numbers (Simon and Alexander 1993; Simon and Lynch 1999). Nativism – a preference for protecting the interests of the native born against those of immigrants – was behind the Immigration Act of 1924, which effectively prohibited immigrant admissions from Asia and Africa and severely limited those from Southern and Eastern Europe (Zolberg 2006). Nativism is also evident in one of the first polls about immigration policy. During the Great Depression and just after the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom against the Jews in Germany and Austria, a scientific poll asked whether political refugees from Nazi-occupied countries should be allowed to enter the United States "with conditions as they are here." Fully two-thirds of those polled replied "we should try to keep them out," 18 percent felt that only as many as the national quota allowed should be admitted, and only 5 percent said quotas should be raised and refugees encouraged to come (Roper/Fortune 1938). After World War II, despite Americans' preferences for limiting immigration, politicians felt pressure to allow

more immigration as the country gained international influence, the economy expanded, the foreign-born population reached record lows, and support for civil rights grew.

Pollsters have asked repeatedly whether current immigration levels should be decreased, kept at present levels, or increased (Figure 1) (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research 2013). In 1955, 76 percent of those polled either wanted immigration decreased (39%) or kept at present levels (37%). Only 13 percent wanted immigration increased, while 11 percent had no opinion. Response distributions were similar in the '60s and '70s. In 1982, when the nation was debating how to limit unauthorized immigration originating mostly in Mexico, the desire to limit immigration peaked: 89 percent either wanted immigration decreased (66%) or maintained at current levels (23%). Only 4 percent wanted it increased and very few had no opinion (7%). Restrictivist sentiment was strong until the mid-1990s, when the percentage wanting immigration decreased or maintained at current levels began to decline, reaching a low of 67 percent in 2013. Over these two decades the percentage wanting to increase immigration levels quintupled from 5 to 25 percent. Although this is hardly a mandate for increasing immigration, it shows that a growing number of Americans do not perceive threats from immigrants or their growing numbers.

This shift in attitudes comes, at least in part, from weakening concerns that immigrants pose an economic threat. In 1993, about two-thirds of Americans agreed that "immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care", while only a third agreed with the contrasting statement that "immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents". Since 2003 roughly equal percentages (45 and 44 percent, respectively) agree with each of these statements (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research 2013). Over the same period, a growing percentage agreed with the broader statement that "immigration is a good thing" for the country. Between 1993 and 2001, agreement grew from 29 percent to a peak of 66 percent, averaging about 59 percent in the last decade. Indeed, ample research suggests that immigrations' positive impacts outweigh the negative (Card 2005). The view that immigration and immigrants are good for the country was once controversial, but as these opinion poll results illustrate, more Americans now share this view.

Theories of Prejudice: The Group Threat and Contact Hypotheses

Research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy is rooted in Blumer's (1958) theory of group position or, more generally, group threat theory and Allport's (1954) theory of prejudice. Both theories seek to explain in- groups' attitudes toward out-groups, specifically whites' attitudes toward blacks and the racial policies aimed at eliminating racial discrimination. The theories differ in their conceptualization of what causes prejudice, which is commonly defined as an adverse or hostile attitude toward a group and its individual members that is unsupported by evidence, although it can also be a positive attitude. Blumer, a symbolic interactionist, viewed prejudice as an expression of group identity that emerges when conflict makes group differences salient. Allport, a social psychologist, considered prejudice to be a product of socialization that resides in individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and values, which can be modified by contact with members of the out-group under propitious

circumstances. These theories have generated the threat and contact hypotheses, respectively.

The threat hypothesis proposes that prejudice by an in-group occurs when members perceive a threat from an out-group (Blumer 1958). The threat consolidates their sense of themselves as an in-group and reinforces their feelings of superiority, entitlement to rights, statuses, and resources, alienation from and a sense of threat by the out-group group. Blumer's conflict hypothesis is associated with Blalock's (1967) power threat hypothesis, which proposes that the larger the size of an out-group, the stronger the sense of threat perceived by the in-group. The hypothesis received empirical support from findings that the proportion of blacks in an area is positively associated with lynchings (Reed 1972), opposition to racial integration (Giles and Evans 1986; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989), racial prejudice, and opposition to affirmative action policies (Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998; Taylor and Mateyaka 2011). It is also supported by research that measures dominant group members' perception of threat to their individual resources, rights, and statuses (e.g. Bobo 1983; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996) as well as those of their group (e.g. Rosenstein 2008; Smith 1981).

The contact hypothesis proposes that interaction between groups, under optimal conditions, reduces racial prejudice (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998). Just as racial prejudice is learned through socialization, it can be unlearned through positive contact between in-group and out-group members. When in-group and out-group members interact in a situation in which they have equal status, pursue a shared goal, engage in inter-group cooperation, and receive the support of authorities, law, or custom, prejudice among in-group members is predicted to decrease through the falsification of in-group members' prejudiced views of the out-group (Allport 1954). While contact theory developed from experimental research, survey research supports its generalizability (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). In surveys, respondents with cross-racial friendships report lower levels of prejudice (Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 2002; Ellison, Shin, and Leal 2011), as do those living in more racially and ethnically integrated neighborhoods (Oliver and Wong 2003). However, while the effect of living in a more diverse neighborhood reduces prejudice, living in a more diverse metropolitan area increases it (Fosset and Kiecolt 1989; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998). The key to explaining this apparent contradiction is whether the context facilitates face-to-face contact between in-groups and out-groups (McDermott 2011a; Pettigrew and Tropp 2011; Rocha and Espino 2009).

