

**ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY**

BY

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Justin Allen Berg find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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# ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

Abstract

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Recent immigration to the U.S. has significantly increased the nation's ethnoracial diversity. This demographic change prompts questions regarding intergroup relations and interracial conflict. With data from the General Social Survey, 1994 to 2004, I add to the discussion by examining native-born white public opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy. Specifically, I examine the power of a core network approach, which suggests that individuals' personal contacts influence immigration attitudes, and a symbolic racism framework, which argues that whites develop relatively stable values and beliefs during childhood and adulthood about the personal limitations and costs of immigrants. Multilevel models and logistic regression models indicate that core networks consisting of higher levels of education and non-white contacts influence native-born whites to hold a pro-immigrant attitude, while older and tighter networks have the opposite effect. At the same time, core networks also condition the impact of group threat and intergroup contact on immigration attitudes, suggesting that the interpersonal environment and broader social environment interact during opinion formation. Furthermore, symbolically racist native-born whites are more likely to hold anti-immigrant opinions, independent of their feelings of labor market competition. Thus, social

policy that considers the interpersonal environment as well as the broader institutional environment in which native-born whites are embedded may offer more effective directives in achieving positive native-born and foreign-born relations.

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## CHAPTER 1

With nearly a million foreign-born individuals entering the U.S. legally each year, and a similar number entering illegally, the nation is currently experiencing a level of immigration similar to the early 1900s (Warner 2001); yet, unlike the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the majority of immigrants—or foreign-born persons of non-citizen parentage who migrate to the U.S.—originated from Europe, today’s immigrants typically come from Latin America and Asia (Lee and Bean 2004). Consequently, the nation’s ethnoracial landscape is quickly becoming more diverse than ever before, a situation which prompts public and scholarly questions regarding the likelihood of positive intergroup relations and interracial conflict (Espenshade 2001a; Shanahan 2001).

The purpose of the current research is to add to this discussion by examining and explaining native-born white attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. White immigration attitudes should be a part of the discussion for a number of reasons. First, numerically, whites constitute the largest ethnoracial group in the U.S., and, socially, politically and economically, they hold the most power, making their public opinions particularly consequential for all ethnoracial groups. Furthermore, the vast majority of policy makers, lobbyists, and leaders of political organizations self-identify as white. Their beliefs have an impact on the legislation process and consequently directly affect the development and passage of immigration law. In turn, as noted elsewhere (e.g., see Tichenor 2002), immigration laws influence the economic progress, social and cultural diversity, and homeland security of the nation. Second, with greater understanding of the primary factors and the social processes that form immigration attitudes, individuals and organizations may take actions that result in

interracial cooperation in their communities and places of employment. Lastly, because of the projections for continued immigration and, accordingly, even more ethnoracial diversity in the coming decades, the interpersonal and structural influences of public opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy are likely to grow in importance.

One of the preliminary questions in understanding the development of whites' immigration attitudes is: Do whites' public opinions match the empirical evidence of the corresponding issues? For example, most whites believe that immigrants are poor (Espenshade 1995, 2001a). Does the empirical evidence on the economic prosperity of immigrants support this viewpoint? If whites have a relatively accurate and unbiased perception of immigrants, there may be little need to theorize about the development of their immigration attitudes. Their beliefs are based in reality. However, if whites' beliefs are not equivalent to the empirical evidence, scholars may posit a number of theories to explain the emergence of white attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy.

In Chapter 2, I use the General Social Survey, which gathers a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults residing in the U.S., to describe the recent state of whites' beliefs regarding immigrants and immigration policy. Then I compare these beliefs to the empirical evidence on immigrants. Overall, the findings suggest that whites tend to draw an unflattering picture of new immigrants and hold a restrictionist position on immigration policies, both for legal and undocumented immigrants. In most cases, whites' beliefs do not reflect the present situation of immigration control, the actual impact of immigrants on the U.S., and immigrant characteristics. Consequently, what influences the formation of their opinions?

In Chapter 3, I describe a number of theoretical perspectives in the current research literature that offer explanations for white immigration attitudes. I group the theories into three general categories: cognitive, interaction, and value-oriented. The cognitive theories suggest that social structural forces influence whites to see the social situation in a certain light and consciously form their opinions in response. The interpersonal approach focuses on the power of interaction with immigrants. The value-oriented theories highlight the influence of relatively stable values and belief systems, which are learned in childhood and adulthood through powerful social institutions, such as the family and the education system. In the process of describing these theoretical perspectives, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each theory and identify a few places where the literature is undertheorized and lacking.

In Chapter 4, I summarize the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of this doctoral dissertation. Specifically, with three research papers, I introduce two new theoretical perspectives—core networks and symbolic racism—to the literature. I use the General Social Survey as my data source, which has many advantages compared to other surveys used in previous studies. I employ two statistical techniques, multilevel modeling and pooled cross-sectional time-series analysis, which are relatively new to the immigration literature. Finally, I update and extend the empirical findings on undocumented immigrants, an understudied group. In these ways, I attempt to fill some of the holes in the current literature on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy.

Chapters 5 through 7 represent the three research papers, respectively. In these studies, I examine the relationships between core networks, symbolic racism, undocumented immigrants

and white immigration attitudes. Within each chapter I expand further on the particular results and implications.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude with a discussion of what the overall findings suggest about how whites develop their public opinions toward immigrants and immigration policy. Then I offer some ideas regarding the implications for public policy on immigration and native-born and immigrant relations.

## CHAPTER 2

In the study of white attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy, a number of foundational questions arise that may shed light on the potential for positive intergroup relations and intergroup equality in the U.S. First, what are whites' beliefs about immigrants and immigration policy? Second, to what extent have these beliefs changed over time? Third, to what extent are these beliefs grounded in the actual experiences of immigrants? Using data from the General Social Survey (GSS), I explore answers to these questions.

The GSS has been conducted almost annually—depending on funding from the National Science Foundation and other sources—by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) since 1972 (for a detailed explanation of the GSS, see Davis and Smith 2005). In 1994, NORC began conducting the GSS biennially, totaling 25 surveys between 1972 and 2004. Excluding the first four surveys, the GSS has been a full probability sample, representing English-speaking, non-institutionalized adults over the age of 18 residing in the United States. It currently follows a multistage probability sampling design that designates approximately 79 primary sampling units that consist of metropolitan areas and counties, households within the primary sampling units and particular individuals within the households, to obtain its respondents. Trained interviewers conduct in-person interviews that last approximately an hour. The GSS typically achieves at least a 70 percent response rate each survey year.

Between the years of 1994 and 2004, the GSS asked 34 questions regarding immigrants and immigration policy. I organize these questions into four general categories: 1) The Role of the Government in Controlling Immigration; 2) Immigrant Rights; 3) The Social and Economic Impact of Immigrants on the U.S.; and 4) Immigrant Characteristics. In this chapter, I

summarize responses for each set of questions and discuss the extent to which white beliefs match the real life outcomes of immigrants.<sup>1</sup> While the GSS has been used frequently to study race relations (e.g., see Krysan 2000; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997), few studies use it to study immigration attitudes. In the next sections, therefore, I discuss the findings from each of the survey questions on immigration and compare the beliefs to the actual experiences of immigrants living in the U.S.

### *The Role of the Government in Controlling Immigration*

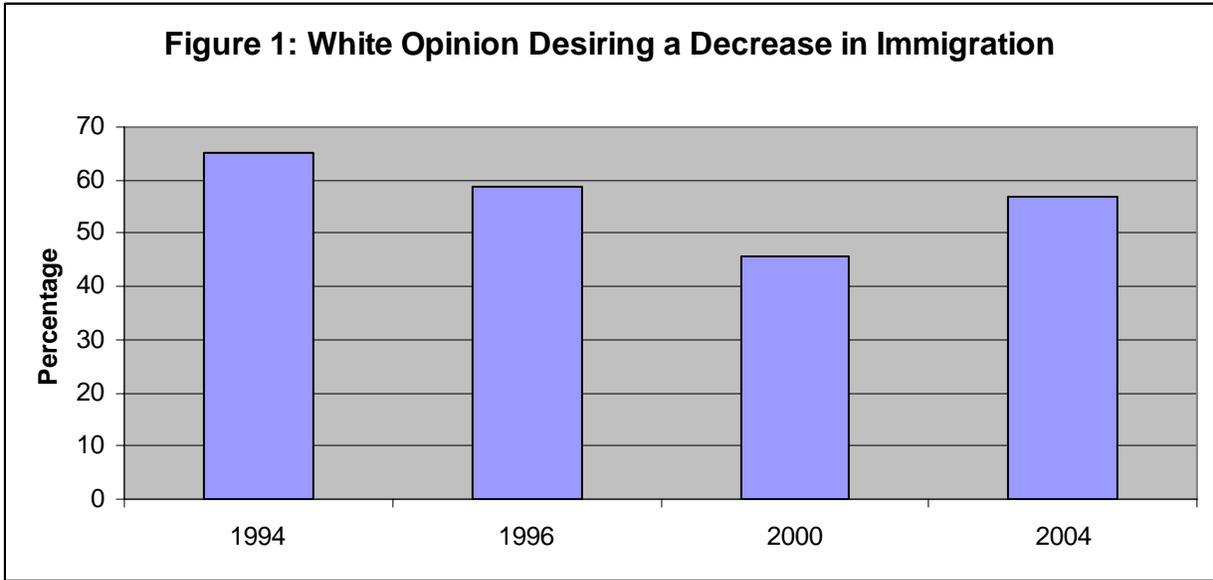
The 1965 Hart-Celler Act changed the national origins quota system to a seven-category preference system that favored family reunification. After passage of this Act, the number of incoming immigrants increased substantially, especially from non-European regions such as Latin America and Asia (Tichenor 2002). Legislation in the 1970s also facilitated the induction of more refugees from Asia and legislation in the 1980s offered amnesty to approximately 3 million undocumented aliens, mostly from Mexico (Baker 2001). Additionally, the 1990 Immigration Act increased the annual cap of legal immigrants to 675,000. By the late 1990s and early 2000s nearly 1 million immigrants a year were entering the U.S. legally and a similar number illegally (Warner 2001). Thus, currently, over 34 million U.S. residents are foreign-born. Including the 31 million-plus second-generation children, immigrants and their offspring constitute approximately one-quarter of the U.S. population (Lee and Bean 2004). The majority

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<sup>1</sup> Given that the majority of the questions are scales of agree or disagree, or, in other words, pro- or anti-immigrant, I group the respondents who offer mid-point answers, such as “neither agree nor disagree,” with respondents who answer “don’t know” or “refused.” Additionally, some of the differences in the percentages across years may be due to differences in question-wording, even though the specific topic is the same.

of these new immigrants originate from Mexico, with a sizeable number also coming from other countries, such as the Philippines, Cuba, Canada, Germany, Vietnam and China (Warner 2001). Because large numbers of these new immigrants are Latino and Asian, scholars expect the percentage of Latinos living in the U.S. to triple and the percentage of Asians living in the U.S. to double by 2050 (Passel and Cohn 2008), assuming constant immigration trends.

