REATIONS TO IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY IN AMERICA:
A COMPETITIVE CLASH OVER IDENTITY OR RESOURCES?

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REATIONS TO IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY IN AMERICA:  
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ABSTRACT

At the broadest level, the conflict regarding immigration has typically been attributed to two threats posed by immigrants: a competition over resources and a struggle to mitigate cultural threat. This thesis investigates the primary theories of intergroup behavior associated with these threats, realistic conflict theory and social identity theory, and uses them as a framework to examine recent trends in immigration policies, demographics, and public opinion. Using recent survey data, I test whether or not evidence of these threats and their impact on people’s attitudes about immigration are borne out by recent public opinion data. The results show that while both realistic and social identity threats play a role in influencing attitudes towards immigration, particular groups of immigrants tend to evoke certain types of threat. The most consistent finding was that the perception of realistic group conflict over resources strongly influences attitudes, particularly when it comes to unauthorized immigrants. Attitudes towards legal immigrants, however, were also influenced by social identity concerns. With regards to immigration policy preferences, the findings were somewhat mixed. While social identity concerns were associated with preferences for deportation, realistic threat was the predominant driving force behind opposition to policies allowing unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States. Consequently, any form of conflict management designed to reduce hostilities must be sensitive to the type of threat posed by immigration.
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When most people think about the concept of conflict, they might envision violent struggles where one or more groups are bent on each other’s destruction. Perhaps they think of wars, genocide, and other brutal contests for power. However conflict can also take on subtler forms as well, where violent force rarely bubbles to the surface. Indeed, a prominent textbook for the study of conflict merely defines conflict as a “perceived divergence of interest” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 7). One such conflict that fits this characterization is the immigration debate that has flooded the airwaves of the mainstream media and political campaigns. The contention is broadly portrayed as the following; immigration, particularly immigration from Mexico, is a threat to America’s wellbeing and must be dealt with accordingly.

The reasons for this contention typically relate to two schools of thought concerning conflict theory: realistic conflict theory and social identity theory. From the perspective of realistic conflict theory, social tensions related to immigration stem from the perception of competition over economic resources. Indeed, public discourse surrounding the debate often invokes this element. It also serves as the motivating factor for many of the political initiatives aimed at restricting immigration. On the other hand, according to social identity theory, the debate concerning immigration involves the clash of identities. In this line of reasoning, immigration undermines national identity. Some claim that contrasting notions of American national identity have led to different attitudes regarding immigration. In what might be termed the exclusive view, America’s national identity is predicated on certain elements of its history, such as its roots in Anglo-Protestant culture and the English language. Contrasting this view is
the *inclusive* view of American identity, which holds that America’s national identity is adaptive
and not defined by any specific race, religion, or official language. Rather it is a distinct product
of its liberal political ideology and respect for the rule of law.

This thesis examines recent public opinion on immigrants and immigration policy
through these theoretical frameworks. The findings indicate that both types of threat influence
attitudes towards immigration, although realistic threats appear more prevalent in attitudes
towards unauthorized immigration.

Consequently, different motivations for negative attitudes towards immigration point to
different solutions. To the extent that anti-immigrant attitudes are driven by perceived threats to
American identity, initiatives aimed at integration may prevent this issue from further escalation.
On the other hand, anti-immigrant attitudes that are motivated by realistic threats may be
mitigated by economic factors, some of which are uncontrollable. In the final section, some of
the possible mechanisms for conflict management are reviewed.
BACKGROUND

In 2006, nearly five million people in over 160 cities across the United States participated in protests and demonstrations to voice their opposition to H.R. 4437, otherwise known as the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (Barreto, Manzano, Ramirez, Rim, & Kathy, 2009). Although it ultimately failed in the Senate, this bill would have introduced greater penalties for providing aid to undocumented immigrants. Despite such protests, in 2007, state legislators across the country introduced over 1500 bills related to immigration, nearly three times as many introduced in the previous year (Hegen, 2008). The associated public backlash demonstrated by the 2006 protests, as well as the continued support for immigration related legislation, points to the prevalence of hostility at the societal level. This section provides an overview of some of the more contentious legislative efforts. It also examines the patterns of immigration and characteristics of immigrants in the United States.

Overview of Legislation Related to Immigrants and Immigration

The perception of immigration as a threat to the United States has given rise to various political initiatives seeking to mitigate the potential harm. Historically, such legislative attempts have sought to redress concerns related to either economic or cultural dimensions, and in some cases both. One of the first legislative attempts to restrict immigrants from competing economically with native born citizens was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which imposed a ban on Chinese immigration to the US. This legislation was in reaction to the California Gold Rush and the influx of Chinese born laborers who were competing for the same low skill mining...
jobs as Americans. It was accompanied by a sharp increase in political rhetoric directed against immigrant workers taking jobs that allegedly could have gone to native born American citizens (Kanazawa, 2005).

In the contemporary era, California’s Proposition 187 in 1994 exhibited similar economic concerns, albeit in a different manner. It sought to prohibit undocumented immigrants from receiving welfare benefits, public education, and other social services afforded to native born citizens (Larsen, Krumov, Van Le, Ommundsen, & Van der Veer, 2009). Although it was not a restrictionist policy like the Chinese Exclusionary Act, it nevertheless attempted to redress the perception of economic threat by reducing the strain placed on social services. While it was initially passed by California voters, it was overturned after a series of legal challenges. At other times, proposals like the English Language Amendment, made prominent in the early 1980s, have reflected cultural concerns by emphasizing the importance of the English language in maintaining the unity of America’s cultural heritage (Citrin, Reingold, Walters, & Green, 1990).

Recent initiatives have perhaps taken a harsher tone. In addition to restricting unauthorized immigrants from accessing social benefits, there have also been efforts to increase cooperation between state and federal governments to enforce existing immigration laws more efficiently, as well as to facilitate the removal of unauthorized immigrants. For instance, Arizona’s SB 1070, or the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act of 2010, specifically targets the unauthorized population of the state, but in a manner that is much more active than Proposition 187’s denial of social services. It seeks to enact a policy of “attrition through enforcement,” (Arizona SB 1070, § 1) primarily by enforcing Federal immigration laws. The basic idea behind attrition through enforcement policies is that increased levels of
immigration enforcement will create uncomfortable conditions for unauthorized immigrants, thus inducing them to leave on their own, or self-deport (Chin, Hessick, Massaro, & Miller, 2011). “Attrition through enforcement” policies have sparked considerable debate. Two of SB 1070’s particularly controversial provisions include charging non-citizens who fail to carry identification documents with a state misdemeanor, and requiring police to ascertain immigration status during a lawful stop or arrest, which could potentially lead to removal proceedings (Chin et al., 2011). In addition to being met with legal challenges, critics charge that SB 1070 is racially biased against Hispanics (Campbell, 2011). Arizona is not alone however. Other states have enacted comparable legislation, including Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Minnesota, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Utah (Bailey & Fitzgerald, 2010; Chin, Massaro, & Miller, 2010). Alabama’s recent HB 56 has been criticized as being particularly strict and racially biased (Lopez, Tsitouras, & Azuma, 2011). Reflecting perhaps just how powerful the reactions have been to such legislation, in a testimony delivered before the Birmingham City Council, the Director of Legal Advocacy for the Southern Poverty Law Center even described HB 56 as having “destroyed lives, ripped apart families, devastated communities, and left [Alabama’s] economy in shatters,” (Congressional Ad Hoc HB56 Hearing, 2011).

Demographics of Unauthorized Immigration

The tendency for recent anti-immigration policies to focus on unauthorized immigrant populations should perhaps come as no surprise. From 1990 to 2007, the unauthorized population in the United States increased from 3.5 million to an estimated peak of 12 million in
2007 (Cohn & Passel, 2010). Below, Figure 1 shows the estimated ranges of the total unauthorized immigrant population in the United States, as well as the unauthorized immigrant population from Mexico from 2000 to 2010, as reported by the Pew Research Center. As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, Mexicans comprise the majority of the total unauthorized population. After 2007, there was a decline in the overall unauthorized population by about 8%, which could be attributed to the decrease in the unauthorized population from Mexico. It is interesting to note that this time period was accompanied by a financial crisis and economic recession in the United States, reflecting perhaps a supply and demand dynamic between labor needs in the United States and unauthorized immigration from Mexico. This is explained by economic theories of migration, which traditionally have been concerned with the supply and demand of labor and wage differentials between geographic regions (Harris & Todaro, 1970). In macroeconomic terms, immigration is caused by regional differences in the supply and demand of labor. Individuals will migrate from labor abundant countries with low wages to countries that have labor shortages and, presumably, higher wages. Thus, hostility related to the unauthorized movement of migrant workers could be reduced through increased border enforcement, as well downturns in the U.S. economy.
Figure 1. Estimates of the Total U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population and Unauthorized Immigrant Population from Mexico, 2000-2010

Note: Bars indicate low and high points of the approximate 90% confidence interval.

Figure 1. Adapted from (Passel & Cohn, 2011)
Hispanic Immigration

While many different immigrant groups reside in the United States, Hispanic immigration is particularly unique due to a number of factors. One is the contiguous nature of Mexico and the United States and the two countries’ drastic economic inequality. In addition to facilitating the movement of migrant workers, this allows immigrants to remain in close contact with their relatives back home. Another is the scale of Mexican immigration. In the 1970s, about 640,000 Mexicans legally migrated to the United States. This figure increased to about 2,249,000 in the 1990s (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Moreover, immigrants from Mexico currently account for more than a quarter of the total foreign born population in the United States (Patten, 2012). On a similar note, while the Hispanic population in the United States includes other Spanish speaking nationalities, Mexicans comprise the largest group, and in 2010 accounted for almost two-thirds of the total Hispanic population (Motel & Patten, 2012). Population projections predict that by 2050, roughly 29% of all Americans will be of Hispanic descent, compared to the 14% in 2005 (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Unauthorized crossings also present a unique challenge. While other nationalities also enter illegally, Mexicans comprise the largest percentage of this population. In 2010, Mexicans accounted for 58% of the total foreign born unauthorized population (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Additionally, the regional concentration of immigrants plays a defining role in the debate. Currently, more than two-thirds of all Hispanic immigrants in the United States reside in the Southwest. Of these, nearly half live in California and Texas (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). Mexican immigration further differs from other types of immigration due to its persistent nature. Whereas immigrant groups in the past have varied in both size and composition, Mexican immigration steadily increased after 1965 and has only
recently tapered off (Passel et al., 2012). As such, many argue that these patterns have led to an overly unbalanced demographic change.