Even without direct contact, threat can be reduced by the absence of zero-sum conditions. Blumer (1958) argues that group threat is produced when an in-group perceives that gains by an out-group will result in the loss of their own resources, rights, or statuses. These zero-sum conditions and the presence of an out-group exacerbate in-groups members' sense of threat and, hence, increase prejudice. It follows that in the absence of these zero-sum conditions, group threat and prejudice are minimal. Since the 1950s fewer Americans express racial prejudice, even in the historically prejudiced South (Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, Krysan 1997; Quillian 1996). Per capita income growth and, to a lesser extent, increased educational attainment – what Alba (2009) calls "non-zero sum mobility" – explain reduction in national levels of anti-black prejudice. Similarly, competition may be heightened or mitigated by the in-groups' characteristics. For example,

Branton and Jones (2005) find that the racial diversity of a county strongly affects non-Hispanic whites' racial policy attitudes, but the direction of effect depends on whether the county has high or low percentages of college educated residents. Racial policy attitudes become more liberal as diversity increases in high education counties, consistent with the contact hypothesis, but they become more conservative as diversity increases in low education countries, consistent with the threat hypothesis (see also Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). These contextual variables are far more important than individual level variables in explaining variation in levels of prejudice (McDermott 2011a; Quillian 1996). In short, the threat and contact hypotheses are incomplete without measures of context.

Research on Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy

How are theories of prejudice relevant to attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy?

Although race and ethnicity are not equivalent to nativity, they overlap. At the present time in the United States 67% of Asians and 38% of Hispanics of any race are foreign-born, compared to only 8% of blacks and 4% of non-Hispanic whites (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). Furthermore, the correlation between race, ethnicity, and nativity varies widely across geographic units and regions, with stronger correlations in new immigrant destinations, and weaker correlations in traditional Hispanic and Asian destinations. Consequently, researchers and research subjects often conflate immigrants with Asians and Latinos and natives with whites and blacks. Further, they use theories developed to study racial attitudes – conflict and contact hypotheses – to study natives' attitudes toward the two largest race and ethnic groups of the post-1965 immigrants, Latinos and Asians.

In general, researchers conclude that the effects of group threat and contact on whites' prejudice toward Latinos and Asians are not as strong as they are for blacks. Both Taylor (1998) and Dixon (2006) find that whites living in areas with higher percentages of blacks express more anti-black prejudice, but larger percentages of Hispanics or Asians do not affect whites' prejudice toward those groups. Dixon (2006) finds that whereas just knowing a Hispanic or Asian person reduces whites' prejudice toward those groups, whites must know and feel close to blacks to feel less anti-black prejudice. Dixon and Rosenbaum (2004) also find that the percentage of blacks or Latinos in an area increases whites' anti-black but not anti-Hispanic stereotypes. While whites' stereotypes are diminished by more formal work-based contact with blacks, their stereotypes of Hispanics are reduced by more casual community contact. In short, whites feel greater animus towards blacks than toward Hispanics and Asians. Dixon (2006: 2197) argues that "a historically and culturally rooted racial/ethnic hierarchy differentially shapes whites' present-day threat of, contact with, and ultimately, prejudice towards blacks, Hispanics, and Asians."

Indeed, Blumer (1958) proposes that forming a sense of group position is a lengthy and dynamic process. While white-black race relations in the United States are as old as the nations' history, relations between whites and Latinos or Asians are recent in most parts of the country, with some notable exceptions. For example, Mexicans and their descendents lived in the Southwestern U.S. well before the U.S. acquired it in 1848 (Camarillo 2007), and Chinese began arriving on the West Coast in 1820 when shipping trade began with

China and it surged with the California Gold Rush in 1849 (Yin 2007). Bobo (1999: 461) argues that "with a longer history of relations between dominant and subordinate group members comes a more fully crystallized sense of relative group position." Thus, when we consider how prejudice theory is relevant to the study of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, we must keep in mind that we are observing an on-going process of inter-group positioning with different lengths of historical contact between groups as well as different contexts involving more or less conflict and contact. So, the hypotheses of conflict and contact continue to be relevant, but are ideally viewed in a dynamic and spatial framework in order to best understand variability in relative group positions and attitude formation.

Threat and contact hypotheses applied to immigrants, Hispanics, and Asians

Natives most commonly report feeling an economic threat from immigrants. The fear that immigrants "take jobs" from natives and lower the wages of those with whom they compete has generated a large empirical literature and a lively debate (e.g., Borjas 1987; Card 1990). True or not, social psychologists have shown that the mere perception of threat from immigrants powerfully shapes attitudes (Esses et al 2001; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Stephan et al 2005). Bonacich (1972) argues from historical and cross-cultural evidence that immigrants who accept lower wages and worse working conditions than native workers cause ethnic antagonism between natives and immigrants by allowing employers to split the labor market and undermine the negotiating position of native workers. This self-interest hypothesis is supported by research showing that those most likely to compete for jobs with immigrants – the unemployed and workers with below college-level education, blue collar occupations, or lower earnings – are more likely to view immigrants unfavorably and prefer restrictive immigration policies (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Indeed, an experiment isolating perceived job threat by immigrant guest workers among information technology workers shows that self-interest very strongly predicts immigration policy preferences (Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013). However, although self-interest explains the views and policy preferences of those with the most at stake, those not directly threatened more frequently base their views and policy preferences on group identifications and values (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001). Consequently, the self-interest hypothesis only provides a partial explanation of anti-immigrant sentiment and policy preferences.