The native-born white population has always expressed opinions about immigration control, or at least since the early 1800s when the government began to collect immigration statistics officially (Tichenor 2002). Yet, their opinions do not always follow the passage of immigration law. Between the end of World War II and the 1960s, many whites were comparatively sympathetic to liberal immigration policies, perhaps allowing the pro-immigrant act of 1965 to pass. At the same time, however, the 1970s and 80s introduced a neo-restrictionist era, with upwards of 70 percent of Americans desiring a decrease in immigration levels (Espenshade 2000a), even though in these decades, as mentioned above, new laws helped refugees and undocumented immigrants. As Figure 1 shows, this restrictionist sentiment lessened in the 1990s, yet has shown a slight resurgence in the 2000s. In 1994, 65.21 percent of whites desired less immigration, compared to 58.65 in 1996, 45.84 in 2000 and 56.73 in 2004.



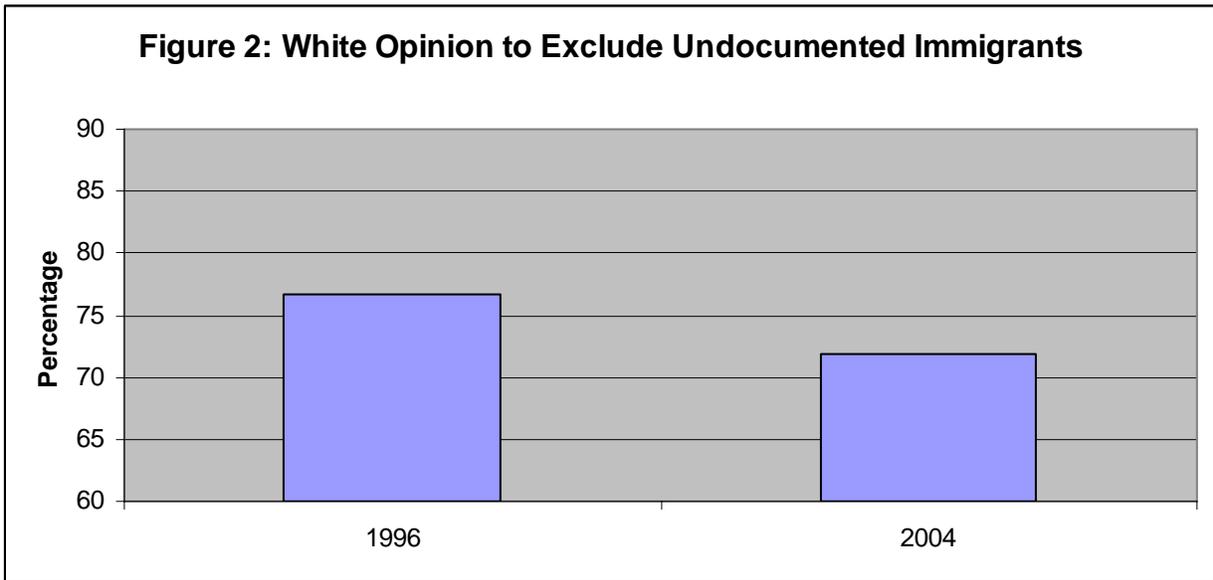
Note: General Social Survey. This question was not asked in 1998 or 2002.

Question-wording:

A. (1994 and 2000). Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?

B. (1996 and 2004). Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?

Some of these annual differences, however, may be due to differences in question wording. The 1996 and 2004 question does not specify whether or not the immigrants are “permitted” to enter the U.S. Some evidence indicates that many whites tend to believe that the majority of “new” immigrants are “illegal” immigrants (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996), who have a much lower public image (Espenshade 1995). As Figure 2 shows, a sizeable majority of whites—76.63 in 1996 and 71.88 in 2004—think that the government should be more aggressive in excluding undocumented immigrants.

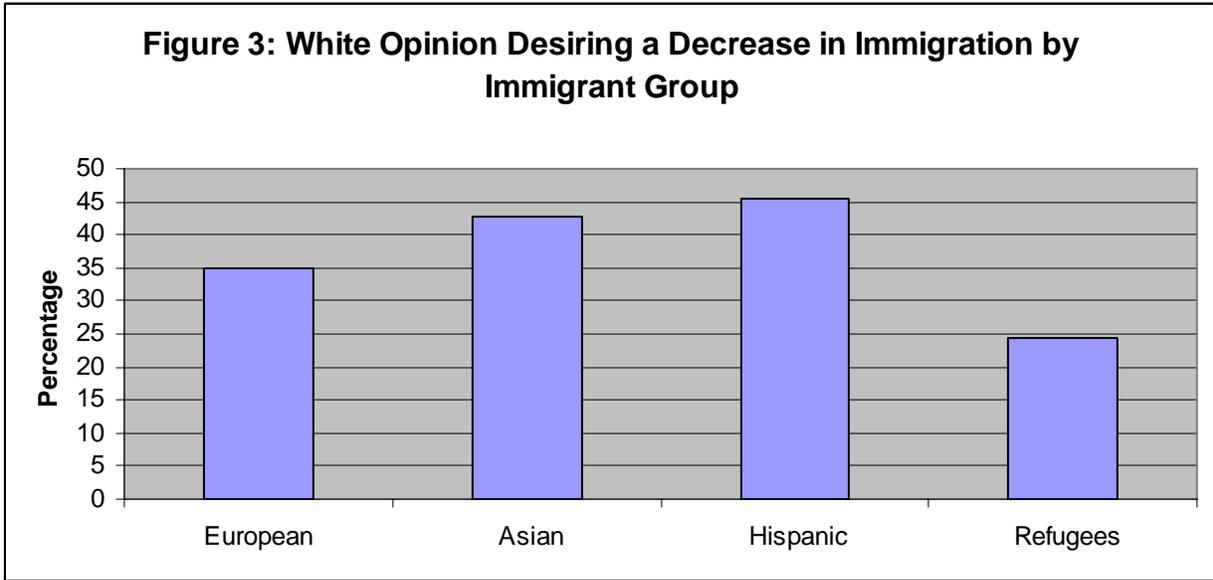


Note: General Social Survey. This question was not asked in 1994, 1998, 2000, and 2002.

Question-wording:

A. (1996 and 2004). How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and Disagree Strongly.

In the hierarchy of immigrant status, immigrants from Europe are favored among whites, as Figure 3 indicates, with Asians and Hispanics—as the survey labels persons of Latin decent—falling in descending order, respectively. Only 34.82 percent of whites believe that the number of European immigrants should be decreased, while 42.75 and 45.55 percent do so with respect to Asia and Latino immigrants, respectively. Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005) associate such attitudes with perceptions of differences in group sizes. This may be part of the reason, in addition to general sympathy, that only 24.42 percent of whites hold the opinion that politically repressed refugees should not be allowed to remain in the U.S.



Note: General Social Survey. Columns combine the response categories “decreased a little” and “decreased a lot” or “disagree” and “disagree strongly.”

Question-wording:

A. (2000). What about the number of immigrants from Europe? (Should it be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?)

B. (2000). What about the number of immigrants from Asia? (Should it be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?)

C. (2000). What about the number of immigrants from Latin America (that is, Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas)-should it be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?

D. (1996). How much do you agree or disagree that refugees who have suffered political repression in their own country should be allowed to stay in America? Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and disagree strongly.

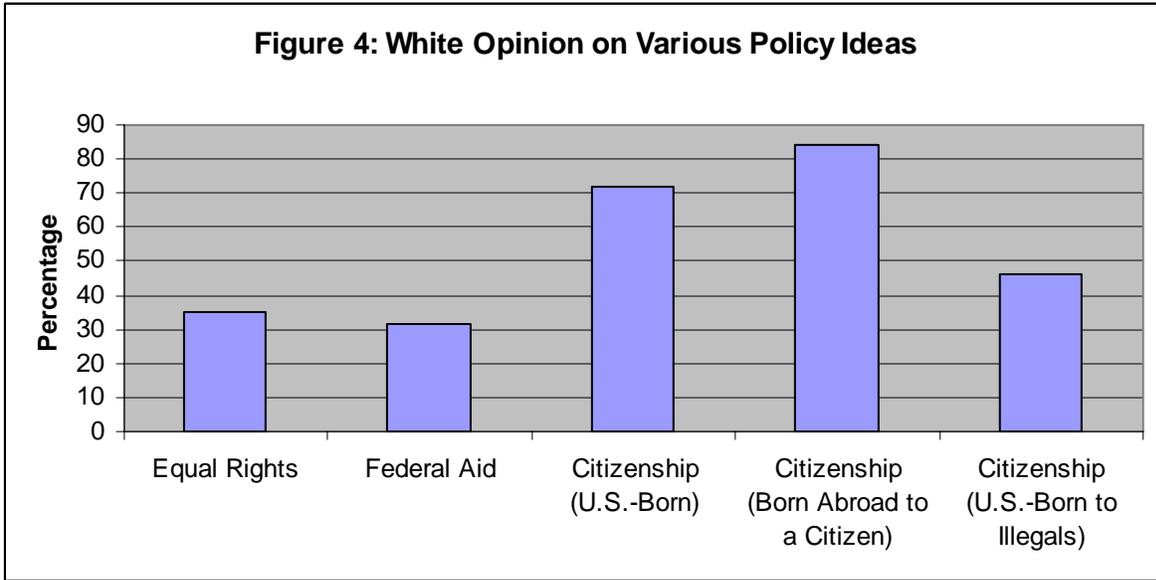
### *Immigrant Rights*

Whites also express strong beliefs regarding the extent to which immigrants should be entitled to certain rights. Figure 4 shows that only 35.12 percent of whites believe that legal immigrants, who are not yet citizens, should have the same general rights as U.S. citizens. More specifically, 31.82 percent believe that legal immigrants should be eligible for government assistance, such as Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare, upon arrival to the U.S.

Before the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, legal immigrants and refugees were eligible for public assistance to a similar degree as U.S. citizens (Schuck 2007). Afterward, however, a four-tier eligibility system was created with U.S. citizens given first priority for assistance, followed by refugees, then legal immigrants and lastly undocumented immigrants, who continue to receive very little government help (Espenshade 1995; Espenshade 2000b). This policy change also severely limited access to food stamps, Medicaid, and assistance with disability, education, and housing for legal immigrants, especially within the first five years of residency (Barnhill 2001; Kaushal, Reimers, and Reimers 2007; Schuck 2007)—even though, on the national-level, legal and undocumented immigrants likely contribute to the financial systems of the U.S. more than they take out (Espenshade 1995).