Some claim that Hispanic immigration is uniquely threatening. One of the major proponents of this view is Samuel Huntington. According to Huntington, Hispanic immigration, particularly immigration from Mexico, poses a threat to America in a way that no other kind of immigration could. In his controversial 2004 publication *Who are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, he points to the factors discussed above as ones that make Mexican immigration unique and particularly resistant to integration and assimilation (Huntington, 2004).

There is also the issue of the differences in ethnicity, culture, and language. Huntington alleges that Hispanic immigrants are especially averse to shedding their cultural identity, leading to the emergence of ethnocultural enclaves (Huntington, 2004). Furthermore, he cites low rates of intermarriage and acquisition of the English language as factors that make Hispanic immigrants unlikely to assimilate. Research supporting these claims is somewhat mixed. There is evidence that Hispanic immigrants hold on to their ethnic heritage when describing their identity. In a 2011 survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, 75% of Hispanic respondents reported that they most often describe their identity in terms of their family’s country of origin or as “Hispanic” or “Latino” as opposed to just 21% who use the term “American” (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012). Yet contrary to Huntington’s assertion, Hispanics exhibit significant rates of intermarriage. A study found that in 2010, interracial and interethnic marriages accounted for 26% of Hispanic marriages (Wang, 2012). The issue of language is a bit more complex. A 2007 study that used data from six nationally representative surveys found that among first generation Mexican immigrants, 71% spoke English only a little or not at all.
(Hakimzadeh & Cohn, 2007). This percentage is high in comparison to other immigrant groups. However, most research shows that by the second or third generation, children of Hispanic immigrants are no different than any other immigrant group in gaining proficiency in English. The contention that Hispanic immigrants are particularly unique is important because, as it will be discussed later on, the saliency of an outgroup may increase the probability of it being perceived as a threat to the ingroup.
THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in the previous section, immigration policies have frequently reflected concerns over the economic impact of immigrants, although certain groups of immigrants tend to evoke concerns more closely tied to cultural factors. Consequently, at the broadest level, research on immigration attitudes has generally focused on economic and cultural explanations. Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005) describe these as “a pair of competing hypotheses: a class-based economic-threat hypothesis that draws broadly on Marxist thought, and an identity-based cultural-threat hypothesis derived from sociological group-threat theories” (p. 105). Various studies testing these theories have produced somewhat mixed results. There is some evidence that noneconomic factors at the individual level, like educational attainment and having pluralistic cultural values, are more associated with positive attitudes towards immigration (Citrin & Sides, 2004; Fetzer, 2000). On the other hand, some studies show that negative evaluations of the national economy, rather than personal economic circumstances, are more closely linked to support for restrictionist attitudes (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997). Empirical work has also found that both economic and cultural factors can play significant roles in predicting attitudes towards immigration (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996). The following section reviews some of these studies. First though, the major theoretical concepts used in this analysis are outlined, as well as how they have been applied in previous research on public opinion towards immigration.
Theoretical Framework

Realistic Conflict Theory

Realistic conflict theory, alternatively known as realistic group conflict theory, posits that intergroup attitudes and behaviors are determined by the functional relations between groups (Sherif, 1966). Groups are inclined to cooperate and display positive attitudes towards other groups that share their material interests (Moghaddam, 2008). Conversely, groups are likely to exhibit negative attitudes and competitive behavior towards groups with opposing material interests. This theoretical concept was demonstrated by Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues through a series of field studies involving male youths at summer camps (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). According to Sherif, a group entails a number of individuals who have stable roles and status in relation to one another and share a set of values and norms that regulate their behavior. Intergroup relations occur whenever individuals interact in reference to their group identification (Sherif, 1966).

Sherif’s field studies, known collectively as the Robber’s Cave Experiment, involved four stages: the interpersonal phase, the intragroup phase, the intergroup phase, and the introduction of a superordinate goal (Liu, 2002; Moghaddam, 2008). In this experiment, twenty-two young boys from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who had no prior contact with one another were brought together at a summer camp. At first, during the interpersonal phase, the boys interacted normally with each other and formed friendships. Following this, in the intragroup phase, researchers divided the boys to create two groups. Friends were separated and assigned to different groups. Both groups were allowed to organize their own activities, and soon group structures and leaders emerged. Next came the intergroup phase, as the researchers
created competitive situations involving mutually incompatible goals. This entailed sporting contests between the two groups. The winners of such contests would receive prizes. As the study moved into this phase, the researchers observed several changes in group behavior. Intergroup attitudes and behaviors became increasingly negative and hostile, while intragroup solidarity increased, as did the preference for more aggressive leaders. Boys who had been friends in the first stage turned into enemies. In other words, the competition over resources had generated intergroup conflict. In the final stage of the experiment, the researchers sought to improve intergroup relations through the introduction of superordinate goals. Sherif defined superordinate goals as “goals which are compelling for members of two or more groups and cannot be ignored, but which cannot be achieved by the efforts and resources of one group alone” (Sherif & Sherif, 1979, p. 11). In other words, the achievement of these goals required the cooperation of both groups. In the study, this took the form of a broken down truck carrying food supplies, which could only be pulled into camp through the collective efforts of all the participants. After several similar events, intergroup hostilities were set aside and the two groups essentially merged into one (Moghaddam, 2008).

For the purpose of this discussion, it is useful to highlight several key tenets regarding realistic conflict theory and its implications. According to this theory, intergroup relations are a function of the compatibility of goals between groups. Compatible goals encourage positive relations, while incompatible goals, caused by resource competition, lead to negative relations and conflict. An important caveat is that actual competition is not necessary for intergroup conflict. The mere perception of competition over limited resources is enough to impact intergroup relations (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998). In this context, resources refer to
economic goods like wealth, jobs, and social benefits, as well as a broad range of material interests. Moreover, the struggle over resources is perceived as a zero-sum game, where one group’s gains are achieved at the direct expense of the other group (Wilson, 2001). Therefore, the attitudes and behavior of an ingroup towards an outgroup are determined by the potential challenge that outgroup poses. Competitive outgroups are perceived as threats and are likely to be viewed negatively by the ingroup (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Greater perceptions of threat will invoke higher levels of hostility from the ingroup, as well as higher levels of ingroup solidarity (Liu, 2002). LeVine and Campbell argue that when resource competition is present, intergroup contact and proximity increase hostility (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). This is in line with Allport’s often cited contact hypothesis, which predicts that increased intergroup proximity will decrease hostilities only under conditions of equal status, goal alignment, cooperation, and adherence to social norms (1954).

The Instrumental Model of Group Conflict

Researchers have also attempted to adapt realistic conflict theory in order to identify strategic responses to perceived group competition caused by immigration. One model frequently cited is the instrumental model of group conflict put forth by Esses, Jackson, and Armstrong (1998; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2008). In this model, realistic conflict theory is applied along with social dominance theory, which essentially postulates that dominant groups preserve their positions through maintaining and enhancing social hierarchies and group based inequalities (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Esses et al. posit that “resource stress and the salience of a potentially competitive outgroup lead to perceived group competition for resources”
(1998, p. 702). Certain factors can increase the saliency of potential competitors, such as distinctiveness and increased size. An ingroup is more likely to feel threatened when confronted by a particularly distinct outgroup that is seen as capable of taking away resources the ingroup is interested in. Consequently, the ingroup will engage in strategic behavior to remove the source of the competition. This includes attempting to decrease the outgroup’s competitiveness, attempting to increase the ingroup’s competitiveness, or avoiding the outgroup by decreasing proximity (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998). In regards to immigration, the instrumental model of group conflict is worth noting primarily because these strategies can be seen in practice through opposition to social programs that potentially benefit immigrant groups or support for restrictionist policies. The model is schematically represented below in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. An instrumental model of group conflict**

![Diagram of instrumental model of group conflict](source)

Source: (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998)
Social Identity Theory

Whereas realistic conflict theory focuses on the role of competing material interests in predicting intergroup relations, social identity theory primarily focuses on the role played by social factors. Social identity theory can be traced back to the early work of Henri Tajfel. Tajfel expanded on the idea that individuals are motivated to favor their ingroup. He sought to explain the process of ingroup identification, alleging that other theories, such as realistic conflict theory, failed to do so (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel asserted that groups are formed according to the categorization of nonsocial stimuli, which leads individuals to minimize differences within groups and exaggerate differences between groups. Unlike other researchers, Tajfel claimed that ingroup favoritism could be formed on the basis of a “minimal category” (Moghaddam, 2008). He demonstrated this through an experiment known as the minimal group paradigm (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). In this procedure, individuals are first asked to perform an arbitrary task, such as estimating the number of dots on a screen. Participants are then given the results of their performance and are placed into one of two groups. While the participants believe that this placement is based on their performance, groups are actually randomly assigned. Participants are then asked to distribute points between the two groups. Points can either be distributed equally, or in ways that give greater rewards to one group. Research shows that participants tend to exhibit ingroup favoritism, as individuals consistently choose to distribute as many points as possible to their own group. These findings indicate that even social categorization based on a minimal distinction can produce group bias. In a later study, Tajfel modified the experiment so that points could only be distributed according to four options: equal distribution, maximal joint profit, maximal ingroup profit, or maximal margin of profit for the ingroup. The results showed
that while participants still exhibited ingroup favoritism, they consistently chose to distribute points in such a way that maximized the margin of profit for the ingroup (Tajfel, 1978). This subverts the predictions of economic self-interest models, as the preferred pattern of point distribution involved the greatest profit differential rather than the highest reward (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Such findings from the minimal group studies led to further analysis of social identity theory.