The group threat hypothesis proposes that broader contextual threats affect attitudes toward immigrants. In a multi-level model of anti-immigrant prejudice in the European Economic Community, Quillian (1995) concludes that individual level measures corresponding to self-interest explain little variation in prejudice towards minority racial groups and immigrants. Instead, the size of the racial or immigrant group and national economic conditions interact to increase prejudice against minorities and immigrants during difficult economic times. Individuals' perceptions of group threat also appear to matter more than self-interest. Burns and Gimpel (2000) show that pessimism about the national economy, rather than one's personal economic prospects, more consistently influences negative stereotyping of blacks, Hispanics, and whites by members of other racial groups and increases preferences to reduce immigration. These economic threats often overlap with cultural threats.

Cultural concerns about immigrants typically focus on whether they harm society. Those who think immigrants mostly cause problems want to decrease immigration levels, while those who welcome immigrants want to raise or maintain current levels (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). When people perceive that immigrants need language accommodations in schools or at the ballot box they are more likely to favor reducing legal and illegal immigration (Chandler and Tsai 2001). In contrast, people who reject ethnocentrism are less likely to believe that immigrants increase crime rates or take jobs from natives and more likely to believe they are good for the economy and make America more open to new ideas and cultures (Haubert and Fussell 2006). Using a scale indicator of cultural threat and comparing it to other indicators of economic threat, ethnic affect, group contact, core values and prejudice, Buckler et al (2009) conclude that cultural threat is the strongest explanation for favoring stronger immigration enforcement. Although this research stream measures culture inconsistently, it nevertheless shows that cultural concerns are quite powerful independently of economic concerns.

Researchers who have tried to reconcile group threat and contact theory find that threat is weakened by intergroup contact, especially face-to-face contact, although not always eliminated (Dixon 2006; Hood and Morris 1997; Pettigrew, Wagner, and Christ 2010; Stein et al 2000). For example, whites living in counties with large percentages of Spanish-speaking foreign-born Hispanics and low levels of white-Hispanic segregation, and who are therefore more likely to have contact with immigrants, are less likely to support making English the official language or to believe that there are too many immigrants (Rocha and Espino 2009). Further, whites' sense of threat is diminished when they have Hispanic or Asian friends, work colleagues, and neighbors (Dixon 2006). While intergroup contact between native whites and Hispanics may reduce threat, this is not so when Hispanic immigrants are unauthorized (Stein et al 2000). Whites in counties with higher percentages of unauthorized immigrants tend to favor decreasing current immigration levels. In contrast, those in counties with higher percentages of authorized immigrants are less likely to want immigration levels decreased (Hood and Morris 1998). Since prejudice-reducing inter-group contact requires equal status, unauthorized immigrants' marginalized legal status prevents contact from mitigating threat as it does when native whites interact with authorized immigrants. In short, familiarity in the absence of conflict or alienation levels one's sense of relative group position, and thereby reduces anti-immigrant sentiment and restrictive or punitive immigration policy preferences.

Prejudice, or more mildly, ethnic affect and stereotyping, has an independent effect on immigration policy attitudes above and beyond group threat. Regardless of whether researchers measure ethnic stereotypes (Berg 2012; Buckler et al 2009; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Hood and Morris 1997; Lu and Nicholson-Crotty 2010; Schildkraut 2011), group feeling thermometers (Citrin et al 1997), or general views of Hispanics and Asians (Buckler et al 2009), prejudice is consistently related to preferences for less immigration and more punitive enforcement policies. For example, people with cooler feelings towards Hispanics and Asians strongly prefer restricting immigration and delaying immigrants' eligibility for government benefits, net of controls for political orientation, economic and cultural threat and socio-demographic characteristics (Citrin et al 1997). Similarly, natives who resent immigrants for violating norms such as learning English, paying taxes, and trying to fit in,

are more likely to favor restrictive and punitive immigration policies (Berg 2012; Schildkraut 2011). Immigrants' racial origin may also matter for how much prejudice influences policy; research comparing stereotypes of immigrants from four global regions shows that, among Ohio voters, stereotypes of Asians are most positive, followed by those of Middle Easterners and Europeans, while those of Latinos are most negative (Timberlake and Williams 2012). The impact of the stereotype content of different racial and ethnic groups on attitudes toward immigration needs more research.

The extant literature shows that threat, contact, and context are all salient in the production of attitudes towards immigrants, and that in addition to these factors prejudice also informs attitudes toward immigration policies. However, trying to assess the relative importance of multiple indicators of each of these hypotheses by including them all in a regression analysis of cross-sectional data is hampered by collinear indicators and inconsistent measures of central concepts (Lu and Nicholson-Crotty 2010). A return to the theoretical underpinnings of the field is warranted. In particular, closer modeling of Blumer's (1958) causal ordering, in which threat produces prejudice and prejudice affects policy attitudes, would at least partially address the problem of endogeneity. Panel data, though rare, could potentially disentangle the effects of group threat and contact on prejudice (e.g. Lancee and Pardos-Prado 2013). However, the importance of these modeling issues pales in comparison to the larger concern that the production of attitudes toward immigrants is dynamic and spatially variable. In which case, the threat and contact hypotheses may each be more or less salient in different times and places. What makes them salient is often a political process.