Whites are generally less sympathetic toward undocumented immigrants than legal immigrants (Espenshade 1995). As Figure 5 shows, 69.06 percent do not believe that undocumented immigrants should be entitled to attend public universities at the same costs as other students, and 88.55 percent do not think that undocumented immigrants should be entitled to work permits. Overall, 53.39 percent believe that the government is spending too much on immigrants in general and 82.61 percent think that immigrants should work their way up the social and economic ladders without special favors.

With respect to citizenship status, Figure 4 shows that 72.1 percent of whites think that immigrant children should have a right to citizenship if born in the U.S. The number favoring the right to citizenship is even higher (84.25 percent) if one parent is a U.S. citizen and the child is born abroad. Yet, if the question labels the parents as undocumented or “illegal” immigrants, the percentage favoring citizenship for U.S.-born children drops to 45.89 percent.



Note: General Social Survey.

Question-wording:

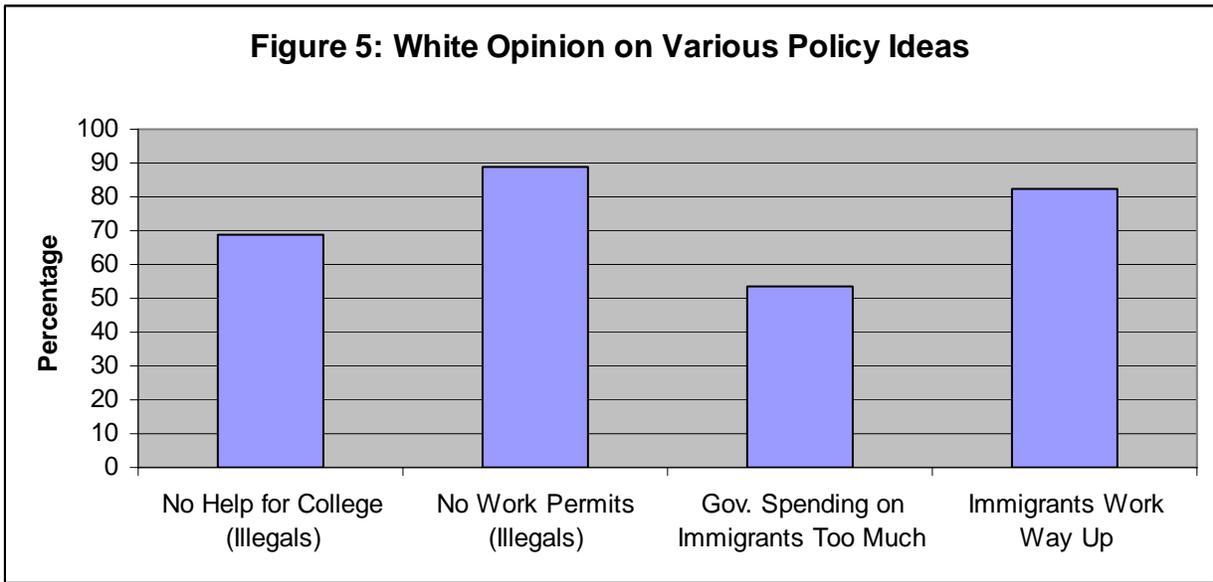
A. (2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America). How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please, select one response). Legal immigrants to America who are not citizens should have the same rights as American citizens. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

B. (1994). Under current law, immigrants who come from other countries to the United States legally are entitled, from the very beginning, to government assistance such as Medicaid, food stamps, or welfare on the same basis as citizens. But some people say they should not be eligible until they have lived here for a year or more. Which do you think? Do you think that immigrants who are here legally should be eligible for such services as soon as they come, or should they not be eligible? Eligible, not eligible.

C. (2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America). How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please, select one response). Children born in America of parents who are not citizens should have the right to become American citizens. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

D. (2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America). How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please, select one response). Children born abroad should have the right to become American citizens if at least one of their parents is an American citizen. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

E. (1994). What about "undocumented aliens," that is, those who have immigrated to this country illegally? Should they be entitled to have their children continue to qualify as American citizens if born in the United States or not? Entitled, not entitled.



Note: General Social Survey.

Question-wording:

A. (1994). What about "undocumented aliens," that is, those who have immigrated to this country illegally? Should they be entitled to attend public universities at the same costs as other students, or not?

B. (1994). What about "undocumented aliens," that is, those who have immigrated to this country illegally? Should illegal immigrants be entitled to work permits, or not?

C. (2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America) . How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please, select one response). Government spends too much money assisting immigrants. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

D. (1994). Now I'm going to read you some statements and would like to get your reaction to them. After I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. The Irish, Italians, Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Today's immigrants should do the same without any special favors.

The Illegal Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 requires persons who wish to sponsor family members for legal immigration status and the accompanying rights to have an income-level 25 percent above poverty thresholds (Espenshade 2000b), ironically depressing the likelihood that many immigrants will come to the U.S. lawfully. Legal immigrants are also limited in who they can sponsor for citizenship, such as foreign-born spouses and children but

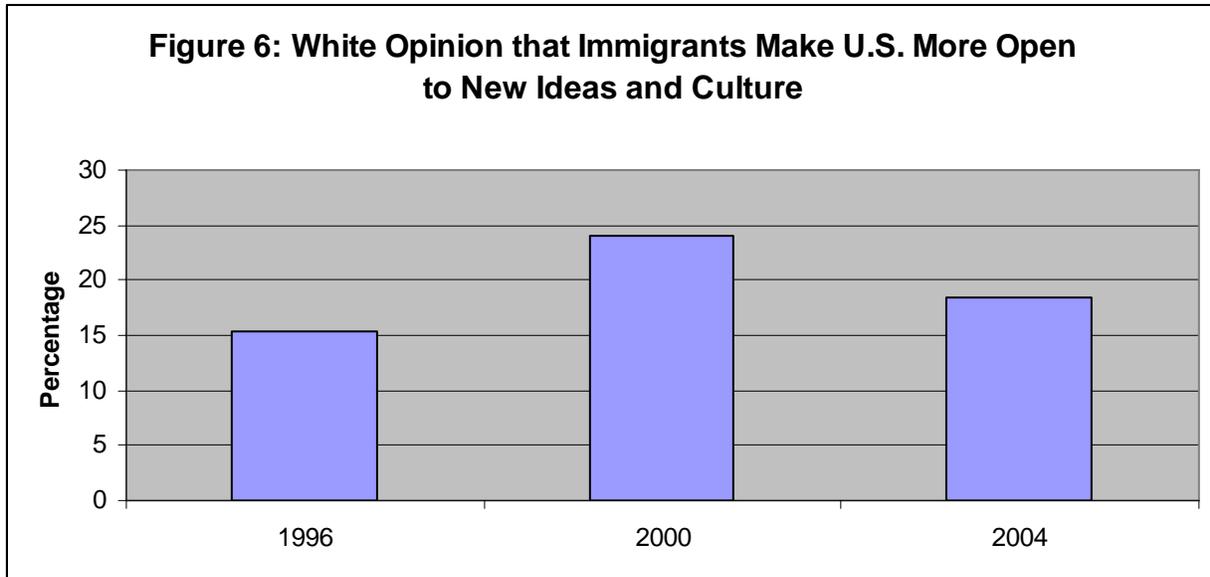
not siblings (Schuck 2007). Children born in the U.S. to immigrant parents though are still entitled to U.S. citizenship.

*The Social and Economic Impact of Immigrants on the U.S.*

Whites are cautious in believing that immigrants have a positive social and economic impact on the U.S. Figure 6 shows that, in 1996, only 15.38 percent of whites thought that immigrants make the U.S. more open to new ideas and culture. This percentage increased slightly in 2000 to 24.08 and then dropped again to 18.49 percent by 2004. In the same figure, a majority of whites (64.12 percent in 2000) fear that English is threatened as a common language by large immigrant communities. Yet, at the same time, only 26.57 percent of whites believed in 1994 that immigrants make it harder to keep the country united, as Figure 7 indicates.

The particular fears of losing English as a common language appear to be unsubstantiated—immigrants continue to assimilate by learning to speak English. As Waters and Jimenez note (2005), at the time of the 2000 Census, only 10 percent of foreign-born residents from non-English speaking countries were unable to speak English, while second generation children were proficiently bilingual and third generation children only spoke English. Another fear, however, may have some empirical support. As Figure 8 indicates, a significant portion of whites believes immigrants increase the crime rates (32.69 percent in 1996; 24.66 percent in 2000; 40.92 percent in 2004). There is some empirical evidence that indicates that a significant portion of immigrants do commits crimes (cf. Schuck 2007), yet, the numbers of crimes committed by immigrants do not appear to be higher than those of native-born groups (cf.

Haines 2007). Even so, one may imagine that if there were fewer immigrants in the U.S. the crime rates would be lower to some degree.



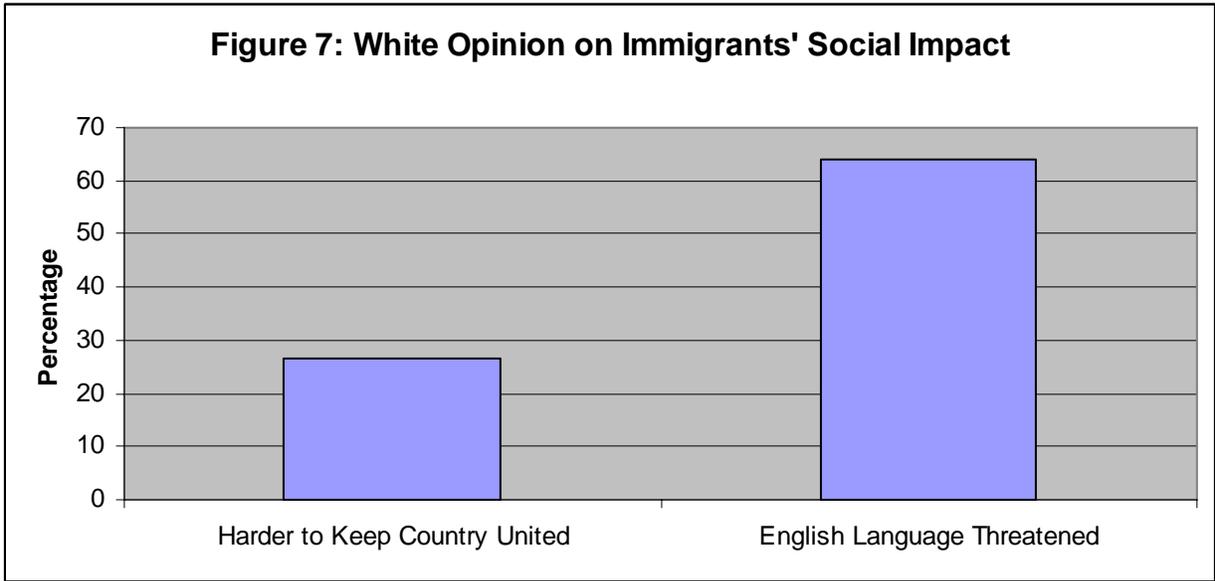
Note: General Social Survey. The questions were not asked in 1994, 1998, and 2002.