According to Moghaddam, there are five basic tenets of social identity theory (Moghaddam, 2008). First, individuals are motivated to achieve a positive and distinct identity. As shown by the minimal group paradigm, this identity distinction can be derived from even a trivial criterion. However, certain criteria, such as skin color or religion, give rise to social categories with cultural meaning. Depending on the cultural context, some criteria are more important in substantiating intergroup differences than others. Second, social identity plays a central role in an individual’s fulfillment of identity needs. Group membership provides emotionally significant benefits such as self-esteem and self-concept. Depending on the cultural context, an individual’s social identity might be derived from membership to one group, or in some societies, multiple groups. Third, groups are inclined to assess their status through social comparisons with other groups. The nature of this assessment can influence intergroup relations. Fourth, individuals who feel dissatisfied with their social identity will seek to improve their situation only under certain conditions. These include the perceived legitimacy and stability of the social order, both of which are influenced by cultural context (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Fifth, groups that wish to improve or defend their social identity will engage in context specific strategies. These strategies are examined below.
It is important to note that ingroup favoritism is not automatic. Tajfel and Turner identified several requirements for ingroup favoritism to emerge. These include the internalization of group membership as part of one’s self-concept, a societal context that allows for intergroup comparisons of salient attributes, and the perceived relevance of comparable outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Similarly, the mere presence of an outgroup does not necessarily lead to conflict. Rather, intergroup hostility in this model is a reflection of the extent to which the ingroup perceives the outgroup as a threat to their positive and distinct social identity.

Social identity theory has important implications for intergroup behavior. Individuals are driven to maintain a positive and distinct social identity. Groups that have negative or threatened social identities may engage in certain strategies to rectify their situation, either at the individual or collective level. These strategies include individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The choice of strategy depends on group status, the perceived permeability of group boundaries, and the perceived security of group relations. Group status is determined through relevant social comparisons. Positive comparisons produce high group status, while negative comparisons produce low group status. Security, in this assessment, refers to the stability and legitimacy of group relations (Haslam, 2004). Individual mobility, as the name implies, occurs on an individual basis as members of low-status groups attempt to leave their ingroup in order to join another group with higher status. It is the most likely option in societies with permeable group boundaries (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 2000).

Unlike individual mobility, social creativity and social competition involve the perception that the social system can be changed, and that group boundaries are impermeable.
In these strategies, individuals believe they are unable to leave a group with a negative or threatened social identity. Both high and low-status groups are likely to engage in social creativity when group relations are secure (Haslam, 2004). This strategy involves enhancing or defending the ingroup’s positive distinctiveness by changing certain elements of the social comparison. Social identity theorists have identified three ways ingroups engage in social creativity: altering the dimension of group comparison, redefining the values of comparisons so that previously negative comparisons are viewed as positive, or choosing a new outgroup in order to achieve a positive comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). High-status groups may display different forms of social creativity, such as benign discrimination that indirectly reinforces the inferiority of threatening outgroups (Platow et al., 1999). When group relations are insecure, high-status groups may engage in social creativity through more obvious discriminatory behaviors that reinforce their group’s superiority (Haslam, 2004).

Social competition is likely to take place when the relative status between groups is perceived as insecure, and groups can imagine a cognitive alternative to the status quo (Haslam, 2004). In this strategy, the interests and values of the ingroup are directly opposed to those of the outgroup. Thus, it is likely to involve more obvious forms of social conflict and intergroup hostility than social creativity. Low-status groups may use this strategy if they believe their inferior status is illegitimate and it is possible to improve it. High-status groups are likely to engage in social competition if they feel that their positive distinct social identity is threatened. In order to maintain the status quo, high-status groups may search for ways to enhance group distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Haslam (2004) provides a helpful schematic depicting
the relationship between the perceived social structure and the strategies that high-status groups engage in to maintain positive social identities. This is shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The relationship between belief structure and strategies for maintaining positive social identity for members of high-status groups

Source: (Haslam, 2004)
Self-Categorization Theory

An important offshoot of social identity theory is self-categorization theory. Self-categorization theory was developed by Turner and others to explain the cognitive underpinnings of group membership (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). According to this theory, an individual’s self-concept moves along a continuum between personal and social identity. Group categories are embodied in a prototype, which is perceived as having the most common characteristics shared by that group. Social identity is constructed in part as a measure of how an individual identifies with the prototypic group member (Turner et al., 1987). Self-categorization theorists contend that social categories, such as age and gender, vary in saliency, as they are dependent on the contemporary societal context (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Hayes, 1992). Individuals are most likely to identify as members of an ingroup when the use of that ingroup’s label accentuates the similarities between group members and highlights the dissimilarities of outgroup members (Turner et al., 1987). Thus, identities are constantly shifting in order to reflect the context of the immediate social comparison (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). In this way, social identity is a dynamic process that shifts according to contextual changes in category salience and group prototypes (Huddy, 2001). In the analysis below, self-categorization theory will be particularly useful in examining how different forms of American identity influence attitudes towards immigration, particularly in regards to the potential variations produced by the varying minimal criteria for affiliation.
Review of Literature

Realistic Conflict Theory and Immigration

Realistic conflict theory has frequently been used as an analytical frame of reference in research on attitudes towards immigration due to its emphases on group competition and the related socioeconomic forces that influence intergroup behavior. It has been applied in various ways, and has been the basis for theoretical frameworks designed to study relations between majority and minority groups. One such theory is the power threat hypothesis, which essentially states that “the presence of an outgroup in sufficient numbers will generate competition for scarce resources and thus local hostility” (Hopkins, 2010, p. 41). While the power threat hypothesis was originally developed to study racial attitudes between whites and minorities (Blalock, 1967), it has been used in the more general context of relations between majority and minority groups. When applied specifically to immigration, the power threat hypothesis predicts that anti-immigration sentiment should be higher in areas with a high concentration of immigrants, as this is where economic and political competition would be the most apparent. Yet support for this prediction has been inconsistent. In a study that examined voter support for Proposition 187 in California, researchers found that white voters living in predominantly Hispanic counties were more likely to support the measure, which barred illegal immigrants from receiving government services (Campbell, Wong, & Citrin, 2006). However, as the authors of the study contend, this is likely due to the fact that the political campaign for Proposition 187 emphasized California’s rapidly increasing Hispanic population. Moreover, Campbell et al. (2006) found that race did not play a significant role in predicting whites’ voting behavior on two other immigration related ballot initiatives in California.
Other studies have failed to establish similar connections. Oliver and Wong (2003) found that whites who lived in racially diverse communities were less likely to exhibit negative attitudes towards Hispanics than whites who lived in racially homogeneous communities. Researchers examining the adoption of E-Verify laws at the state level found that the absolute size of a state’s foreign born population was not an indicator of adoption patterns (Newman, Johnston, Strickland, & Citrin, 2012). States with large foreign born populations did not exhibit greater rates of policy adoption than states with small foreign born populations. However, states experiencing large relative increases in their immigrant populations were more likely to adopt E-Verify laws than states with stable immigrant populations. Hopkins (2010) suggests the lack of support for the power threat hypothesis should not be surprising. First, Americans tend to be unaware of their demographic surroundings. Studies continue to find particularly low correlations between the actual and perceived neighborhood racial composition among white Americans (Chiricos, Hogan, & Gertz, 1997; Wong, 2007). Moreover, immigrants may not always be socially visible to native-born Americans, as these two groups often live and work in different areas (Fischer, 2003; Hellerstein & Neumark, 2008). Consequently, the power threat hypothesis may not be an accurate predictor of attitudes towards immigration in most cases.

Another relevant application of realistic conflict theory involves the economic vulnerability hypothesis. According this postulate, the perception of competition due to immigration will be more salient for those experiencing some form of economic insecurity than for those who feel economically secure (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Burns & Gimpel, 2000). Economic vulnerability has been linked to various structural forces, and has been tested at both the individual and group level. At the group level, one of the most prominent measures
for economic vulnerability is the labor market competition model, which essentially predicts that competition over jobs will lead to anti-immigrant sentiment among those who are competing with immigrants for jobs. Scheve and Slaughter (2001) test this prediction using data from the National Election Studies surveys from 1992, 1994, and 1996, finding that “less-skilled workers are significantly more likely to prefer limiting immigrant inflows into the United States,” (p. 133). Higher-skilled workers, presumably secure in their labor market, expressed preferences for less restrictionist policies. It is important to note that this study measured skill as a function of educational attainment and occupational classification, citing the Heckscher-Ohlin model of international trade as the theoretical basis for doing so. Some analysts contend that education may not be an appropriate proxy for skill, “arguing that anti-immigrant sentiment stems from intolerance or lack of knowledge, rather than economic self-interest,” (Kessler, 2001, p. 20). In studies where the measurement of skill has been tied to other factors, such as income level, findings for the labor market competition model have not been as conclusive (Citrin et al., 1997).

At the individual level, it has been suggested that personal financial stress should lead to negative attitudes toward immigrants and greater support for restrictionist policies. In this hypothesis, economic disadvantage leads to the scapegoating of immigrants (Citrin et al., 1997). However, this claim has received limited empirical support (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). In contrast, evaluations of the national economy, perhaps reflecting some degree of collective concern, have been linked to attitudes toward immigration. In a study analyzing the 1994 General Social Survey data, Chandler and Tsai (2001) find that negative evaluations of the national economy are associated with greater support for restrictionist policies.
Another group level measurement for realistic threat is the fiscal burden model. In the past, the fiscal burden model has reflected concerns that state and local governments are heavily burdened by the cost of providing social services to non-citizens (Passel & Fix, 1994). Although public opinion polls in the late 1990s indicated that there was a general belief that “immigrants tend to end up on welfare and use a disproportionately high share of government services,” the relationship between attitudes towards immigrants and the associated fiscal burdens is somewhat more nuanced (Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw, & Yang, 1997, p. 358) The traditional fiscal burden model predicts that attitudes towards immigrants are related to both the skills of the immigrants and the socioeconomic level of the receiving natives (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010). Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) find that wealthy and poor natives are equally opposed to low skilled immigration, regardless of the related fiscal burdens, but that poor natives are more opposed to low-skilled immigration in states with high fiscal burdens than in states with low burdens. This is presumably due to the belief among poor natives that immigration places constraints on welfare benefits.