Symbolic politics

An in-group's sense of threat from immigrants can be elicited not only by their presence, but also by politics. Symbolic politics theory proposes that political elites employ symbols, words, and laws to evoke predictable emotional reactions among target audiences and assign blame or responsibility for social problems (Edelman 1964; Gusfield 1963). In this way, symbolic politics offers a framework for explaining how anti-immigrant attitudes are activated. For example, in 1994, conservative politicians in California, led by Governor Pete Wilson, introduced a ballot initiative – Proposition 187 – that sought to bar unauthorized immigrants from receiving social services. Although the proposition was approved by a large margin it was quickly found unconstitutional and never enforced. Calavita (1996) argues that voters felt Proposition 187 was a symbolic political object that sent a message to unauthorized immigrants. Citrin et al (1997) credit the Proposition 187 controversy for the nationwide increase in support for restrictive immigration policies between 1992 and 1994. This scapegoating of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico and Central America by politicians and the media hardened negative stereotypes of Latinos (Ayers et al 2009; Chavez 2008; Massey and Pren 2012a and 2012b).

Stereotypes depend upon knowledge of a specific group and therefore can be manipulated to some extent by additional information. In a series of experiments with volunteer research subjects, Stephan and his colleagues (2005) found that attitudes toward an unfamiliar immigrant group were easily manipulated by prompts for realistic and symbolic threats, negative stereotypes, and conditions provoking intergroup anxiety — all of which made

attitudes more negative. However, when research subjects were prompted to empathize with the immigrants, as opposed to the host group, the cues for intergroup anxiety evinced weaker effects. In contrast, when study participants have pre-existing prejudices toward an immigrant group their views are less malleable. For example, when ethnic cues prompt associations about either Latin American or European immigrants' potential tax burden or skill level, research subjects receiving the Latin American cues offer more negative opinions of immigrants and prefer harsher policy than those receiving European cues (Brader, Valentino, Suhay 2008). When an experimental scenario combines unauthorized status and Mexican origin, research subjects express stronger anti-immigrant views than when the hypothetical immigrants are authorized and/or Canadian (Short and Magaña 2002). These results are consistent with neuropsychological research on stereotype content which finds that images of undocumented immigrants, Latinos, Mexicans, South Americans, farm workers, and poor people all register in research subjects' brain images as despised out-groups (Lee and Fiske 2006). Evidently, these deeply ingrained stereotypes of Latino immigrant groups are easily exploited to influence public opinion.

Just as some types of immigrants are more harshly stereotyped, some people are more susceptible to viewing immigrants as threats. Citrin and his colleagues (1990; 2009) find that Republicans, conservatives, and chauvinists tend to identify with ethnic symbols – having been born in the U.S., speaking English, and being Christian – and prefer lower levels of immigration and access to citizenship. In contrast, Democrats, liberals, and non-chauvinists who identify with civic symbols – respecting U.S. laws, voting, getting ahead by one's own work – prefer the opposite (see also Kunovich 2009). Thus, symbolic politics adds to the threat hypothesis by arguing that, while some in-groups may be more susceptible to a sense of individual or group economic or cultural threat, political actors may use symbols to raise threat perceptions and thereby increase support for more restrictive immigration policies favored by conservative politicians. In this way social identities can be exploited for political purposes.

To capture spatial and temporal variability in symbolic politics, Hopkins (2010) models preferences for maintaining or increasing versus decreasing current immigration levels between 1992 and 2009 for a series of geo-coded attitudinal surveys, which he supplements with an index of national media coverage of immigration issues. He shows that when immigration is in national news headlines, respondents living in counties with growing immigrant populations more strongly prefer decreasing immigration levels. Furthermore, localities with fast growing immigrant populations were far more likely to consider anti-immigrant ordinances, leading him to conclude that "local anti-immigrant political activity comes from rapidly changing places, especially at times when immigration is capturing national headlines." (Hopkins 2010: 55-56). Political partisanship is similarly activated by growing immigrant populations, such that in counties with larger immigrant populations Republicans tend to increase and Democrats tend to decrease their support for immigration restrictions (Hawley 2011). Evidently, local and national politics and political party affiliation activate processes of attitude formation in localities experiencing rapid growth of foreign-born populations.

Social identities in attitude formation

Social identities are central to both Allport's and Blumer's theories of racial prejudice. Social identity formation involves categorizing oneself as an in-group member and accentuating in- and out-group differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviors and other characteristics, especially those that favor the in-group (Stets and Burke 2000). For the formation of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy the most salient social identities are race, ethnicity, gender, religion, political orientation, and social class.

Although most Americans have an immigrant past, race, ethnicity, and nativity differentiate those who identify with one of the more recently arrived groups from those with many generations of ancestors in the United States. Given their status as the dominant in-group, native-born whites are the research subjects in most studies of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, as was notable in the previous sections. Indeed, the conflict and contact hypotheses pertain to the dominant in-group, which is most often defined as native-born whites, while blacks, despite being native-born for the most part, are excluded as an out-group. When survey samples include sufficient numbers of non-Hispanic blacks to compare their views to those of whites, depending on the specific issue, blacks are found generally to be more liberal than whites (Buckler, Swatt and Salinas 2009; Berg 2010; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong 1997; Diamond 1998; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) or no different (Diamond 1998; Cummings and Lambert 1997).