Question-wording:

A. (1996). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Immigrants make America more open to new ideas and cultures. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

B. (2000). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all? Making the country more open to new ideas and cultures?

C. (2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America) . How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please, select one response). Immigrants improve American society by bringing in new ideas and cultures. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

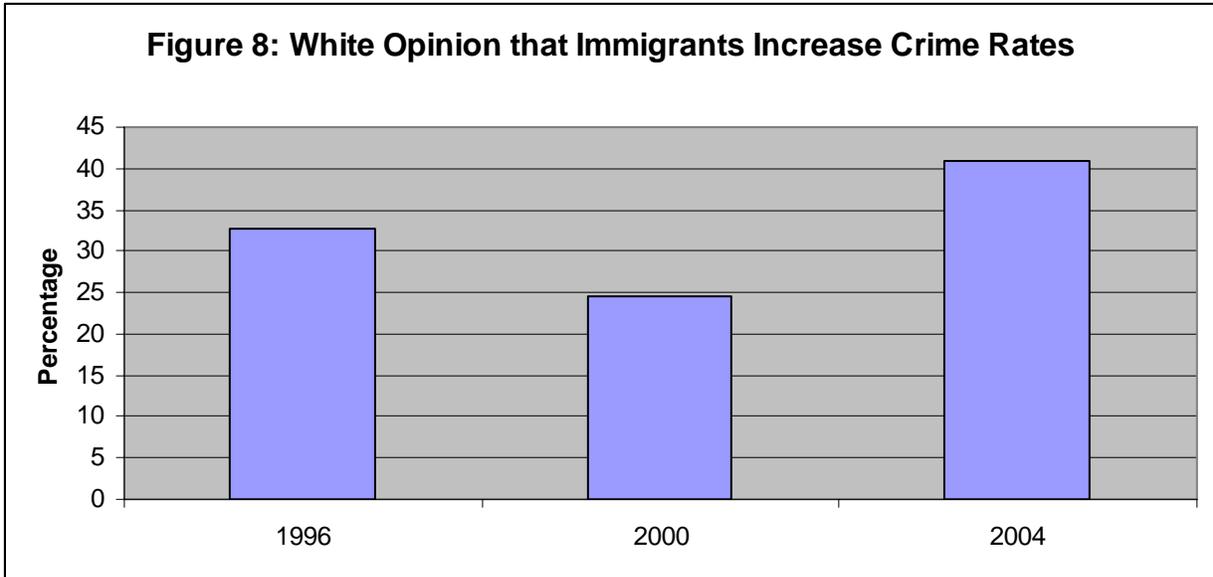


Note: General Social Survey.

Question-wording:

A. (1994). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely? Making it harder to keep the country united.

B. (2000). Now please tell us whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements: English will be threatened if other languages are frequently used in large immigrant communities in the U.S.



Note: General Social Survey. The questions were not asked in 1994, 1998, or 2002.

Question-wording:

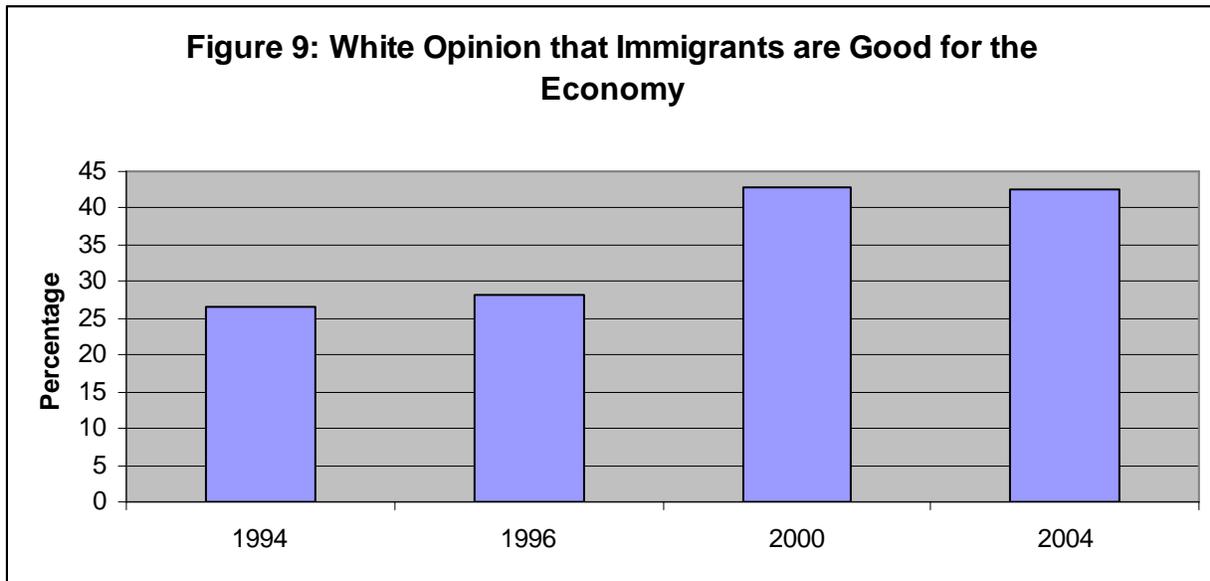
A. (1996 and 2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Immigrants increase crime rates. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.

B. (2000). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all? Higher crime rates?

Whites also fear that immigrants may have a negative impact on the economy. Figure 9 shows that less than half of whites believe that immigrants are good for the economy.

Approximately 26.49 percent held this opinion in 1994 and 28.27 percent in 1996. There was a relatively substantial increase in the percentage in 2000 (42.75 percent) and 2004 (42.45 percent) that believed that immigrants encourage economic growth, although the increase did not surpass 50 percent of the population. Overall, as Figure 10 suggests, one reason for the relatively low numbers may be because a vast majority of whites (86.54 percent) believes that the introduction of more immigrants into the economy leads to higher unemployment rates. Specifically, nearly half of whites in 1996 (46.83 percent), 2000 (60.15 percent), and 2004 (44.53 percent) believed

that immigrants take jobs away from native-born citizens, however not from them personally—only 24.74 percent believed in 1994 that they or a family member would lose a job to an immigrant.

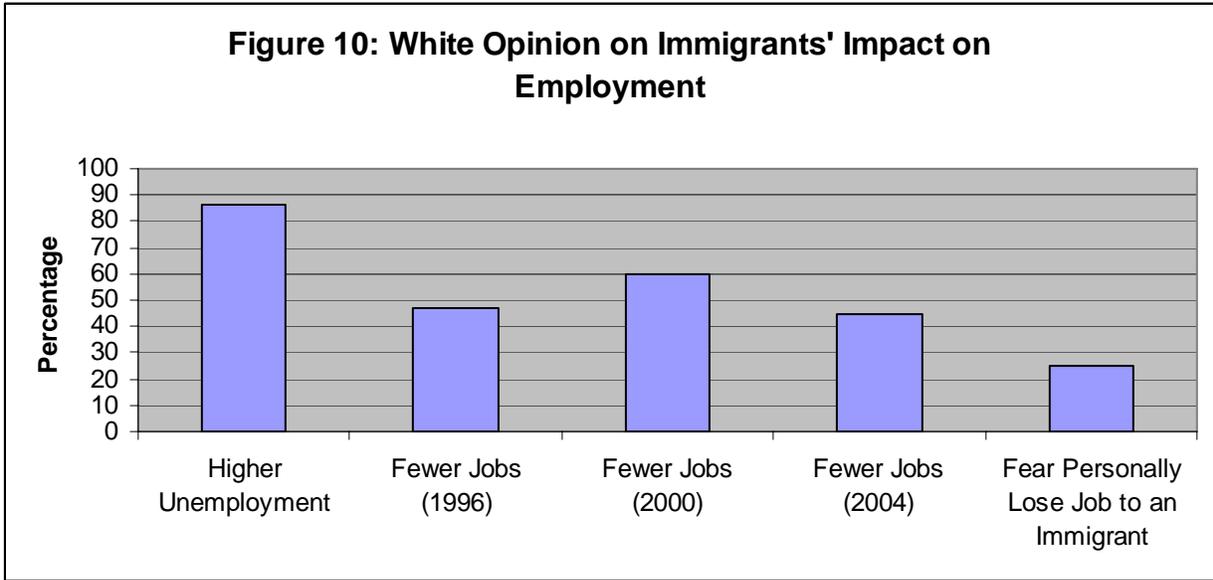


Note: General Social Survey. The questions were not asked in 1998 or 2002.

Question-wording:

A. (1994 and 2000). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely? Higher economic growth.

B. (1996 and 2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Immigrants are generally good for America's economy. Agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly.



Note: General Social Survey.

Question-wording:

A. (1994). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely? Higher unemployment.

B. (1996 and 2004). There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By "immigrants" we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in America.

C. (2000). What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all? People born in the U.S. losing their jobs?

D. (1994). What about immigrants? Is it very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely that you or anyone in your family won't get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified immigrant employee receives one instead?

Empirical evidence indicates that male immigrants work in the labor force at rates similar to native-born male workers and a slightly lower percent of female immigrants work in the labor force relative to their native-born counterparts (Warner 2001). During periods of economic growth, there tends to be less debate surrounding the ill-effects of immigrant workers.