Social Identity Theory and Immigration

In contrast to realistic conflict theory, social identity theory has frequently been used as an analytical framework to examine the intangible social impact of immigration. In this line of reasoning, an individual’s attitude towards immigration is tied to how their social identity is impacted. Negative immigration attitudes would result from the perception that immigrants threaten the ingroup’s positive and distinct social identity. However, as self-categorization theory implies, this depends on members’ identifying with an ingroup that perceives immigrants
as members of a salient outgroup, which may not always be the case. While group identification of this type can be related to various social categories, national identity is often cited as a particularly relevant category within the context of public opinion research on immigration attitudes. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that other social categorizations may play a role in determining immigration attitudes. Thus, before moving on to the issue of national identity, it is instructive to examine some of more influential alternative social categories, such as those related to race or political preferences. These are briefly covered below.

The relationship between social identity and race has received considerable attention in previous studies. However, as discussed earlier, recent studies show that the link between race and attitudes towards immigrants is inconsistent across different contexts. (Campbell, Wong, & Citrin, 2006). An alternative basis for social identity involves political preferences, including identification with a major political party or the adoption of a political ideology as a frame of reference for self-concept (Huddy, 2001). Political identity is expected to strongly affect ingroup identification and outgroup antipathy because it is a type of identity that is collective in nature and therefore likely to be particularly salient from the standpoint of the individual (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995). However, the extent to which political party identification impacts attitudes towards immigration may have more to do with subscribing to the party’s political platform concerning immigration policy. In this way, attitudes towards immigration may be primarily determined by an individual’s political beliefs rather than a struggle over identity. Indeed, research shows that the public in the United States frequently exhibits opposite views on immigration according to political party, with Republicans typically espousing more concerned attitudes towards immigration than Democrats.
As opposed to the racial and political social categorizations described above, national identity is perhaps the most significant social categorization with regards to immigration attitudes, as immigrants are by definition from a foreign national origin. The majority of contemporary work surrounding the concept of America’s national identity tends to view the construct as multidimensional. These dimensions tend to coincide with what Rogers Smith refers to as the “multiple political traditions” of America (Smith, 1993). Smith identifies three specific traditions, including liberalism, civic republicanism, and ethnoculturalism. The various concepts emphasized in each tradition have generally been associated with the required criteria for affiliation in various versions of American identity, which differ in their tendency to include and exclude certain groups.

Ethnoculturalism reflects the exclusive form of American identity and can be thought of as an “essence based” identity (Li & Brewer, 2004). Also ascribed to this view are homogenous elements of America’s cultural composition. Chief among these are the Christian religion and the Anglo-Protestant culture. Consequently, the exclusive view is frequently associated with pro-restrictionist sentiments. It entails a narrow criterion for affiliation with the ingroup that many immigrant groups may have difficulty achieving.

In contrast to the exclusive form’s foundation on a shared ethnocultural heritage, the inclusive form of national identity highlights America’s civic culture of liberal political ideology. It prioritizes political participation, economic individualism, and egalitarian social interactions (Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990). While the inclusive form of American national identity is
predominantly associated with the liberal tradition, civic republicanism is also described as existing more towards the inclusive end of the affiliation spectrum, although the extent of its inclusion typically varies by study. Inclusive forms of American national identity are regarded as particularly compatible with a diverse society, and less susceptible to extreme restrictionist tendencies (Schildkraut, 2007).

It is important to note that these three traditions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The specific elements constructing each of the national identity traditions are often found as overlapping attributes in the extant literature, with little agreement as to the definitive composition of any one tradition. This is particularly true for the issue language, as will be seen later on, (Schildkraut, 2005). The idea of a set of required criteria necessary to possess in order to be considered a true American has also been referred to as the “American Creed,” (Wright & Citrin, 2009). This concept is covered in greater detail in the next section.

The American Creed

Research concerning America’s national identity, as seen above, has often produced inconsistent and sometimes even contradictory findings. To be sure, there is no agreed upon definition of what is means to be American in the existing literature (Schildkraut, 2005). Nevertheless, while the constituent parts of this concept are inconsistently defined, a common thread running through much of work involves a core identity structure referred to as the “American Creed.” This “Creed” is often associated with various aspects of America’s social and political history. With respect to self-categorization theory, the concept of an American Creed may reflect the most common characteristics associated with the group prototype for
America’s national identity. The following sections explore various forms of the American Creed, paying particular attention to how different versions of the Creed give rise to national identities with varying degrees of inclusion.

**Huntington’s Creed**

According to Huntington, American identity is the product of America’s history, which is derived from the American Creed (Huntington, 2004). This Creed is the distinct product of Anglo-Protestant culture. Interestingly, Huntington points out that America was founded by settlers rather than immigrants. These settlers were British Protestants, and he reasons that America would be markedly different had it been founded by the French, Spanish, or Portuguese Catholics. Therefore, the roots of the American Creed are based in Anglo-Protestant culture. This culture includes the English language, religious commitment to Christianity, the rule of law, the rights of individuals, and the Protestant values of individualism. He claims that national identity is predicated on these principles, and that a unified national conscious is only made possible through Americans’ acceptance of them. Furthermore, they inform the various aspects of public life and civil society, as well as provide the foundation for liberal democracy, justice, and law.

Huntington does not base his conception of American identity on race or ethnicity. As he points out, during the 19th century America was the recipient of a wide variety of European immigrants, including Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians. Consequently, by the onset of World War II, a common ethnicity had been largely absent for quite some time. Nevertheless, Huntington asserts there are distinct characteristics that could potentially exclude certain groups.
from being considered as possessing an American identity. In this way, while Huntington includes some of the elements that might be found in an inclusive form of identity, such as commitment to the rule of law and the rights of individuals, his version of national identity is still predominately on the exclusive side of the spectrum due to its fundamental basis on a Creed that demands cultural, religious, and linguistic homogeneity.

In the context of immigration to America, Huntington’s version of national identity is somewhat problematic, as it is particularly restrictive towards the largest immigrant group, namely those coming from Mexico. The obvious barriers preventing the inclusion of this group include the prioritization of fluency in the English language and identification with Anglo-Protestant culture. Huntington even alleges that the group’s denominational tendency towards Catholicism may not be conducive to adopting the dissenting Protestant values of individualism, as such values may be at odds with the communitarian values espoused in Catholicism. As a result, immigrants from Mexico, at least in Huntington’s model, failing to join a national ingroup based on America’s Creedal identity, would constitute a significantly salient outgroup due to their sizeable population and distinct culture, thereby increasing the likelihood of coming into conflict with members of the ‘American ingroup’, who would invariably perceive the immigrant outgroup as a threat to their positive and distinct social identity.

_The Changing Nature of America’s Creedal Identity_

The bleak situation predicted above in Huntington’s model is far from universally accepted. Critics charge Huntington with having an incomplete view of American history with regards to America’s national identity. They frequently point out that although America’s
history is checkered with dark elements, such as Puritanism, xenophobia, moralistic intolerance, and authoritarianism, America’s culture has not stalled on any one of these aspects (Fraga & Segura, 2006). As Arthur Schlesinger writes, a great deal of Western thought, which Huntington would cite as a central element of the American Creed, has been devoted to challenging its own practices (Schlesinger, 1991). In other words, American society is not perpetually bound to its historical misdoings. Rather, as Schlesinger asserts, the American Creed is susceptible to, if not dependent on, change and transformation. Historically, some of these changes have included reforms in voter eligibility requirements, the abolition of slavery, and the civil rights reforms of the 1960s. Thus, it appears there is the possibility of an alternative American Creed, one that prioritizes a commitment to liberal political ideology over a shared cultural or religious heritage.

A widely cherished belief about America is that it is somehow different than other nations and its prosperity has partly emanated from that distinction. While it is certainly the case that many countries base their national identities on a common language, religion, or ethnicity, America is not necessarily similarly constrained (Citrin et al., 1990). Proponents of this view have argued for an American national identity that focuses on a common political ideology rather than ethnocultural homogeneity, asserting that the shared values of liberalism and democracy would be highly accommodating in a diverse society. This version of the American Creed can be found in Smith’s (1997) civic identity model. Smith’s model is based on the aforementioned shared elements of America’s political ideology and history. One is the value of individual liberalism and the mutual acknowledgment of individual rights. Another is that America’s democratic republicanism gives rise to a collective fate. Lastly, America’s political history is one of contestation for which groups are included and excluded. This last criterion is particularly
important in the context of immigrant groups struggling to establish themselves, as it refers to the struggle that numerous groups have endured to receive the right to participate equally in civil and political life in America. A key emphasis here is that this view of identity prioritizes civic engagement as a necessary component of membership (Schildkraut, 2007). Thus, the civic identity model transcends ethnocultural and religious differences, providing a broad basis for ingroup affiliation. Therefore, even a highly unique immigrant group could achieve membership in the ‘American ingroup’ as long as they were willing to embrace America’s liberal political ideology, which would be demonstrated through a commitment to civic engagement. However, as the primary basis for inclusion in this identity model is contingent upon respecting American political institutions and laws, unauthorized immigrants would be automatically excluded. It is also important to note that this model leaves open to question the role played by language, as it would presumably be difficult to engage significantly in civil and political life without being able to easily communicate with fellow society members (this issue is addressed in greater detail later on).

National Identity and Immigration

Social identity theory plays a key role in explaining the casual mechanism through which varying forms of American identity influence attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policies. According to social identity theory, intergroup attitudes are primarily determined by the extent to which one group challenges the identity of another group. This implies that group relations will be strained between two highly distinct groups. In the context of immigration, this implies that particularly distinct immigrant groups will elicit negative attitudes from the native
ingroup. These distinctions are reflected in the characteristics that make the immigrant and native populations separate groups. The dynamic through which these distinctions are removed is known as assimilation.