However, African-Americans' attitudes are complicated and contingent. For example, blacks in localities experiencing rapid Hispanic population growth have cooler feelings toward Hispanics, perhaps because of unfamiliarity and perceptions of conflict, but blacks in localities with larger shares of Hispanics have warmer feelings toward Hispanics, presumably because of greater contact (Taylor and Schroeder 2010). The perception that blacks and Latinos compete for resources may instigate blacks' cool initial reaction to Latinos, but this is balanced by blacks' sympathy for fellow minorities (Mindiola Jr., Flores Niemann, and Rodriguez 2002; Thornton and Mizuno 1999). Blacks' mixture of feelings is contingent on how they feel they are doing as a group; Blacks living in neighborhoods of Los Angeles in which Latinos are economically advantaged relative to blacks tend to hold more negative views of Latinos than blacks living in neighborhoods in which they are economically advantaged relative to Latinos (Gay 2006). Similarly, blacks with more Asian neighbors express more anti-immigrant prejudice, although whites with more Asian neighbors express less (Ha 2010). Asian entrepreneurship in low-income majority black neighborhoods accounts for black-Asian antagonism (Lee 2002). Although blacks may hold more pro-immigrant sentiments than whites, their sense of threat is still raised by economic concerns, such as those triggered by contexts in which Asians or Latinos are more economically successful or their numbers are increasing rapidly (McDermott 2011b; Rodriguez and Mindiola Jr. 2011).

Latinos' attitudes have received more scholarly attention than those of other subordinate racial or ethnic groups. Although Latinos are expected to find common cause with immigrants, especially those from Latin America, their diverse national origins and experiences of reception in the United States also distinguish their political views and party preferences, which may in turn affect their policy preferences (Rouse, Wilkinson, and

Garand 2010). Some research shows that Latinos are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to reject restrictive immigration policies (Buckler, Swatt, and Salinas 2009; Rocha et al 2011), but other research finds no difference, especially after immigrant generation, assimilation, and political views are taken into account (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Citrin et al 1997; de la Garza 1998; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Generally, the most important predictors of attitudes toward immigration policy among Latinos are assimilation and proximity to other native-born Latinos, but national origin groups differ very little in their immigration preferences (Hood, Morris and Shirkey 1997; Knoll 2012). Jiménez's (2007) interviews with Mexican-Americans reveal a more nuanced perspective than that found in survey data. Mexican-Americans are concerned that Mexican immigrants, particularly unauthorized immigrants, produce harmful stereotypes of Mexican-Americans generally, but they also feel empowered by the political and economic influence of the growing Mexican-American population. Thus, Latino views of immigrants and immigration policy depend on cultural affinity, but also assimilation and group threat, neither of which is uniquely measured by a respondent's race or ethnic identification.

Gender also predicts attitudes, but it shows less consistent relationships than most social identities. In some studies women favor more liberal immigration policies (Buckler, Swatt, and Salinas 2009; Chandler and Tsai 2001), but others find no difference between men and women (Berg 2009; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Hood and Morris 1997, 1998; Scheve and Slaughter 2001), and still others find that women favor more restrictive immigration policies (Buckler 2008; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Hood, Morris and Shirkey 1997). Berg (2010) offers an intersectional explanation for this inconsistency by showing that social identities – specifically race, class, and gender groups – combine with one another to produce countervailing effects. Further, these identity combinations depend on the percentage of foreign-born residents in an area. For example, in areas with greater numbers of foreign-born residents women with higher education are more likely to hold pro-immigrant attitudes than men with equivalent levels of education, but this gender gap is smaller in areas with fewer foreign-born residents and for men and women with lower levels of education. In general, Berg (2010) argues that, especially in places with greater proportions of immigrants, higher levels of education lead blacks and women to sympathize with other less privileged groups and feel less threatened by them. In other words, individuals' sense of group position vis-à-vis immigrants depends on both their social identity and their context.

Religious and political identities also influence Americans' views of immigrants and preferences for immigration policy. Members of minority religious traditions that accentuate in- and out-group differences, such as Jews and Mormons, tend to favor more liberal immigration policies than Protestants, Catholics, Greek or Russian Orthodox, Muslims, and atheists (Knoll 2009). Similarly, among non-Hispanic white Christians, those from minority traditions tend to hold more positive views of Asians and Latinos compared to Catholics, Evangelicals, and mainline Protestants (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011). However, McDaniel et al (2011) argue that the true cause of anti-immigrant sentiment among non-Hispanic white Christians is not their religious denomination per se, but rather adherence to "Christian nationalism", or the belief that America has a divinely inspired mission and its

success depends on finding God's favor. Indeed, those who hold values such as individualism, pride in being American, and ethnocentrism – all associated with political conservatism – tend to express more anti-immigrant sentiment and preferences for restrictive immigration policies (Buckler 2008; Citrin and Wright 2009; Haubert and Fussell 2006). Similarly, political conservatives and those identified with the Republican Party are more likely to express anti-immigrant sentiment and to prefer more restrictive immigration policies (Berg 2009; Bucker et al 2009; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Haubert and Fussell 2006). The similar effects of religious and political identities suggest that both are closely related to a common set of values but there is still no consensus on which values are most salient.