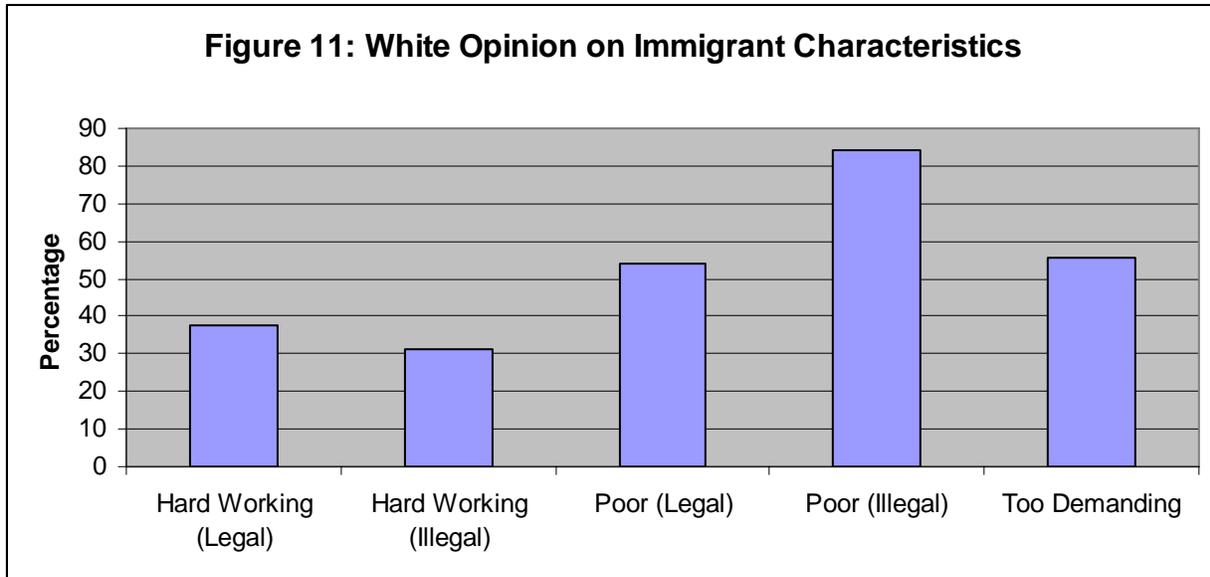
Nevertheless, some scholars suggest that immigrants are a drain on the economy, taking jobs from native-born citizens, using welfare and committing crimes in which the justice system must expend money to prosecute, while other scholars suggest that the population is getting older and

in need of more workers, that many immigrants do not compete with native-born citizens for the same jobs, that immigrants often create their own jobs (e.g., small business owners) and generate more jobs for native-born citizens, and actually pay more in taxes than they cost in using government services (Barnhill 2001). Although the outcomes may vary depending on the items used for analyses, recent research tends to support the idea that immigrants are an overall boon to the national economy and most state economies (Espenshade 1995). The International Monetary Fund estimates that foreign-born residents in the U.S. contribute “13 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product, a proportion slightly higher than their population share” (Kaushal, Reimers and Reimers 2007:181). At the municipal level, researchers may face more difficulties in identifying the specific income generated by immigrants versus the local government expenditures on immigrants, yet some evidence indicates that, on average, the balance in many places is near equal or only insignificantly higher for the costs per immigrant compared to the costs per local native-born resident (Loveless, McCue, Surette, and Norris-Tirrell 1996).

### *Immigrant Characteristics*

When Americans think about the immigrants of the historical past, especially their own immigrant ancestry, they often paint a nostalgic or romantic picture of poor yet hard working, honest individuals who have dreams of a better life for themselves and their children (Tichenor 2002). However, whites in particular are less generous in their evaluations of current immigrants. Figure 11 indicates that, in 1994, only 37.85 percent of whites believe legal immigrants are hard-working, and the percent is even lower when the target group is

undocumented immigrants (31.12 percent). The majority of whites also perceive legal and undocumented immigrants to be poor, 53.85 and 84.35 percents respectively.



Note: General Social Survey.

Question-wording:

A. (1994). Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are "rich." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are "poor." A score of 4 means that you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

1. Immigrants who are in this country legally?
2. Immigrants who are in this country illegally?

B. (1994). Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are "hard-working." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are "lazy." A score of 4 means that you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

1. Legal Immigrants?
2. Illegal Immigrants?

C. (1994). Now I'm going to read you some statements and would like to get your reaction to them. After I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.

As mentioned previously, most male and female immigrants work in the labor force, yet their median household income is significantly lower than that of their native-born counterparts (Warner 2001). However, on average, Asian immigrants, particularly of Chinese and Japanese

ancestry, have a higher annual household income than native-born citizens, and European-born immigrants are at about economic parity with their U.S.-born counterparts (Kaushal, Reimers, and Reimers 2007). Furthermore, as Simon (1986:26) noted twenty-years ago and which remains the case today (Kaushal, Reimers, and Reimers 2007), “Contemporary immigrants have a bimodal educational and occupational distribution relative to natives. That is, immigrants are found in slightly larger proportions in the lowest-level laboring occupations and in the highest-level professional occupations than are natives.” Consequently, immigrant employment and income is much more varied than many whites perceive.

Finally, a majority of whites (55.68 percent) believes that immigrants are pushing too hard for equal rights. While there have been numerous incidents of native-born and immigrant conflict in the last 50 years, the rate of social unrest has declined substantially (Shanahan 2001). Arguably, the battlefield has moved from the streets to political arenas, where restrictionist organizations, such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform, Zero Population Growth, and American Immigration Control Foundation, and expansionist organizations, such as the American Immigration Lawyers Association, National Council of La Raza and National Immigration Forum, vie for political power (Fry 2001). Thus, individual immigrants may take the brunt of such white opinions, even though the consequential political forces and battles typically reside at the group-level.

In sum, there appears to be substantial discrepancy between what the average white person believes about immigration control, immigrants’ use of public assistance, the impact of immigrants on the U.S., immigrant attributes, and the corresponding empirical evidence on the impact immigrants have on the U.S. and their social characteristics. If, on average, whites are

incorrect in so many areas, they are probably not forming their immigrant attitudes based on social reality. Then, what influences the formation of whites' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy? In the next chapter, I discuss a number of theories that offer answers to this question.

### CHAPTER 3

The body of literature on immigration attitudes offers many theoretical explanations. As Table 1 shows, the theories may be grouped into three broad categories: cognitive, interaction, and value-oriented. While all three general approaches have certain explicit or implied social psychological mechanisms, the first approach arguably places more importance on social structural explanations by emphasizing group hierarchies and unequal distributions of social, economic and political resources. The second approach focuses on the powerful impact of everyday interaction with specific individuals on changing certain attitudes and perceptions of threat. The last approach favors a socialization or social learning framework, suggesting that behaviorally influential cultural values, which have been embedded in society's social institutions for hundreds of years, are engrained in individuals over the life-course.

**Table 1: Theoretical Perspectives Explaining Immigration Attitudes**

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***Cognitive Approaches***

Group Threat  
Group Consciousness  
Realistic Group Conflict  
Labor Market Competition  
Split Labor Market  
Utilitarian Calculus

***Interaction Approach***

Contact

***Value-Oriented Approaches***

New Racism  
Symbolic Politics  
Subtle Prejudice  
Cosmopolitanism  
Cultural Affinity

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In this chapter, rather than discuss each theory separately, I focus on certain ones from each category. In the first category, I examine group threat and labor market competition. The other perspectives may be subsumed under these two more general perspectives. For instance, group threat suggests that both perceived and real threats affect people's attitudes (Burns and Gimpel 2000), while the realistic group conflict approach argues that the threats are based in actual, not perceptual, competition for limited resources (Quillian 1995). Group consciousness argues that the level of group awareness and group affinity of the members influences opinions (Sanchez 2006), while group threat suggests that individuals of all groups learn to create in-groups and out-groups (Alba, Nee, and Nee 2005). The split labor market theory suggests that market dynamics may pay one, more dominant, group a higher wage than another group for the same work (Bonacich 1972). The higher paid workers feel threatened by the lower paid workers. The labor market competition perspective is more general. It suggests that any type of perceived or real competition in employment between different groups in any position in the hierarchy will influence attitudinal formation. The utilitarian calculus approach argues that regardless of the individual's labor market position, he or she will perform a cost/benefit analysis of the contribution of another group, an action which is assumed under the labor market competition approach (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Consequently, when discussing group threat and labor market competition the primary forms of group identity, threat, and conflict are included.

From the value-oriented category I discuss new racism and cosmopolitanism. Similar to new racism, the symbolic politics approach suggests that political policies act as symbols to which people attribute meaning and respond behaviorally. Yet, new racism focuses on race

specifically, which in the current waves of immigration is an important factor in white attitude formation (Sears 1998). Subtle prejudice may arguably fall under the umbrella term of new racism, only it is slightly different with its focus on the psychological variable of indifference—whites are often indifferent toward racial minorities (Meertens and Pettigrew 1997). I choose to discuss new racism to keep the discussion centered on pro-active behaviors, which are easier to identify. Lastly, the cultural affinity approach suggests that persons who feel culturally similar to immigrants will express a pro-immigrant attitude (Espenshade 1995), yet it offers less explanation of how and why such sentiments develop than cosmopolitanism, which highlights the socializing power of educational and employment institutions.

### *Cognitive Approaches*

*Group Threat.* Over fifty years ago, Herbert Blumer (1958) presented the idea that a perceived challenge to a group's social standing would shape its attitude toward other groups. Social scientists who favor group threat theories typically acknowledge the likelihood that many Americans may be prejudiced against immigrants in general and certain non-white immigrants in particular. Yet, they argue that the primary cause of Americans' immigration attitudes is not due to racial or ethnic prejudice but rather to perceptions of group identity, group interests, and group fear (Blalock 1967; Quillian 1995). These perceptions are likely to lead to both prejudice against certain immigrant groups and specific anti-immigration attitudes. First, Americans perceive themselves as belonging to an in-group—native-born citizens—with certain others making up an out-group—foreign-born individuals. Next, they come to believe that the privileges that they

enjoy rightfully belong to their own group. Lastly, when various out-groups increase in power and desire a share of those privileges, Americans feel threatened. They consequently create prejudicial stereotypes of immigrants and promote anti-immigrant policies to block access by immigrant groups to the limited resources. Thus, the development of their attitudes is ultimately due to group competition and fear of losing power.

Numerous research studies find that whites express an attitude of group threat when more immigrants enter their geographical area (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000), especially when the community is experiencing an economic downturn (McLaren 2003). Similarly, they also develop a negative attitude toward immigrants and liberal immigration policy when they perceive, correctly or incorrectly, an increase in the minority populations (Alba, Rumbaut and Marotz 2005). Whites fear that they will lose valuable and limited resources, such as federal benefits and employment opportunities (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996), over which they feel normative ownership (cf. Bobo and Hutchings 1996).

*Labor Market Competition.* While the theoretical framework of labor market competition incorporates perceptions of group order to a certain extent, it focuses more specifically on individuals' assessments of economic competition with another group of people, no matter that group's rank in the hierarchy of groups. As Espenshade (1995:202) states, "a labor market competition hypothesis suggests that persons having the lowest levels of socioeconomic status attainment are likely to have the most concern over job competition with new immigrants," a situation which will lead them to develop a negative attitude toward their economic rivals. At the same time, such a perspective may also predict that top-tier workers might experience similar

competition and possibly negative attitudes, because a significant portion of immigrants also enter professional occupations (Kaushal, Reimers and Reimers 2007). The two competing groups, however, need not always be at the same level of socioeconomic status to generate competition. Ultimately, the national and local economic situations, in coordination with individual perceptions of economic competition, are the causal factors behind whites' immigration opinions from this perspective. Empirically, Espenshade and colleagues (1995; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) find significant yet comparatively weak empirical evidence for this perspective. For example, whites with lower levels of SES do hold more negative attitudes toward immigrants than whites with higher levels of SES, yet the effect on immigration attitudes is modest compared to other factors.