Just as the concept of national identity is multidimensional, so is assimilation. Individuals can assimilate to certain dimensions of national identity, while remaining unassimilated to others. Assimilation involves the minimization of differences between immigrants and natives, but at the same time “leaves open difference along other, often cultural, lines,” (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008, p. 163). Inclusive forms of national identity facilitate the integration of immigrant groups by offering broad criteria for affiliation, thus imposing lesser assimilation requirements. On the other hand, exclusive forms may prevent immigrants from being considered members of the national society, and can lead to negative attitudes towards unassimilated immigrant groups.

According to Skerry, previous research has erred by associating assimilation with primarily three criteria (2000). These include accepting English as the national language, exhibiting the Protestant work ethic of being “self-reliant, hardworking, and morally upright,” and respecting “America’s liberal democratic and egalitarian principles,” (Skerry, 2000, p. 58). An additional criterion that is often included in assimilation research involves the adoption of the destination country’s national culture at some level. Again, it is worth noting here that the perceived salience of immigrants as a recognizable outgroup increases the likelihood that an ingroup will view them as a threat to their positive and distinct social identity. Paxton and Mughan (2006) addressed the perceived threat to American culture posed by immigrants as an assimilationist threat. According to their study, the root of the cultural threat perception lies in
the perceived failure of immigrants to assimilate by adopting the cultural norms and lifestyle of Americans, a belief reflected in Huntington’s work. This would tend to imply that certain immigrants may or may not be seen as a unitary outgroup given that some immigrant groups are likely to assimilate better than others.

Research on the criteria for assimilation has frequently yielded inconsistent results across different studies. Of particular interest to the present work are the criteria of language and respect for American political institutions and laws. These are addressed below.

*The Role of Language*

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson traces the historical roots of the relationship between language and the rise of the national conscious (Anderson, 1991). He identifies three reasons that form the basis of this relationship, all of which emanate from the emergence of print media. One is that through the rise of print languages, readers of the same language became aware of each other through the exchange of print media. Another is that print media gave rise to a “fixity” or stability to languages, which offered stabilizing tendencies for exchanges. Third, the rise of print languages also gave rise to languages of power, as the dominant languages initially saturated the print media. While Anderson’s study concerns the initial role that language had in establishing a national conscious, lessons can be drawn with regards to the role of language in establishing or maintaining a national identity. The dominant role that language has as the primary means for the exchange of ideas will likely never change. Consequently, it would be reasonable to assert that individuals who speak different languages will not be able to freely exchange ideas without facilitation. Along this line of reasoning, one
might argue that it would be extremely difficult to forge an ingroup affiliation with individuals who cannot freely enter into the exchange of ideas with the rest of the ingroup. Such a significant barrier to interaction would be sufficient to constitute a distinct outgroup.

Furthermore, attitudes concerning the impact of the preservation of the minority language influence support for minority language right policies. This is particularly true for attitudes regarding bilingual education in public school (Citrin et al., 1990). It was found that support for bilingual education was highly correlated with beliefs that such education would lead to faster assimilation. On the other hand, opposition to bilingual education policies was highly related to beliefs that such education policies would only perpetuate ethnolinguistic enclaves. In this way, the issue of language constitutes a core challenge to the American identity, at least from the perspective of English speaking Americans (Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw, & Yang, 1997). According to Paxton and Mughan (2006), assimilation is impossible without interaction, which is impossible in the absence of a common language. Therefore, outgroup hostility would be heightened by the absence of a common language, presumably English in the United States.

The importance of language for affiliation with the ingroup is also reflected in attitudes towards unauthorized immigrants. Many Americans proudly assert that the United States is a diverse society, hosting a plurality of religions, ethnicities, and cultures. While some scholars may paint another picture, the one aspect that is inarguably consistent among the majority of legal American citizens is their fluency in English, and research shows that fluency is particularly low among the unauthorized population, especially for the first generation (Passel & Cohn, 2011). However, as Martin points out, this is likely attributable to the recent arrival of many unauthorized immigrants (Martin, 2005). Moreover, the children of unauthorized
immigrants typically exhibit similar rates of acquisition of the English language as other immigrants groups.

The Role of Respect for American Political Institutions and Laws

As previously discussed, the most inclusive form of national identity is perhaps one that prioritizes respect for American political institutions and the rule of law as the primary means for affiliation. In terms of social identity theory, the respect for American political institutions and the rule of law constitute a group norm, one that most individuals can conform to (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). However, in the context of immigration to America, unauthorized immigrants would be automatically excluded, as by definition their presence in America violates the rule of law.
DATA AND METHODS

Data Source

The data source for this paper comes from the Transatlantic Trends: Immigration survey (TTI), which is conducted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and its partners. The TTI is an annual survey that measures public opinion regarding immigration and integration issues and includes data from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. However, for the purposes of my research, the data set was limited to responses from the United States. The TTI survey has been conducted every year since 2008, and the results are available to the public. This paper draws on data from the 2011 survey results, as they are the most recent. Interviews for the 2011 TTI were conducted between August 25th, 2011 and September 18th, 2011. The sample size for the United States was 1,001 and was a national geographic representation based on the current census of individuals aged 18 years old and above. The survey was conducted using computer assisted telephone interviews using random digit dialing. The TTI data was selected for analysis because the questions asked in the survey address the primary issues of concern in this paper, specifically attitudes towards immigration and related economic and cultural factors.

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a The 2011 Transatlantic Trends: Immigration survey is a joint project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Compagnia di San Paolo, Barrow Cadbury Trust, and Fundacion BBVA.
Main Variables and Measures

Dependent Variables

The main dependent variables used in this analysis were responses to questions about attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. Five of the survey questions were selected as the dependent variables for the regression analyses. Three of these questions address attitudes towards the impact of immigration, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants. Two address attitudes towards policies for dealing with illegal immigrants. All models were analyzed through binary logistic regressions. The descriptive statistics for how each question was answered according to total responses, gender, age, and political party preference are provided in the Appendix.

The first question (labeled Q27 in the TTI) asked respondents if they felt immigration was more of a problem or an opportunity:

“Some people say that immigration is more of a problem for the United States. Others see it as more of an opportunity for the United States. Which comes closer to your point of view?”

Responses were coded 1 for ‘more of a problem,’ and 2 for ‘more of an opportunity.’ The next two questions (labeled Q4.1 and Q4.2 in the TTI) asked the respondents if they were worried about legal and illegal immigration:
“Can you tell me if you are worried or not about legal immigration?”

“Can you tell me if you are worried or not about illegal immigration?”

Responses for both questions were coded 1 for ‘worried,’ and 2 for ‘not worried.’

The fourth question (labeled Q12 in the TTI) asked respondents whether illegal immigrants should be required to return to their country of origin or allowed the opportunity to remain in the United States:

“Thinking now about immigrants who are currently living in America illegally, should they be required to return to their country of origin or be given the opportunity to obtain legal status that allows them to stay here?”

Responses to this question were coded 1 for ‘they [should] be required to return to their country of origin’ and 2 for ‘[they should] be given the opportunity to obtain legal status that allows them to stay.’

The fifth question (labeled Q14 in the TTI) asked respondents whether they would support a law that granted legal resident status to illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children through military enlistment or college enrollment:

“Would you support or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college?”
Responses to this question were coded 1 for ‘oppose,’ and 2 for ‘support.’ Unlike the previous question concerning immigration policy, this question provides an opportunity to examine attitudes towards a specific proposal, namely the Dream Act.

Control Variables

The models included several categories of control variables. The first set of control variables include demographic indicators commonly cited in public opinion research, such as gender, age, level of education, and race. Race was captured by two variables. One included an indicator variable for whether or not the respondent identified as Hispanic. The other included an indicator variable for whether or not the respondent identified as white. A control variable for citizenship was also included. The next set of control variables measured political ideology. This was captured by two variables: political party and political leaning. The variable for ‘political party’ was a compilation of two survey questions, the first asking respondents whether they thought of themselves as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else and the second which asked those respondents who answered either ‘Independent’ or ‘something else’ whether they were more inclined towards the Republican or Democratic Party. The variable included in the models consequently only includes values of 1 for Democrat, 2 for Republican, and 0 for nonresponses. The variable for ‘political leaning’ was measured on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being ‘very liberal’ and 7 being ‘very conservative.’ The final set of control variables indicated the respondent’s personal household financial situation as well as their perception of the nation’s economy.
Main Independent Variables

The main independent variables were questions from the TTI survey that most closely represented the implications of realistic conflict theory and social identity theory. Realistic conflict theory was captured by two questions (labeled Q18.1 and Q18.5 in the TTI). If realistic conflict theory was an accurate predictor of respondents’ attitudes towards immigration, as captured by the dependent variables in the models, these indicators should be statistically significant. The survey asked the respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

“Immigrants take jobs away from native born.”

“Immigrants are a burden on social services.”

Responses were coded on a range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating ‘strongly agree’ and 4 indicating ‘strongly disagree.’ These variables are expected to have positive coefficients, meaning that individuals who perceive immigrants as a competitive threat would have more negative attitudes towards immigration.

Social identity theory was examined through two questions. If respondents’ attitudes towards immigration were predicted by social identity theory, these variables should be statistically significant. The expected sign of the coefficients depends on the specific model. Individuals who feel culturally threatened by immigration would be expected to have more negative attitudes towards immigrants. The first question (labeled Q16 in the TTI) asked respondents how they thought immigration impacted American culture:
“Some people think that immigration enriches American culture with new customs and ideas. Others think that these new customs and ideas negatively affect American culture. Which comes closer to your point of view?”

Responses were coded 1 for ‘immigration enriches American culture,’ and 2 for ‘immigration negatively affects American culture.’ This variable would be expected to have a negative coefficient in all of the models, meaning those who believe that immigration negatively affects culture would have more negative attitudes towards immigration.

Social identity theory was also examined in a question (labeled Q31.2 in the TTI) that asked the respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement.

“There are different ways of thinking about how to relate to other people. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements: People who come to the U.S. should try to act like Americans.”