Although education is often used as a proxy for social class, it is an imperfect one since there are multiple ways in which it influences how individuals interpret the presence of an out-group. Nevertheless, it is one of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. Like contact, higher levels of education, especially college education, strongly diminish natives' sense of threat from immigrants, an effect that is produced in multiple ways. Education is one of the socio-economic statuses related to labor market competition, or individual economic threat. Since many immigrants have low levels of education, threat is most likely felt by natives with secondary education or less, while those with higher education levels feel less labor market vulnerability. Education is also related to direct and indirect contact with immigrants and their cultures. In particular, exposure to the university curriculum as well as to members of the heterogeneous groups attending universities produces more tolerant views of different racial, ethnic and national-origin groups (Côté and Erickson 2009; Quillian 1996). The more cosmopolitan worldview of the college educated is likely to be reinforced through living abroad (Haubert and Fussell 2006), belonging to a more educated social network (Berg 2009), and living in areas with higher percentages of college graduates (Moore and Ovadia 2006). Finally, education checks misperceptions of the size of the non-white population that drives anti-immigrant attitudes (Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005). However, education is also correlated with a predisposition to express more tolerant attitudes, a subject that I return to in the section on social desirability bias. Because education divides Americans by strongly shaping lifetime earnings trajectories, tastes, and lifestyles, Fischer and Mattson (2009) argue that it represents a growing divide among Americans that is expressed in their attitudes and policy views – and perhaps in increasingly divided preferences for limits on immigration.

Social identities or American identities?

The literature on social identities reviewed in the previous section reveals some slippage between when social identities are conceptualized as a sense of relative group position and when they are used as atheoretical controls for group differences. When taken altogether, however, it is evident that race, ethnicity, religion, political views and education define shared cultural worldviews or values that shape attitudes. However, the role of values in public opinion research is controversial, with some arguing that values and attitudes are too similar to use values as attitude predictors (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004). Schwartz (1994: 21) defines values as "…desirable transsituational goals… that serve as guiding principles…",

while attitudes are favorable or unfavorable views of an object and therefore less durable (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004: 361).

Despite this controversy, a few studies of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy include values and show that egalitarianism and humanitarianism are associated with more sympathetic views of unauthorized immigrants and preferences for maintaining or increasing immigrant admissions and allowing immigrants to receive government services. In contrast, individualism, pride in being American, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism are associated with less favorable views of immigrants and preferences for restrictive and punitive immigration policies (Buckler 2008; Citrin and Wright 2009; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Pantoja 2006). These values resonate with political views and party affiliations, as well as American identities that are either ethnic – defined by birth place, ancestry and religion – or civic – defined by feeling "American", speaking English, and respecting national laws and institutions (Citrin and Wright 2009; Kunovich 2009). These American identities strongly influence immigration policy preferences (Kunovich 2009).

American identity is a construct that taps into how Americans draw boundaries around membership in the polity (Citrin and Wright 2009; Kunovich 2009; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Schildkraut 2011). In her study of Americanism, Schildkraut (2011) finds that Americans are more alike than different in their views of what it means to be American, despite increasingly diverse origins. The vast majority believe that the following are "very important" to American identity: respecting American political institutions and laws (80.9%), respecting other people's cultural differences (80.1%), having American citizenship (76.0%), seeing people of all backgrounds as American (73.1%), being able to speak English (71.0%), pursuing economic success through hard work (69.0%), thinking of oneself as American (68.9%), tolerance for others' views (65.9%), being informed about national and local politics (65.3%), and feeling American (62.1%). Only a minority endorses an ethnocultural definition of Americanism in which the following are "very important": being born in America (24.2%), being Christian (19.3%), having European ancestry (7.0%) and being white (3.8%). Despite holding generally liberal values, many Americans, and not only the minority who define being American in ethnocultural terms, harbor resentment against contemporary immigrants, who they believe do not uphold these values. In general, Schildkraut finds that these American norms and values strongly predict preferences for making English the official language, English-only ballots, English immersion classrooms, as well as policies to intern Arab Americans or Arab immigrants suspected of terrorism, and profiling Arabs and motorists. Schildkraut's (2011) careful study of American identities shows that values are central to both social identity formation and the modeling of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies.

Masuoka and Junn give racial and ethnic identity a more prominent role in the formation of American identities. Masuoka and Junn (2013: 26-27) theorize that differing perceptions of national belonging between American racial and ethnic groups shape their attitudes toward immigration not just in terms of strength, but also the direction of effect. Although all native-born Americans are in-group members, racial minorities sense that their in-group membership is conditional and reflected in the American racial hierarchy. Racial minorities who have a stronger sense that their own fate is linked to that of their racial group, are more

likely to recognize and object to the exclusionary practices implicit in immigration policies. Consequently, their immigration policy views differ from those of whites (Masuoka and Junn 2013: 142-143). Whites who define American boundaries more exclusively strongly support decreased immigration levels, while the effect is similar for Asians, Latinos, and especially blacks, it is much smaller. Moreover, whites who perceive their life chances to be linked with those of other whites are more likely to favor decreasing immigration, while the opposite is true for blacks, Asians, and Latinos who perceive their fates to be linked with other members of their racial group. Masuoka and Junn's (2013) "racial prism of group identity" theory substantially advances this field of research by expanding the focus of this literature to not just include, but also to explain in a theoretically sophisticated way the divergence in attitudes toward immigrants between whites, blacks, Asian-Americans, and Latinos.