The group threat and labor market competition theories offer powerful explanations of immigration attitudes, yet they pay less attention to two important factors: interpersonal interaction and emotions. Both theories assume individuals are making cognitive decisions based on the social situation that they perceive and both assume that these decisions are not generated or influenced by friends, family or other acquaintances. Yet, close associates especially are likely to provide information to individuals that may produce feelings of threat or competition or at least weaken or strengthen those feelings. Individuals do not act autonomously. Further, individuals do not always form their attitudes based on cognitive calculations of the social situation. They also act on emotions (Pettigrew 1997). While the threat may be a feeling, the theories assume they derive from logically assessing the social situation rather than developing an opinion based on socio-psychological responses. Lastly, in

order for these theories to explain whites' immigration attitudes, they require a non-zero percentage of immigrants to be present in a designated geographical unit to which the respondent belongs. However, many whites live in areas that have no noticeable presence of immigrants, yet still form opinions on immigrants and immigration policies.<sup>2</sup>

### *A Contact Approach*

Even if persons experience the aforementioned fears, the theory of intergroup contact argues that interaction or “contact” between members of different groups leads to shared feelings of acceptance and respect (Allport 1954). This goodwill is especially likely when four conditions are met. First, the members of the different groups have equal status, such as all being of the upper-class or middle-class. Second, they have common goals, such as protecting the community from criminal activity. Third, they are willing to cooperate with each other, such as might be found in a business organization or military unit.<sup>3</sup> Fourth, societal authorities support the interaction between the members of the different groups, such as enforcing laws concerning the desegregation of schools. Even though these four conditions make contact between different groups likely to have a positive outcome, evidence indicates that various groups take on a friendly attitude toward each other even in less than ideal situations (for a

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<sup>2</sup> The U.S. may also be a geographic unit in which whites live in the presence of immigrants, supporting the threat perspective. In this case, to a certain extent, whites may be analyzing the social situation rationally, even if no immigrants are present in their particular communities.

<sup>3</sup> In some cases, as with military units, individuals are forced into a group, while, in other cases, such as colleges, they choose to be in the group. In either case, a willingness to work with others once in the group facilitates positive intergroup contact. Future research, however, may extend contact theory by examining the difference between being forced in a group or choosing a group with respect to affecting intergroup outcomes.

review, see Pettigrew 1998), such as when members of one group have a lower status than members of another group in a place of employment.

In the case of attitudes toward immigrants, the political scientists, M.V. Hood and Irwin Morris (1997), find that native-born whites who live near and have contact with Latinos and Asians express fewer stereotypes of those groups and are more open to immigrant-friendly public policies, compared to native-born whites who do not live near enough to the two groups to have any significant opportunity for intergroup contact. There are, however, limits to this positive impact. Compared to individuals in other states, Californians were more negative in their attitudes towards immigrants despite significant exposure to immigrants. Hood and Morris speculate that negative media stories, elite politicians running on an anti-immigration issue, the size of the legal and undocumented immigrant population, the way that public social services are funded or unknown factors make California different. In another study, Hood and Morris (1998) also find that whites who may have more contact with undocumented immigrants are less likely to hold positive attitudes toward them. The explanation is that whites are primed to see these immigrants—who have an illegal status and often low English-speaking skills—negatively. In most contact situations, however, the assumption would be that after native-born whites meet immigrants, they discover that foreign-born individuals share many of the same values as they do, such as hard-work and independence, shaping development of a positive attitude toward immigrants and pro-immigrant public policy, an outcome that Hood and Morris find for intergroup contact between whites and legal immigrants.

Furthermore, contact is dependent on the geographical unit. Neighborhoods are more likely to generate positive intergroup contact than metropolitan areas, because residents have

greater opportunities to interact and interact in a comparatively cooperative location.

Consequently, the type of contact is also important. Contact that produces feelings of friendship and closeness are much more likely to encourage whites to develop a pro-immigrant attitude (cf. Dixon 2006).

While contact theory incorporates the interpersonal environment into the analysis, it limits the target group to one group. In the case of native-born whites, the target group is immigrants. Whites must have contact with immigrants to form their immigration attitudes. The interpersonal environment, however, includes members from many social groups that may influence the individual. For instance, contact with native-born college graduates likely influence a white individual's beliefs about immigrants and immigration policy. Moreover, similar to group threat and labor market competition, contact theory assumes that individuals are consciously forming their opinions and making decisions about issues based on the social context—if the social context of the area changes, it is assumed that the person's attitude will change too. However, individuals have been socialized from their childhood to hold certain viewpoints. These socializing influences are unlikely to be noticeable to the individual and are likely to be relatively stable or long lasting in many cases, regardless of the social context of the geographical area. For example, whites from the south compared to the north are socialized to see “race” differently. Such engrained values and beliefs about race do not dissipate easily, whatever the sociodemographic make-up of the local area. The particular latent feelings also precede contact situations and therefore likely influence the experience of intergroup contact.

### *Value-Oriented Approaches*

In contrast to the cognitive approaches, as well as the intergroup contact approach, which are context specific and dynamic in the sense that the current social environment determines the development of a person's public opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy, the value-oriented approaches are grounded in the assumption that certain values and beliefs are acquired consciously or unconsciously in childhood and adulthood that are relatively static throughout a person's life course. It is these values and belief systems, which have long been a part of important social institutions, from the government to the education system to the family, that influence a person's attitude toward immigrants and public policies that target immigrants. I consider the following two theoretical perspectives to fall in this category: new racism and cosmopolitanism.

*New Racism.* Scholars, such as the social psychologists Thomas Pettigrew and R. W. Meertens (1995), argue that racial and ethnic prejudice still exists in the current period but that it has changed form from previous decades. Traditional prejudice is founded on the notion that racial and ethnic minorities are biologically inferior to the white majority in a number of important characteristics, such as intelligence and longevity. This type of prejudice is not as wide-spread as in prior decades. Rather, most whites value the principle of racial and ethnic equality. Accordingly, Huddy and Sears (1995) find that many whites currently believe that ethno-racial discrimination does not occur anymore, or, at the very least, ethno-racial discrimination has much less of an effect on people's life chances than people's own willingness to work hard to

achieve their goals. At the same time, many whites believe that racial and ethnic minorities, including many non-white immigrants, do not value the “American” work ethic. Consequently, they believe that racial and ethnic minorities do not deserve any special public assistance.

New racism therefore entails a normative belief about the “American” work ethic and a racialized perception of immigrants, which generate negative feelings toward non-white individuals who are seen as only desiring special treatment from the government without being willing to work hard enough to be self-reliant. This new type of racial and ethnic prejudice is more subtle than the traditional one. The assumption is that Americans have been socialized from childhood by their families, the education system, the media, and other important social institutions, to view racial and ethnic minorities, including immigrants, in this way.

Public opinion surveys are able to identify the extent to which whites convey this new racism by asking specific questions regarding their viewpoints on the “American” work ethic, individualism, the work ethic of racial and ethnic minorities, how close they feel to these other ethno-racial groups, and their degree of support for racially-targeted public policies. Huddy and Sears (1995) show that, as native-born citizens score higher on new racism survey scales, they are more likely to disfavor bilingual education. These white individuals support racial and ethnic equality; yet, they are unsupportive of measures that would ameliorate the poor life circumstances of immigrants, especially if the measures require the re-allocation of funds away from native-born citizens. They do not desire more or less immigration and they would send only certain immigrants home; yet, they are against measures that would improve native-immigrant relations. Consequently, they reject immigrants in a way that is subtle and effective.

*Cosmopolitanism.* As Haubert and Fussell (2006:492) explain, cosmopolitanism is based in new class theory, which offers “an explanation of why many educated middle- and upper-class professionals embraced liberal politics in spite of their vested interest in maintaining the status quo.” Accordingly, a person’s educational attainment, particularly based in the humanities and social sciences, and occupational status, especially one that involves the production of knowledge and the processing of symbols, are important components of a cosmopolitan world-view. Whites gain this cosmopolitan world-view or ideology from schooling, which favors multiculturalism, and their employment, which benefits from globalization. The person’s mindset is therefore comparatively liberal, less parochial, and more likely to be open to immigrants and pro-immigrant policy, even though they are also more likely to live a middle to upper class lifestyle. In support of other work in this area (e.g., see Bean 1995; Betts 1988), Haubert and Fussell (2006) find that cosmopolitans, who generally express values and beliefs that reject ethnocentrism and adhere to a global oriented ideology, have a greater likelihood of holding a pro-immigrant attitude.

New racism and cosmopolitan theories imply but do not specifically emphasize that the interpersonal environment, such as family members or school friends, influences attitude formation. These individuals become the conduit through which values and beliefs are transmitted to the recipients. For example, the pro-immigrant influence of social science courses is transmitted through instructors and classmates. Consequently, as the interpersonal environment changes, socialization outcomes will change. Certain social structures, such as networks, may direct the type of socialization. In the next chapter, I further discuss the

theoretical weaknesses of the current body of knowledge on immigration attitudes as I describe the contributions of this doctoral dissertation.

## CHAPTER 4

Prior research has greatly advanced scholarly understanding of white public opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy. Social scientists now know that a number of factors influence whites to develop immigration attitudes, from contextual environments of threat and intergroup contact to relatively stable belief systems grounded in new racism and cosmopolitan worldviews. At the same time, however, because attitudinal development, especially concerning a topic as controversial and complex as immigration, is multifaceted, much remains unknown. The three empirical studies that follow this chapter attempt to contribute to the general foundation of knowledge regarding the relationship between public opinion and immigration in three ways: theoretically, methodologically, and empirically.

Theoretically, one of the weaknesses in the literature is that the interpersonal environment is either ignored or constrained to the outgroup in contact theory. To expand on the power of the interpersonal environment I introduce a core network approach. Core networks are small social structures in which people are embedded and which constrain the amount and type of information that flows to the individual (Marsden 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashears 2006). They also place a certain degree of pressure on the individual to conform to group norms (French 1956; Friedkin 1990). While the basic idea behind a core network approach is similar to an intergroup contact approach, in the sense that interpersonal interaction is the primary theoretical mechanism, it is unique in that it offers a theoretical explanation of how the interpersonal environment remains consequential for white public opinion toward immigration regardless of the number of immigrants residing in the local area. Further, a core network approach suggests that the effects of any broader social structures in the local area, such

as unemployment, may be conditional on the core network, since the personal contacts from the core network may alleviate or intensify those broader effects by offering financial or emotional support, for example.

Additionally, the notion that stable beliefs systems affect attitude formation on immigration has received less attention in the literature. New racism is used broadly in only one study and mentioned only briefly another study. I expand on this line of theoretical reasoning by introducing a symbolic racism approach to the study of white immigration attitudes. Symbolic racism suggests that whites develop a latent social psychological belief system through various social institutions, such as the family and education system, which disfavor racial minorities, including immigrants who are often perceived as ethnoracial minorities (cf. Burns and Gimpel 2000). This anti-immigrant disposition, however, is only predicted to emerge when whites are confronted with certain political symbols, such as policies that specifically target immigrants. Consequently, a symbolic racism approach is able to explain how many whites may strongly support racial and ethnic equality while simultaneously expressing a restrictionist attitude toward particular pro-immigrant policies.