Responses were coded on a range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating ‘strongly agree’ and 4 indicating ‘strongly disagree.’ This variable should have a positive sign in most models, indicating that those who believe people who come to America should act like Americans are likely to harbor more negative attitudes towards immigration. It should be noted that this expectation assumes the respondent perceives immigrants as a distinct outgroup.
An additional independent variable was included to examine the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and the endorsement of liberal criteria for citizenship. This was examined through a question regarding the most important precondition for obtaining American citizenship (labeled Q10a in the TTI).

"Which of the following attributes do you think is the most important precondition to obtaining American citizenship?"

These included being able to speak English, respecting American political institutions and laws, having lived in America for most of one’s life, and sharing American cultural values. Of these preconditions for citizenship, ‘respecting American political institutions and laws’ is particularly associated with the endorsement of liberal notions of citizenship, as previously discussed (Smith, 1997).

Hypotheses

In the models below, I test two hypotheses relating to realistic conflict theory and social identity theory, as well as one relating to the endorsement of liberal criteria views regarding the most important precondition for obtaining American citizenship.

Realistic Conflict Theory Hypothesis

In reference to realistic conflict theory, I offer the following hypothesis:
\[ H_1: \text{If an individual believes that his or her ingroup is competing with immigrants over access to scarce resources, their attitude towards immigrants and immigration in general will be negative.} \]

That is, individuals who believe that immigrant groups are competing for the same resources as their own ingroup are expected to have negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. Past research has supported this effect, as shown in studies conducted by Citrin and his colleagues (1997), as well as by Scheve and Slaughter (2001). If this hypothesis is true, the variables associated with realistic conflict theory should be statistically significant. The signs of their coefficients are expected to be negatively correlated with the dependent variables, which are all measures of the respondents’ attitudes towards immigrants and immigration.

\textit{Social Identity Theory Hypothesis}

With regards to social identity theory, I hypothesize the following:

\[ H_2: \text{If an individual believes that his or her ingroup’s positive and distinct social identity is threatened by an immigrant outgroup, their attitude towards immigrants and immigration in general will be negative.} \]

As previously mentioned, in order for this to occur, an individual must perceive the immigrant group as a salient outgroup that is capable of posing such a threat. Additionally, the social identity under threat is derived from belonging to a group. In the present context, this
involves some form of national identity. While some scholars have posited that ingroup favoritism might not necessarily lead to outgroup derogation, the test for this hypothesis is specifically designed to determine if the TTI data on immigration support such a relationship.

If this hypothesis is true, the variables associated with social identity theory should be statistically significant in the models. The signs of their coefficients are expected to positively correlate with the dependent variables. Thus, individuals who feel culturally threatened by immigrants are expected to have more negative attitudes towards immigration than individuals who perceive no such threat.

**Most Important Precondition for Citizenship Hypothesis**

I am also interested in testing the relationship between beliefs regarding the most important precondition for obtaining American citizenship and attitudes towards immigration. Specifically, the test for this hypothesis is aimed at determining how a liberal view of citizenship, espousing a broadly constructed criterion for inclusion, influences immigration attitudes. As previously discussed, this view of citizenship prioritizes respect for American legal and political institutions as the most important precondition for naturalization, thus offering a particularly broad basis for inclusion. Accordingly, I offer the following hypothesis:

\[ H_3: \text{Individuals who place primary importance on respecting American legal and political institutions as the most important precondition for obtaining citizenship will express support for immigration policies that expand the criterion for naturalization have negative attitudes towards unauthorized immigration.} \]
I believe that individuals who place primary importance on the acceptance of American legal and political institutions as a prerequisite for citizenship should exhibit negative attitudes towards illegal immigration.

If this hypothesis is true, the ‘liberalism’ variable should be statistically significant in questions regarding unauthorized immigration, as these immigrants are in violation of the law. It should also be statistically significant in questions regarding the expansion of policies for immigrants to obtain legal status.

**Results**

The results for the individual regression models are below.
Table 1. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Q27 “Is immigration more of a problem or opportunity?”

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Notes: *p value < 0.10, **p value < 0.05
The first model used the dependent variable Q27, which asked respondents whether they viewed immigration as more of a problem or more of an opportunity. In this model, all of the realistic conflict theory variables and the social identity theory variables were statistically significant at the 5% level, except Q3.2 which was statistically significant at the 10% level. The variable for Q18.1, which asked respondents whether immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans, was statistically significant and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that they disagreed with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans were more likely to believe that immigration is more of an opportunity. In other words, those individuals who did not see immigration in terms of a competition for jobs were more likely to have a favorable opinion of immigration.

The variable Q18.5, which asked whether the respondent believed that immigrants are a burden on social services, was also statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that immigrants are not a burden on social services were more likely to have a favorable opinion of immigration. Both of the social identity theory variables were also statistically significant, but had oppositely signed coefficients. One of the social identity theory variables, Q16 which asked respondents whether immigration enriches American culture, was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that immigration negatively affects American culture were more likely to state that immigration is more of a problem than an opportunity. This demonstrates that individuals who see immigrants as a threat to their culture are more likely to have a negative attitude towards immigration in general. The other social identity theory variable, Q3.2, which asked respondents whether they thought immigrants should act like
Americans, was statistically significant at the 10% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that they strongly agreed with the statement that people who come to the United States should behave like Americans were more likely to have a favorable opinion of immigration.

Several control variables were statistically significant at the 5% level in this model. These included ‘age,’ ‘political party’ and ‘household financial situation.’ ‘Age’ was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient. This means that individuals who were older were more likely to have a negative opinion about immigration, as they saw it as more of a problem than an opportunity. ‘Political party’ also had a negative coefficient, meaning that individuals who self-identified as Republicans were more likely to respond that they saw immigration as more of a problem than an opportunity. Q35, which asked about the respondent’s household financial information, was statistically significant at the 10% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that their household financial situation had gotten relatively better in the previous 12 months were more likely to believe that immigration is more of an opportunity than a problem.
Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Q4.1 “Are you worried about legal immigration?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<td>.007**</td>
<td>.510</td>
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</tr>
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<td>14.458</td>
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</table>

Notes: *p value < 0.10, **p value < 0.05
The second model used Q4.1 as the dependent variable, which asked whether the respondent was worried about legal immigration. One of the realistic conflict theory variables and one of the social identity theory variables were statistically significant at the 5% level. The variable Q18.1, asking respondents whether they believed that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans, was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that respondents who disagreed with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans were more likely to state that they were not worried about legal immigration. The only social identity theory variable that was statistically significant at the 5% level was Q16, which asked respondents whether they believed immigrants enrich American culture. This variable had a negative coefficient, meaning that individuals who responded that immigration negatively impacts American culture were more likely to respond that they were worried about legal immigration.

The only statistically significant control variables were ‘political leaning’ and ‘age.’ ‘Political leaning’ was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient, meaning individuals who self-identified as more conservative were more likely to respond that they were worried about legal immigration. ‘Age’ was also statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient, indicating that older respondents were more likely to respond that they were worried about legal immigration.
Table 3. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Q4.2 “Are you worried about illegal immigration?”

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>df</th>
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<td>1.079</td>
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<td>.003**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.652</td>
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Notes: *p value < 0.10, **p value < 0.05
The third model used Q4.2 as the dependent variable, which asked whether the respondent was worried about illegal immigration. While neither of the social identity theory variables was statistically significant, both of the realistic conflict theory variables were statistically significant at the 5% level. The variable Q18.1, asking whether respondents believed that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans, was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient. This can be interpreted as showing that individuals who disagreed with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans were more likely to respond that they were not worried about illegal immigration. This can also be interpreted as showing that those individuals who do not feel economically threatened by immigrants are more likely to have a positive attitude towards immigration. The other realistic conflict theory variable, Q18.5, was also statistically significant at the 5% level. This variable, asking whether the respondent believed that immigrants are a burden on social services, also had a positive coefficient, meaning that individuals who responded that immigrants are not a burden on social services were more likely to respond that they were not worried about illegal immigration.

The variable for liberalism was also statistically significant in this model at the 5% level. I included this variable in order to capture the effect of a respondent’s attitudes about citizenship, specifically to examine how a liberal basis for naturalization impacts attitudes towards immigration. The variable was coded ‘1’ if an individual reported that valuing American political institutions and laws was the most important factor for citizenship, and ‘2’ for all other responses, which related to more exclusive factors. This variable had a positive coefficient, meaning respondents who stated that the most important precondition for citizenship was
respecting American political institutions and laws were more likely to respond that they were worried about illegal immigration.

Three of the control variables, ‘political party,’ ‘political leaning,’ and ‘white,’ were statistically significant at the 5% level. ‘Political party’ had a negative coefficient, meaning that individuals who self-identified as Republican were more likely to respond that they were worried about illegal immigration. ‘Political leaning’ also had a negative coefficient, meaning individuals who self-identified as more conservative were more likely to respond that they were worried about illegal immigration. ‘White’ had a positive coefficient, indicating that respondents who self-identified as White were more likely to respond that they were not worried about illegal immigration.
Table 4. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Q12 “Thinking now about immigrants who are currently living in America illegally, should they be required to return to their country of origin or be given the opportunity to obtain legal status that allows them to stay here?”

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<tr>
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<td>.624</td>
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<td>.822</td>
<td>1.194</td>
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<td>.028**</td>
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<td>10.238</td>
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<td>1.467</td>
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Notes: *p value < 0.10, **p value < 0.05
The fourth model used Q12 as the dependent variable, asking whether immigrants currently living in America illegally should be required to return to their country of origin or be given the opportunity to obtain legal status that allows them to stay in the United States. While both of the realistic conflict variables were statistically significant, only one of the social identity theory variables was. The variable for Q18.1, which asked respondents whether immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans, was statistically significant and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that they disagreed with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans were more likely to believe that illegal immigrants should be given an opportunity to stay in the U.S. by obtaining legal status. The variable Q18.5, which asked whether the respondent believed that immigrants are a burden on social services, was also statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that immigrants are not a burden on social services were more likely to state that illegal immigrants should be given the opportunity to stay. Only one of the social identity theory variables was statistically significant. The variable Q16 was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient. This means that those respondents who stated that immigration negatively affects American culture were more likely to respond that illegal immigrants should be required to return to their country of origin.