Social Desirability Bias

Although fewer Americans admit to overt prejudice against members of racial groups now than in the past, persistent opposition to policies favoring racial minorities suggests that attitudes may still be shaped by prejudice, even if survey respondents do not express prejudice overtly (Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, Krysan 1997; Quillian 1996). This social desirability bias occurs when survey and interview respondents offer non-prejudiced answers when in fact they hold prejudiced views (Krysan 2000; Quillian 2006). If social desirability bias leads to underreporting of prejudice, researchers may falsely reject prejudice as a cause of racial or immigration policy attitudes.

Most research on social desirability bias concerns attitudes toward racial policies, with attention only recently being paid to immigration policy. Janus's (2010) list experiment elicits obtrusive and unobtrusive measures of whether respondents support cutting off all immigration to the U.S. Survey respondents are randomly assigned survey two groups, in which they count from a list of either three or four statement count the number with which they agree. The control group is read three non-controversial statements, while the treatment group is given an additional statement about cutting off all immigration. The difference between the treatment and control group means provides an unobtrusive estimate of support for immigration restriction. Janus finds that college graduates without professional degrees and political liberals are particularly likely to underreport their preference for restrictive immigration policies. In contrast, Knoll (2013a) uses a similar list experiment to examine nativist views and finds that, in his sample of Kentucky voters, nativism is socially desirable and therefore over-reported, especially by respondents age 65 and older, conservatives, people with annual family incomes of less than $50,000, and those with less than a college degree. Furthermore, Knoll (2013a) finds that Kentuckians who are more afraid to express undesirable opinions are even more likely to express nativist views. Apparently, social desirability bias exaggerates group differences, since group tendencies trend in different directions. Because the list method only estimates the size of social desirability bias for groups, and not individuals, it only supports the criticism that social desirability bias threatens the validity of research on attitudes but does not offer a means of eliminating it.

Social desirability bias can be "controlled" in experiments in which research subjects' implicit biases can be compared against their explicit prejudices. Two methods are used: priming techniques, which prompt unconscious racial associations before asking a set of questions, and implicit association tests, which measure response delays when subjects are asked to pair concepts with a racial category (Quillian 2006). Only recently have these approaches been applied to study immigrant affect. Using implicit association tests, Pérez (2010) finds evidence of unreported negative attitudes toward Latino immigrants, but not toward white immigrants, and that implicit negative attitudes toward Latino immigrants predict opposition to both illegal and legal immigration net of conservatism, socioeconomic concerns, ethnocentrism, and education. Likewise, Knoll (2013b) finds that implicit preferences for American culture over Latino-American culture are associated with more conservative immigration policy preferences independently of explicit nativism, political ideology, economic threat, and anti-Hispanic affect. These studies indicate that not only is prejudice underreported but also that stereotype content is an important factor influencing attitudes toward immigration policy. How much implicit prejudice affects whites' or other groups' attitudes toward different race, ethnic, or immigrant groups is likely to depend on the history of contact, conflict, and the context in which those groups have encountered one another and how it has informed the in-groups' stereotypes of the out-group.

Conclusion

Traditional theories of prejudice provided a set of hypotheses and findings that provided a point of departure for social scientists studying attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Accumulated evidence shows that non-Hispanic white Americans' attitudes toward immigrants, Latinos, and Asians are akin to prejudice against blacks, but not as deeply rooted or pervasive. Theories of symbolic politics and social identities have usefully expanded on threat and contact hypotheses to show how people and places interact in ways that increase or decrease negative stereotyping. These newer studies are in fact more consistent with Blumer's (1958) assertion that prejudice stems from a sense of relative group position that emerges out of a specific context and changes over time, in other words, that the process of group position is dynamic and spatially uneven. This leaves us with the question of whether prejudice against immigrants is weaker than anti-black prejudice because attitudes are being measured earlier in the group positioning process or because unique and historically specific processes of group positioning for each racial and ethnic group result in stereotype content invoking different levels of threat and animus. Data and modeling approaches which allow for cross-level interactions provide traction in addressing this question, and answers will shed light on how native in-groups' affect the context of immigrant out-groups' reception and incorporation.

How researchers conceptualize group positioning has been complicated by the growing diversity of the U.S. population. In research on anti-black prejudice, the focus is on whites' attitudes toward blacks, with whites defined as the in-group. In research on attitudes toward immigrants, native-born residents should define the in-group, although many researchers nevertheless conceptualize the in-group as non-Hispanic whites. New theories of American identities and new data that allows for racial and ethnic group comparisons are promising developments that allow for a more nuanced understanding of attitude formation (e.g.

Schildkraut 2011; Masuoka and Junn 2013). Even still, most attention has been paid to the attitudes of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, while those of Arab Americans, Native Americans, and other smaller groups, not to mention all the national-origin groups within these pan-ethnic groups, are absent from the literature. The unique group identities shaped by different racialization experiences suggest that attitudes of these smaller groups will differ in important ways (Bashi Treitler 2013; Bozorgmehr, Bakalian, and Salman 2012; Masuoka and Junn 2013). Thus, a more dynamic and spatial approach to attitude formation could be complemented with a broader conceptualization of who constitutes the in-group or in-groups.