Methodologically, I use two techniques that receive less attention in the literature on immigration attitudes: multilevel modeling (Luke 2004) and a pooled cross-sectional time-series analysis (Woolridge 2005). Even though the foundational tenets of group threat and intergroup contact theories suggest that the social environment affects individual behavior, few studies examine the hierarchal dimensions of attitudinal development (for exceptions, see Dixon 2006 and McLaren 2003). Furthermore, many studies have previously analyzed the opinions of individuals who live in the same geographical units without using statistical methods that adjust

for correlated errors (i.e., people living in the same geographical units are likely to be more similar to one another than people living in different geographical units).

A number of studies have used pooled cross-sectional time-series methods to study white-black interrelations (for a review, see Krysan 2000), yet very few extend this to white-immigrant relations (for an exception, see Burns and Gimpel 2000). It is relatively unknown therefore if the same factors that account for trends in the white-black relationship also account for trends in the white-immigrant relationship. Since immigrants constitute a much more ethnoracially diverse group of people and hold a different national status than blacks, it seems highly unlikely that the white-black trends would also explain the white-immigrant trends.

Finally, I extend my empirical analyses to undocumented immigrants as well as legal immigrants. Few studies examine the factors that influence whites' opinions toward undocumented immigrants and policy ideas that focus on illegal immigration than legal immigrants and legal immigration policy. Consequently, the chapter seven updates and extends the prior research (e.g., see Espenshade 1995; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993, and Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) on public opinion toward undocumented immigrants using different, nationally representative data, across different time periods, and with different theoretical perspectives.

## CHAPTER 5

Due to high levels of immigration from Latin America, Asia, and other regions outside of Europe, the ethnoracial population of the U.S. is significantly more diverse today than fifty years ago (Lee and Bean 2004). Currently, foreign-born residents and their children constitute approximately one-quarter of the U.S. population, with projections for a substantial increase over the next fifty years (Passel and Cohn 2008). These demographic changes prompt scholarly debate regarding the likelihood of intergroup conflict, particularly with respect to native-born whites' attitudes toward minorities, immigrants and racially-targeted policies (Krysan 2000). Two theoretical perspectives are prevalent in the discussions: group threat theories and contact theory.

Group threat theories (e.g., Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995) suggest that, as an area becomes racially and ethnically diverse, the dominant ethnoracial group is likely to feel it will lose its social, economic and political power. This feeling of threat may lead dominant group members to express prejudiced attitudes toward other ethnoracial groups, resulting in intergroup conflict. For example, McLaren (2003) and Quillian (1995) find that, in European countries, native-born individuals who live in regions with large immigrant populations are likely to hold negative attitudes toward immigrants, especially if the region is struggling economically. In the U.S., Alba, Nee, and Nee (2005) show that non-Hispanic whites tend to desire restrictions on immigration, especially from Latin America and Asia, when they perceive an increase in the size of minority groups in their local areas. Many whites believe that new immigrants reduce the native-born population's share of limited resources, such as jobs (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996).

Contact theory (Allport 1954[1979]; Dixon 2006; Pettigrew 1998), however, suggests that, even in less than ideal social situations, interaction between different ethnoracial groups may result in positive intergroup feelings. The contact allows the different groups to gain more than a stereotypical understanding of the other groups, encouraging intergroup harmony. Consequently, whites who live in areas with large numbers of immigrants may express favorable attitudes toward immigrants and pro-immigrant policy. Empirical research shows that whites tend to interact more frequently with Hispanics and Asians in areas that have greater numbers of Hispanics and Asians (e.g., see Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000), suggesting that whites, on average, do not avoid contact with other ethnoracial groups, especially ones that have large immigrant populations. Further, whites who live in these ethnographically diverse areas hold fewer negative stereotypes toward Hispanics and Asians (Dixon 2006; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004), and toward immigrants (Hood and Morris 1998), and they tend to be comparatively open to immigrant-friendly public policies (Hood and Morris 1997).

As suggested in other research, these two theoretical perspectives may not be in opposition (e.g., see Dixon 2006). Both focus on the social environment. Therefore, geographical size may matter. Oliver and Wong (2003) find that neighborhoods are more likely to generate positive racial feelings because individuals have the chance to interact with out-group members, while metropolitan areas are more likely to facilitate feelings of group threat. At the county level, however, the evidence is mixed, with some support for group threat (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000) and some support for intergroup contact (e.g., Hood and Morris 1998). The type of contact therefore may also matter. Interactions between whites and minorities that generate feelings of

closeness and friendship reduce the likelihood that whites will express negative ethnoracial stereotypes (Dixon 2006).

In the current research, I use a network perspective to add to this discussion in two ways. First, I suggest that the positive or negative effects of the social environment on white immigration attitudes may be conditional on the composition of the individual's core network, which is typically defined as a set number of persons who have emotionally close ties to the individual (Marsden 1987). Often, homophily structures the social ties in the core network so that the personal contacts are similar to the individual in sociodemographic characteristics. This may be due to the individual's choice in friends (cf. Mouw 2006) or due to the structured opportunity for particular relationships (cf. Blau 1977). For example, in racially diverse areas, whites have more structural opportunity to develop personal contacts that are racially different from them and likely more immigrant-friendly (cf. Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). These personal contacts may influence the white individual's perceptions of threat and experiences of contact with immigrants (cf. French 1956; Friedkin 1990, 1999). Consequently, the core network and the broader sociodemographic environment likely interact during opinion formation.

Second, I suggest that within the social environment, whites are also embedded in an interpersonal environment. The core network is one way to measure an individual's interpersonal environment and the corresponding effects of having certain relationships (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears 2006). This smaller social structure may have a direct influence on whites' immigration attitudes, even when there are no immigrants residing in the larger social environment. The network perspective extends the predictions of contact theory, which rests on white-immigrant interactions, regarding the formation of immigration attitudes. Thus, the

network perspective may also be consequential for other topics of social science research, such as studying attitude formation toward gays/lesbians, military veterans, the disabled, and the poor.

In the next section, I present a core network approach to studying whites' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. This approach does not follow a standard social network analysis, which requires identifying specific differences in network structures. Rather, it is more general, because it examines the respondents' beliefs about the characteristics of their personal contacts. Therefore, it is usable with nationally representative data. It also parallels the work of other attitudinal researchers (e.g., see Jackman and Crane 1986 for an examination of network influence on attitudes toward African Americans and Dixon 2006 for an examination of network influence on attitudes toward Hispanics and Asians), in the sense of asking respondents about the characteristics of their friends, yet, to my knowledge, no prior study has examined attitudes toward racial/ethnic minorities, and attitudes toward immigrants, in the way that I outline below. After the theoretical discussion, I define the sample, which comes from the 2004 General Social Survey and which is linked to Census 2000 data. I then review the method of multilevel modeling, which I use to test the independent and conditional significance of core networks on immigration attitudes. I conclude with a discussion of the findings and implications for future research.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The meaning of "attitude" can be narrow, reflecting favorable or unfavorable evaluations of an object, or broad, by including beliefs that are evaluative in nature (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo,

and Krysan 1997). For example, whites may *evaluate* the amount of government assistance given to immigrants to be “too much,” while also *believing* that immigrants bring new ideas to the U.S. In this study, I use the broader definition of attitude to predict white opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy.

### *Core Networks*

In comparison to standard social network data, which maps all of the connections between a set of actors without favoring any particular actor, core networks focus on individuals, called egos, and their close associates, called alters (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Other terms for core networks include “ego-centered” or “personal” networks. In this type of network, the alters are often determined when individuals designate people with whom they share important information (Marsden 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears 2006). Therefore, the core network has a significant relationship with ethnoracial attitudes, because it represents the group of people that individuals confide in, believe, are pressured by, aim to please, and gain information from when forming opinions on ethnoracial groups and policies that target those groups (cf. French 1956; Friedkin 1990). Ultimately, as Friedkin (1990, 326) notes, “the substantive argument is that individuals modify their actions in response to other individuals’ actions,” a situation that also applies to attitude formation (e.g., see Friedkin 1999). Thus, there are at least four characteristics of the core network that likely affect whites’ immigration attitudes: the number of non-whites in the network, the education level of the network, the age of the network, and the strength of ties between the ego and the alters.

In general, a core network with a greater number of alters decreases the chance that the ego will experience pressure to conform to a group norm and increases the chance that he or she will hear new information about a variety of issues. Yet, due to homophily, core networks tend to be racially homogenous (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears 2006). Whites tend to have white family members, friends and associates. Networks with racially similar members depress the opportunity to hear new information, because members of the same racial group have similar socially structured experiences regarding racial privilege (cf. Blau 1977). Core network size, therefore, may not be especially predictive of immigration attitudes.

However, as Bienenstock, Bonacich, and Oliver (1990) find, when the alters are ethnically and racially different from the ego, the core network usually circulates information that favors the various ethnic and racial groups. Prior research on white public opinion toward immigrants finds that African Americans (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) and Latinos (Sanchez 2006) typically express sympathetic attitudes toward immigrants and immigrant-friendly policies relative to whites. Consequently, whites with non-whites in their core networks are likely to hear a greater number of pro-immigrant arguments, leading to a higher chance of adopting a pro-immigrant attitude.

Similarly, the education level of the core network may circulate new information because, as McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashears (2006, 372) find, “higher education people have larger networks of both family and non-family members, and their networks have more of the range that tends to bring new information and perspective into the interpersonal environment.” Thus, for example, an ego that has little education and only one alter will still receive new information if the one alter is educated. This educated contact will likely have a

diverse network through which new information flows and can pass to the ego. Moreover, the information is likely to be framed as pro-immigrant. Educated persons tend to hold comparatively sympathetic viewpoints on ethnic and race issues, especially toward immigrants (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Hood and Morris 1997) and pro-immigrant policy (Burns and Gimpel 2000). Given their high status and knowledge, educated persons are also able to persuade the ego to hold similar opinions (Jackman and Crane 1986; Krysan 2000). Educated networks, therefore, may influence the person to adopt a pro-immigrant attitude.

Age, however, tends to have a negative relationship with pro-immigrant attitudes (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Older individuals often consider immigrants to be more costly than beneficial to the community and accordingly favor greater restrictions on immigration (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). Consequently, older networks may persuade the individual to hold anti-immigrant opinions.

Lastly, as Granovetter (1973) argues, the strength of the ties between the ego and the alters generates several outcomes for the ego. Strong ties, which are often measured by frequency of communication (Granovetter 1995), are more likely to circulate redundant information. Because the ego and alters interact frequently, they do not venture into different social circles, which would provide different viewpoints on important issues (Marsden 1987). Moreover, strong ties are able to put pressure on the ego to conform to a group norm or belief (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears 2006). Therefore, whites who have greater frequency of communication with their core network contacts are limited in generating a well-informed opinion of immigrants and may default to a restrictionist viewpoint when controlling for other individual and network factors. That is, for example, if other network characteristics, such as

age and education, are held constant, the structure of the network, as measured by tie strength, should influence the flow of potential information and thereby influence immigration attitudes.