The control variables for ‘gender,’ ‘political party,’ and ‘economic outlook’ were also statistically significant at the 5% level. Female respondents were more likely than males to respond that illegal immigrants should be given an opportunity to stay in the United States. Respondents who self-identified as Republican were more likely to respond that illegal immigrants should be required to return to their country of origin. The variable Q36, asking
whether the nation’s economy has gotten better or worse in the last year, was statistically
significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient. This means that individuals who
responded that the economy has gotten worse were more likely to respond that illegal immigrants
should be required to return to their country of origin.
Table 5. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Q14 “Would you support or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children to gain legal status if they join the military or go to college?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>.732</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.030**</td>
<td>1.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36economicoutlook</td>
<td>-.297</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>3.156</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.076*</td>
<td>.743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q181immigrantstakejobsaway</td>
<td>.397</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>13.039</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>1.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q185burdenonsocialservices</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>4.119</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.042**</td>
<td>1.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16enrichculture</td>
<td>-.255</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>1.372</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q312actlikeAmericans</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>1.705</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>1.174</td>
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<td>1.735</td>
<td>2.434</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>14.988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p value < 0.10, **p value < 0.05,
The final model used Q14 as the dependent variable, which asked respondents whether they would support or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college. Interestingly, both of the realistic conflict theory variables were statistically significant, while neither of the social identity theory variables were statistically significant. The variable for Q18.1, which asked respondents whether immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans, was statistically significant and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that they agreed with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from native born Americans were more likely to respond that they would oppose the proposed law. In other words, those individuals who did not see immigration in terms of a competition for jobs were more likely to believe that illegal immigrants should be given a path toward legal citizenship if they joined the military or went to college. The variable Q18.5, which asked whether the respondent believed immigrants are a burden on social services, was also statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that immigrants are a burden on social services were more likely to oppose the proposed law.

Several control variables were statistically significant in this model, including: ‘age,’ ‘political party,’ ‘household financial situation,’ and ‘economic outlook.’ ‘Age’ was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient, indicating the older a respondent was, the more likely he or she would oppose the proposed law. ‘Political party’ was also statistically significant at the 5% level and had a positive coefficient, meaning that respondents who self-identified as Republican were more likely to oppose the proposed law. The variable Q35, which
asked respondents about their household financial situation, was statistically significant at the 5% level and had a negative coefficient. This means that individuals who responded that their household financial situation had gotten worse in the previous twelve months were more likely to be opposed to the proposed law. The final control variable that was statistically significant was Q36, which asked respondents whether they thought the nation’s economic outlook had gotten better or worse over the previous year. This variable was statistically significant at the 10% level and had a positive coefficient, indicating that individuals who thought the nation’s economy had gotten worse were more likely to be opposed to the proposed law.
ANALYSIS

The most consistent indicators for immigration attitudes in this study were the realistic conflict theory variables. At the same time, results from three of the regressions support the idea that negative attitudes towards immigration are driven by a combination of realistic and identity threats, at least to the extent that the constructed variables are accurate indicators. While the realistic threat variables were the most consistent indicators of immigration attitudes, the political party variable was the second most consistent, as it was statistically significant in four of the five models. In addition to assessing how the hypotheses were supported in the models, the key points of interest addressed below include the differences between attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants, the determinants of support for the two immigration policies, and the relationship between political identification and immigration attitudes.

Support for Hypotheses

The hypothesis that received the most extensive support was that the perception of group conflict over resources influences public opinion towards immigration. Respondents that believed immigrants took jobs away from native born Americans or were a burden on social services were more likely to express negative views towards immigration. An important exception to this general finding was that the belief that immigrants are a social burden was not linked to worries about legal immigrants. This would lend tentative support to the fiscal burden model (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010). Additionally, the impact of the belief that immigrants take jobs away from native born citizens provides sharper support for the tenet of realistic conflict theory that predicts intergroup hostility will arise from the perception of resource
competition as a zero-sum game, where gains made by the outgroup come at the direct expense of the ingroup, in this case jobs for native born citizens (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2008).

Less support was found for the social identity hypothesis. The second social identity theory variable, the belief that those who come to America should act like Americans, was only statistically significant in one case. Respondents who expressed such a belief were more likely to see immigration as an opportunity. This is perhaps the case because these individuals may perceive immigrants as inclined to assimilation, which would reduce any potential threat to social identity. While this is one interpretation, the implication of this variable is not entirely clear in the context of the data. The first social identity theory variable was somewhat more in line with what was predicted, namely that threats to an ingroup’s positive and distinct social identity, in this case cultural identity, will lead to hostile attitudes towards the source of the threat. Engagement in some form of strategic behavior as predicted by social identity theorists, and shown earlier in Figure 3, may be exhibited through support for policies that reinforce the outgroup’s inferior and illegitimate status, such as requiring unauthorized immigrants to return to their country of origin rather than allowing them the opportunity to gain legal status, as shown in the fourth model. However, the absence of such cultural concerns in the fifth model suggests that identity concerns do not play a consistent role in impacting attitudes towards immigration policy.

The third hypothesis was partially supported. The third model found that respondents endorsing liberal naturalization policies, which rest on respecting American legal and political institutions, were more likely to exhibit negative views towards illegal immigration. While such
naturalization policies are more inclusive than aspects such as language acquisition, or sharing in the dominant culture, they do impose the minimum requirement of legal obedience (Smith, 1997). Consequently, unauthorized immigrants would be automatically excluded from membership due to their illegal entry and unsanctioned residence. This hypothesis did not find support in either of the policy related questions concerning pathways for unauthorized immigrants to obtain legal status, however. This was somewhat unexpected, as it was predicted that the endorsement of such a broad basis for naturalization should be associated with positive attitudes concerning the expansion of policies for immigrants to obtain legal status. Therefore, preferences for liberal naturalization policies, as they have been constructed above, may not be linked to greater levels of support for the expansion of policies for unauthorized immigrants to obtain legal status.

*Attitudes Towards Legal and Illegal Immigration*

The differences depicted in the models regarding the motivators for attitudes towards legal and illegal immigration were particularly noteworthy. While the perceived cultural impact of immigration influenced attitudes towards legal immigration, there was no such relationship between cultural concerns and illegal immigration. There are various reasons why this would potentially make sense. Illegal immigrants may not constitute a relevant outgroup because of their perceived temporary status. Alternatively, illegal immigrants may not be perceived as legitimate members of society, particularly when it comes to social interaction. Many unauthorized immigrants work in economic sectors that are not dominated by native born citizens, such as farm labor (Carroll, Georges, & Saltz, 2011). Moreover, unauthorized
immigrants tend to live predominantly in rural areas that are effectively segregated from the majority of the nation’s population. As most Americans do not have interactions with illegal immigrants on a personal level, they would not develop the perception that illegal immigrants pose a hostile threat to American culture. This suggests that cultural perceptions may be cultivated at the individual level from personal interactions rather than absorbed from third party sources such as the media.

Furthermore, illegal immigrants, representing a low-status group (see Figure 3; Haslam, 2004) may not be perceived as a relevant challenge to the positive social identity of the high-status citizen ingroup. At the same time, it should not be surprising that negative attitudes towards legal immigrants are motivated by cultural concerns. To the extent that legal immigrants are perceived as a distinct outgroup with their own customs, appearance, and perhaps even language, the native born population may feel that the status of their cultural identity is under threat. Unlike unauthorized immigrants, legal immigrants cannot be strategically removed by the ingroup through increased border enforcement policies or deportation campaigns. Rather, legal immigrants may pose a challenge to the existing social order that can only be dealt with by assimilating them into the dominant ingroup, or engaging in negative behaviors designed to reinforce the inferiority of the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The difference in attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants in relation to the perceived burden placed on social services was also interesting. The third model found that individuals that believed immigrants are a burden on social services were more likely to be worried about illegal immigration, but no such relationship existed for legal immigration. This may be due to the belief that illegal immigrants may be perceived as having a disproportionate
impact on social services, as any social benefits they receive come at the expense of the tax paying ingroup, while their own tax contributions may be minimal (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). Again, the gain of the outgroup, in this case the unauthorized immigrants’ access to social benefits, is at the direct expense of the ingroup.

Taken together, these two findings suggest that attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants entail varying, although not entirely separate, motivations. After all, in both cases, the belief that immigrants take jobs away from native born citizens played a significant role in determining attitudes. However as the evidence suggests, legal immigrants are also associated with social identity threats due to their perceived cultural impact, while illegal immigrants are not.

Support for Immigration Policies

The two models regarding support for immigration policies also yielded interesting findings. While both realistic conflict theory variables were significant in each model, social identity concerns only affected attitudes in the fourth model. The findings showed that individuals who did not perceive immigration as culturally threatening were more likely to support giving illegal immigrants the opportunity to gain legal status. However, when presented with a specific policy that allowed illegal immigrants who arrived as youths to obtain legal status through military service or college enrollment, the cultural impact of immigration did not play a significant role in determining attitudes. This finding is particularly interesting because it also indicated that individuals who believed immigration negatively impacts American culture were more likely to support deportation policies, perhaps reflecting one of the behaviors associated
with high-status groups attempting to preserve their positive and distinct social identity (see Figure 3 above; Haslam, 2004).

It should not be surprising that those who perceived immigrants as a realistic threat expressed support for deportation. As discussed earlier, the strategic attempt to remove the source of a potential threat has been associated with realistic conflict theory in previous research. The range of such strategic behavior is the primary emphasis of the instrumental model of group conflict (see Figure 2; Esses et al., 1998). This model also points to the strategy of attempting to remove competition by decreasing the competitiveness of a potentially threatening outgroup. A policy that would allow illegal immigrants to obtain legal status, and particularly one that would do so through encouraging higher education or skill training through the military, would have the effect of increasing the competitiveness of an outgroup. Furthermore, the finding that support for deportation was also associated with the perception of cultural threat suggests that strategic behaviors to remove the source of threat can reflect a combination of identity and realistic threats.