These new directions in the study of attitude formation have the potential to better connect attitudes toward immigrants with research on immigrant reception and inter-group relations. In the past decade, an exceptional body of research on new immigrant destinations has investigated natives' attitudes toward new immigrant populations (e.g. Fennelly 2008; Grey and Woodrick 2005; Hernández-León and Zuñiga 2005; Marrow 2011; Massey and Sánchez 2010; Shutika 2005). Effectively, these are studies of the early stages of attitude formation, in contexts where recently arrived, low-skill, Latino immigrants are competing with low-skill natives for jobs, maximizing the potential for group threat. Because there are many unauthorized immigrants among Latino immigrants, especially in new destinations, there is limited potential for contact to mitigate prejudice since natives and immigrants differ in their statuses and goals, lack opportunities for inter-group cooperation, and immigrants lack the support of authorities, laws, or customs. Consequently, these case studies maximize conditions for prejudice formation. In contrast, old destinations, like New York City, often minimize such conditions and show greater acceptance of immigrants (Waters and Kasinitz 2013). Research that intentionally contrasts sites on conflict and contact conditions would reveal a broader range of natives' attitude formation processes and how these play a role in immigrant reception.

Such research might explain the surprising finding that a growing minority of Americans supports increasing immigration levels and that fewer Americans want to reduce immigration levels. Several trends potentially explain this softening of Americans' attitudes. On one side of the equation, the potential for native-immigrant contact is greater due to the increasing number of immigrants and their geographic dispersal; fewer natives experience economic and cultural threat as their increased levels of education and the post-industrial global economy have taken them out of competition with low-skill immigrants and imbued them with more cosmopolitan world views; and finally, shifts in the racial and ethnic composition of the population have increased the numbers of minority in-group members who hold more pro-immigrant attitudes. On the other side of the equation, symbolic politics, particularly rhetoric around and use of federal and state laws that criminalize unauthorized immigrants and exacerbate perceptions of threat and conflict, contribute to a heightened sense of in- and out-group differences that inform prejudice. These politics may harden ethnoculturalists' views, but they may push others with more liberal views form more positive attitudes of immigrants and immigration, thus polarizing public opinion. While it is difficult to predict the overall direction of public opinion, there is ample evidence that the formation of attitudes toward immigrants is dynamic and context-dependent, and these

attitudes will shape the context of immigrant reception and the future of inter-group relations.

Acknowledgments

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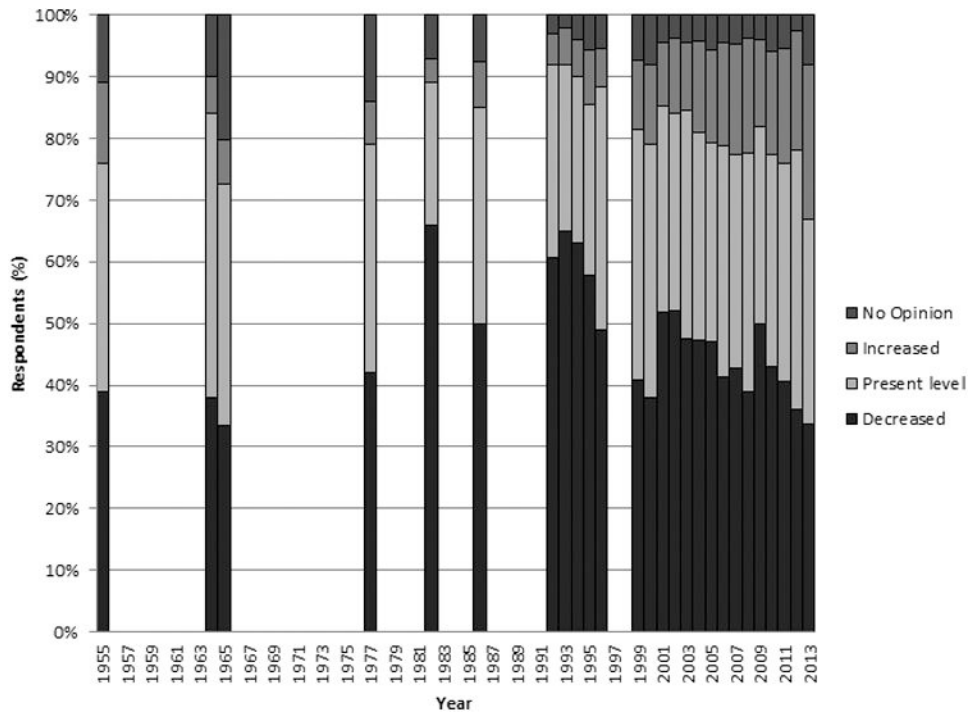
Figure 1. "Should immigration be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?" 1955-2013
Source: The survey results reported here were obtained from the iPOLL Databank provided
by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. Accessed June
19, 2013 at http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu
Note: Survey results were available for the years shown. Multiple surveys, with the number
in parentheses, were averaged in the following years: 1986(2), 1995(4), 1996(3), 2001(6),
2002(5), 2003(2), 2004(4), 2005(5), 2006(8), 2007(3), 2008(4), 2010(2), 2011(2), 2012(2),
2013(2).