National economic evaluations were significant in predicting support for immigration policies. In both models, individuals that reported the national economy had gotten worse in the last year were less likely to support policies allowing illegal immigrants to obtain legal status. This is perhaps indicative of the importance of group evaluation with regards to support for inclusive immigration policies. Alternatively, individuals may be more likely to scapegoat immigrants when they perceive economic insecurity (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). In the fifth model, personal economic evaluations also played a role in determining support. Individuals who reported that their personal financial situation had gotten worse in the past year were more
likely to oppose this policy, reflecting perhaps the influence of their own personal economic vulnerabilities on their political attitudes.

*Political Identification*

Finally, it is worth noting that political party identification was statistically significant in four of the five models. Respondents who identified themselves as Republicans were more likely to express negative attitudes towards illegal immigrants and immigration in general. Interestingly, this did not hold for the second model, which involved concern over legal immigration. The ‘political leaning’ variable was significant for this question, as well as the question on illegal immigration, as individuals who identified as conservative were likely to report being worried by both legal and illegal immigration. Thus it is possible that attitudes towards immigration are determined by political identification, and the adoption of a political party’s immigration platform.

*Limitations*

While this data analysis is useful for examining immigration attitudes a broad level, it should be noted that several significant limitations exist. The main constraint for the interpretation of these results is the extent that the constructed variables actually measured what they were intended to measure. The indicators are by no means perfect measures of realistic conflict or social identity theory. With regards to the variables representing realistic conflict, it would be reasonable to question how much they actually measure perceived threats to the group, as opposed to the individual. There is also the issue of the identity of the immigrant group. In
the survey questions used, the only variation in the identity of the immigrant group was legal status. While this provided valuable insights, it would be inappropriate to generalize these results to the broader Hispanic immigrant community. The intention of using the 2011 TTI data was to examine recent immigration attitudes. One of the most significant limitations with regards to how the data is used in the current study is how social identity was constructed. The first social identity theory variable is perhaps more relevant than the second, however the results depend, in either case, on the extent to which the respondent has internalized American culture as part of their social identity. Therefore, the results that suggest realistic threat as the principle driver of anti-immigrant attitudes may be overstated. Relatedly, the respondents may have been masking certain prejudices, or may have been inclined to give responses deemed socially acceptable. In either case, the lack of evidence supporting identity threat as the principle motivator for anti-immigrant attitudes may not give the full picture. Finally, it should be noted that some of the observed relationships between the chosen dependent and independent variables may be endogenous. That is, in certain cases, the dependent variable may be affecting some of the variation in the independent variables.
As mentioned previously, the immigration debate in the United States has not yet broken out in widespread direct violence. Yet the rise in anti-immigration legislative initiatives, as well as the reactionary protests that accompany them, suggest an escalation in the issue’s volatility, especially regarding immigration from Mexico. Furthermore, as the above analysis indicates, many Americans indeed perceive immigration as a threat to their economic or social wellbeing. Thus, it seems prudent to explore potential strategies for preventing any further escalations. In the following section, some of these strategies are explored.

Concerns Related to Identity

In the above analysis, one of the particularly interesting findings was that identity concerns were more tied to legal rather than unauthorized immigrants. In order to alleviate social tensions, some have suggested the adoption of a common ingroup identity model that seeks to replace social categorizations that separate the ingroup from the outgroup with a superordinate categorization provides a common means for affiliation (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). The extent to which this is would be practical in the United States on a national level is somewhat questionable, in part due to the imbalanced regional concentrations of immigration and varying notions of what a common identity in the United States would look like in an increasingly diverse setting. Furthermore, in a country with an avowed history of political contestation, what might constitute a common identity might change over time. Nor is there evidence that shows emphasizing a common identity will necessary improve attitudes towards
immigration. As shown in the findings above, those who held respect for American political institutions and law as the most important prerequisite for gaining American citizenship, values that are typically associated with inclusive forms of national identity, were not particularly likely to have more positive views on immigration. Consequently, it seems that more effective conflict management strategies will focus on reducing the perceived economic threat posed by immigration, which appears to be particularly tied to unauthorized immigration.

Managing Unauthorized Immigration

In order to effectively address the tensions caused by immigration, the United States must have a responsible policy when it comes to managing unauthorized immigration. This involves both curbing the flow of unauthorized immigration as well as dealing with those already residing in the United States. These are examined below.

Reducing Unauthorized Entry

Border protection is an important part of maintaining the territorial integrity of any nation. Indeed, it is worth noting that some of the most emotionally charged rhetoric concerning immigration in the United States as invoked the need to increase border enforcement. To this end, the United States government has dedicated significant resources to reducing unauthorized entry, particularly at the Mexican border. In 2009, the operating budget for the United States Customs and Border Protection agency was $9.5 billion (Hanson, 2009). However, while increased border security is one way to combat unauthorized entry, it is not necessarily the most effective. A common critique of proposals to increase the current level of border enforcement is
that large increases in spending would only achieve minimal gains. Another criticism of increased border restriction is that it might have the unintended consequence of disrupting circular patterns of unauthorized immigrants. That is, instead of coming to the United States to work for a period of time and then returning to Mexico, unauthorized immigrants may be more inclined towards permanent settlement out of fear of riskier future migrations. Nonetheless, secure borders are vitally important, not only for reducing unauthorized entry, but also for security concerns in a post September 11th environment. More effective solutions might include the increased use of technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles that may reduce the need for more costly on the ground solutions.

Past research has also given considerable attention to the relationship between unauthorized immigration and the socioeconomic development of origin countries. Some have suggested that the best way to address the tensions caused by immigration is to deal with the root causes, namely that of the poor conditions within the country of origin (Bohning, 1994). In the context of the present analysis, this would involve promoting development in Mexico through increased aid or liberalizing trade (Larsen et al., 2009). In this measure, an improved Mexican economy would encourage potential immigrants to stay and pursue employment opportunities in Mexico.

However, support for this measure is somewhat mixed. While it is generally believed that economic development in an origin country will curb migratory outflows in the long term, the short and medium term impact may in fact be different. Studies show that increased development aid to middle income countries such as Mexico may actually have the paradoxical effect of increasing migratory outflows (De Haas, 2007). One reason this may occur is that
migration, including even low-skilled labor migration, requires some level of financial means. In 2008, the average cost of crossing the border illegally was $2,750 (Hanson, 2009). Raising the average income in a country of origin like Mexico through economic development aid allows a greater number of individuals to afford such crossings.

It is also important to note that increasing economic development in Mexico will only have a beneficial impact on reducing migratory flows in the long term if it is accompanied by a significant improvement in the security situation. This entails a decrease in drug related violence. Otherwise, it is possible that Mexicans will continue to seek unauthorized entry into the United States as they look for safer living environments.

Unauthorized Residents

Given the magnitude of the unauthorized population in the United States, it seems impractical to engage in large scale deportations. At the same time, it would be unwise to ignore their presence. As shown above, two of the major concerns associated with this immigrant group include the perceived financial burden placed on social services and the belief that this group takes jobs away from native born Americans. Both claims have found support in various empirical studies, and numerous solutions have been proposed. One possible solution addressing these concerns involves modifying the temporary labor visa program so as to include a greater portion of the unauthorized low-skilled labor population to be allowed to gain legal status. This would potentially alleviate the downward pressure on low-skilled wages due to the exploitation of cheap unauthorized labor, thus reducing the incentive employers have to use unauthorized labor. Moreover, proponents of this view argue that employer fees could be associated with the
use of migrant labor that would offset the costs on social services (Holzer, 2011). Moreover, the system could be reformed so as to allow for greater variation in response to the labor market. This would be intended to allow for greater opportunity for low-skilled native workers when necessary, but also meet the demands of seasonal labor needs.

Reframing the Debate

Many believe initiatives aimed towards reframing the political debate could reshape negative attitudes. The key actors here involve political leaders at both national and regional levels, as well as the media (Brader et al. 2008). In the past, some of these actors have been particularly resistant to calls for change in their approach to immigration. However, given the current political salience of immigration, as well as the increasing political importance of Hispanic American voters, there might be a new opportunity to refocus certain aspects of the debate, potentially moving away from the use of unnecessarily alarmist rhetoric.
CONCLUSION

Immigration indeed poses a challenge to America. This thesis explored whether realistic or identity threats were the main determinants of attitudes toward immigration. The results showed that the perception of social identity threat mattered to a greater extent in influencing attitudes towards legal immigrants, while the competition over resources appeared to influence attitudes towards immigration in general. At the same time, anxieties about unauthorized immigration were motivated almost exclusively by realistic concerns. Thus, the extent to which economic threats can be mitigated by some direct policy intervention may facilitate reducing tensions caused by unauthorized immigration. On the other hand, tensions caused by social identity threats associated with legal immigration may be harder to deal with, although these tensions may resolve themselves after successive generations of immigrants become more assimilated. Future research on America’s national identity might find the eventual impact of the increasing proportion of Hispanic Americans will cause a gradual shift in America’s cultural composition, thus ultimately reducing tensions caused by immigration.

While the perceptions of threat have been enough to motivate substantial anti-immigrant legislation, the current situation does not portend an escalation of intergroup conflict. Such legislation may continue to draw social protests, but this is perhaps a necessary chapter in America’s ongoing history of political contestation and civic engagement.
## APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1. Total, Gender, and Age for Q27 “Is immigration more of a problem or opportunity?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q27</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Political Party Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More of a problem</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More of an Opportunity</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Response</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix Table 2. Total, Gender, and Age for Q4.1 “Are you worried about legal immigration?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4.1</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Political Party Preference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Worried</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Table 3. Total, Gender, and Age for Q4.2 “Are you worried about illegal immigration?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4.2</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Political Party Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Worried</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Response</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Table 4. Total, Gender, and Age for Q12 “Thinking now about immigrants who are currently living in America illegally, should they be required to return to their country of origin or be given the opportunity to obtain legal status that allows them to stay here?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Political Party Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be required to return</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be given the opportunity to stay</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Response</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Table 5. Total, Gender, and Age for Q14 “Would you support or oppose a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children to gain legal status if they join the military or go to college?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q14</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Political Party Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Response</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