### *Conditioning the Effects of Group Threat and Intergroup Contact*

Within a social environment, whites may experience intergroup contact with, and group threat from, immigrants. The likelihood of these experiences is often measured by the number of immigrants in a designated geographical unit (Krysan 2000). Simultaneously, many whites are embedded in core networks within the social environment. Thus, scholars may expect core networks to condition the relationships between group threat, intergroup contact, and immigration attitudes. For example, in areas where group threat is consequential, such as metropolitan areas (Oliver and Wong 2003) and regions (Quillian 1995), group threat may have a strong impact on immigration attitudes when core networks are low educated or have few non-white alters. However, in these same areas, when core networks are highly educated or have many non-white alters, group threat may have less of an impact because whites are receiving pro-immigrant information from their close associates. Similarly, in areas that show positive effects for intergroup contact, such as neighborhoods (Oliver and Wong 2003) and counties (Hood and Morris 1998), intergroup contact may have a strong impact on immigration attitudes when core networks are low educated or have few non-white alters. The alters' opinions about immigration may appear less legitimate compared to the opinions of immigrant contacts. Yet, in these same areas, intergroup contact may have a weaker impact on attitudes when core networks are educated or have several non-white alters, because the personal contacts may appear to offer

higher-quality information about ethnoracial groups, including immigrants and immigration policy in a general, compared to what is learned from particular intergroup contact experiences with individual immigrants (cf. French 1956; Friedkin 1999).

Similarly, when the core network is comparatively older and tighter—measured by frequency of communication—intergroup contact may have less of an impact. Whites may hear anti-immigrant information or be pressured to hold negative beliefs about immigrants from these personal contacts, despite particular intergroup experiences. Further, older and tighter networks may increase feelings of group threat compared to younger and more open core networks, which may circulate pro-immigrant opinions and depress feelings of group threat.

#### *Data and Measures*

The data for this study come from the General Social Survey, which is conducted biennially by the National Opinion Research Center. The GSS draws a nationally representative sample from a population of English-speaking adults aged 18 and older who live in non-institutionalized U.S. households (Davis and Smith 2005). It uses a multistage probability sampling design to select respondents. In the first stage, primary sampling units, representing Metropolitan Statistical Areas and U.S. counties, are stratified by region, age and race for selection. Then block groups and enumeration districts are stratified by race and income for selection. In the next stage, blocks are selected. Subsequently, a list of addresses/housing units is constructed to contact respondents. Interviews are conducted in-person and with computers,

averaging approximately an hour and a half in interview-time (Davis and Smith 2005). The 2004 survey, which was conducted between February and April, had a response rate of 70 percent.<sup>1</sup>

In 2004, the survey contained a module for social networks. The primary question of this network module asked, “From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months—who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to you?” Respondents were probed for information on a maximum of five contacts.<sup>4</sup> Respondents were also asked a number of questions regarding their attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. Of the 1216 respondents who were asked these questions, I restricted the dataset to native-born whites, leaving a sample of 914 respondents. I then used the method of listwise deletion (Allison 2002) to drop 206 respondents who answered “don’t know” or “refused” on at least one of the variables of interest, arriving at the final sample of 708 respondents.<sup>2</sup>

### *Dependent Variables*

To measure whites’ attitudes toward immigrants, I create four dependent variables based on ordinal questions of agree and disagree regarding the following statements: 1) Immigrants improve American society by bringing in new ideas and cultures; 2) Immigrants are generally good for America’s economy; 3) Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in America; 4) Immigrants increase crime rates.<sup>3</sup> I subsequently collapsed the response categories from “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree,”

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<sup>4</sup> Overall, this question captures strong ties. Yet, the strength of ties within this group will vary among respondents, measuring some differences in tie strength.

into dummy variables that predict pro-immigrant attitudes. For statements one and two, 1 is equal to “strongly agree” and “agree” and 0 is equal to the other responses. For statements three and four, “disagree” and “strongly disagree” equal 1 and 0 equals the other responses.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, to measure whites’ attitudes toward immigration policy, I collapsed the following ordinal questions of agree and disagree into dummy variables: 1) Government spends too much money assisting immigrants; 2) Legal immigrants to America who are not citizens should have the same rights as American citizens; 3) Children born in America of parents who are not citizens should have the right to become American citizens.<sup>5</sup> For the first statement, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” equal 1 and 0 equals the other responses. For the second and third statements, “strongly agree” and “agree” equals 1 and 0 equals the other responses. Again, this coding scheme predicts pro-immigrant policy attitudes.

In preliminary analyses, I examined these ordinal variables with appropriate statistical techniques, such as ordered HLM, and found the outcomes to be substantively similar to the ones presented below. Thus, for ease of interpretation, I employed the statistical method of generalized hierarchal linear modeling for binary dependent variables, as discussed in more detail below, for the primary analysis.

### *Independent Variables*

To test the effect of core networks on whites’ attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy, I create five independent variables: network size, number of non-whites in the network, network education, network age, and tie strength. Network size is a count of the

people named from the question above about persons with whom important matters are shared, with six or more people coded as 6.5—following Marsden (1987) and McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears (2006). The number of non-whites in the network is a count of the alters who are Asian, Black, Hispanic, and other (“Is [NAME] Asian, Black, Hispanic, White or something else?”). Network education is the average education level of the network (“This card lists general levels of education. As far as you know, what is [NAME]’s highest level of education?”). Network age is the average age of the network (“How old is [NAME]?”). Tie strength is measured by calculating the average frequency of communication between the respondent and his or her network alters (“Thinking about how often you usually talk to [NAME], on the average, do you talk to [him/her] almost every day, at least once a week, at least once a month, or less than once a month?”).

Many respondents did not name anyone with whom they discuss important matters (i.e., no core network); and many respondents did not have any non-white contacts. In both of these cases, I gave the respondents a zero. Thus, respondents who do not have a core network received a zero for each of the network characteristics, and respondents who have no non-white alters received a zero for the variable that counts the number of non-white alters. The assumption is that these respondents are not influenced by the particular core network characteristics, given that they presumably do not have them.

### *Control Variables*

In the literature on racial attitudes, scholars often measure group threat and intergroup contact by calculating the percentage of the minority group in a geographical area (Krysan 2000). Group threat predicts negative white attitudes with a higher percentage of the minority group, while intergroup contact predicts positive white attitudes. For the 2004 GSS survey, the National Opinion Research Center used 79 primary sampling units (PSUs), which encompassed 312 counties and metropolitan areas and from which respondents were selected to complete the survey. With permission from NORC, I obtained the respondents' PSUs. I then calculated the percentage of the foreign-born in each PSU from the 2000 Census and linked the two datasets. Therefore, I measure group threat/intergroup contact with the percentage of the foreign-born in the respondents' PSUs.<sup>6</sup> In some cases, the PSUs consist of several counties and metropolitan areas and, in other cases, they represent a single county. Subsequently, I label the PSUs "local regions." Additionally, I include the overall population size and the percentage of unemployed in each local region as control variables, since both factors may influence an individual's perception of immigrant residents (Hood and Morris 1998; Quillian 1995).

At the individual level, I control for six other factors: educational attainment (less than high school to graduate degree); age (in years); gender (1=female); family income (logged mid-points); political party affiliation (coded 1 to 7 for strong Democrat to Independent to strong Republican), and Hispanic (1=yes).

## *Method*

For the statistical analysis, I use multilevel modeling with the software program HLM 6. Methodologically, I use this statistical technique because many respondents are located in the same local region and experience the same percentage of the foreign-born. They are likely to have correlated errors, a situation which violates the basic assumption of independent errors of multiple regression. Multilevel modeling accounts for this correlation and corrects the standard errors to offer more accurate significance tests (Luke 2004). Theoretically, I use it because the basic ideas behind group threat and contact theories assume that the sociodemographic context of the area influences individual behavior and attitudes. Comparatively few studies that investigate racial attitudes construct these hierarchal linear models (for an exception, see Dixon 2006), and only one, to my knowledge, does so when examining attitudes toward immigrants—in this case, immigrants in Europe (see McLaren 2003).

More specifically, because the dependent variables are binary, I employ generalized hierarchal linear modeling with a Bernoulli distribution and Laplace estimation for reliable deviance scores (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), which assist in comparing the fit of nested models (Luke 2004). Additionally, to be consistent with prior research (e.g., Dixon 2006), I use grand mean centered continuous variables and uncentered dichotomous variables. The following is an example of the full generalized hierarchal linear model that predicts whites' opinions that immigrants improve American society.

Level 1:

$$\text{Prob}(\text{Improve American Society}=1 | \beta) = \varphi$$

$$\text{Log}[\varphi/(1 - \varphi)] = \eta$$

$$\eta = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} (\text{Educational Attainment}) + \beta_{2j} (\text{Female}) + \beta_{3j} (\text{Age}) + \beta_{4j} (\text{Logged Family Income}) + \beta_{5j} (\text{Political Party}) + \beta_{6j} (\text{Hispanic}) + \beta_{7j} (\text{Network size}) + \beta_{8j} (\text{Number non-white in network}) + \beta_{9j} (\text{Network Education}) + \beta_{10j} (\text{Network Age}) + \beta_{11j} (\text{Tie Strength})$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Percent Foreign-born})_j + \gamma_{02} (\text{Logged Population})_j + \gamma_{03} (\text{Percent Unemployed})_j + u_{0j},$$

where  $\beta_{0j}$  is the average attitudinal score for each local region;  $\beta_{1j} - \beta_{10j}$  are the slopes in level-2 areas;  $\gamma_{00}$  is the level 2 intercept;  $\gamma_{01} - \gamma_{03}$  are the level 2 slopes; and  $u_{0j}$  is the level 2 random error/effect.

## *Results*

As Table 1 shows, the percentage of whites who express pro-immigrant attitudes varies by the issue. However, overall, more whites tend to hold a restrictionist attitude than an expansionist attitude regarding immigration. Table 1 also indicates that the average size of the local regions is 2.8 million people and the mean percentage of the foreign-born in the local regions is 7.86. Further, 81 percent of whites designate at least one individual with whom they

discuss important matters (table not shown), and, on average, they communicate with their personal contacts “almost every week.” The personal contacts, on average, are white, middle-aged, with a high school degree or some college. Lastly, in cross tabulations not shown, chi-square tests indicate that respondents are statistically different in age and education from the age and education of their personal contacts. One possible reason is that approximately half of the core network contacts are family members, such as parents or children.

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Improve American Society	.56	---
Not Cause Crime	.42	---
Not Take Jobs	.32	---
Good for Economy	.43	---
Equal Rights	.35	---
Not Too Much Gov. Spending	.17	---
Citizenship for Kids	.74	---
Educational Degree	2.80	1.21
Age (in years)	45.96	16.24
Female	.56	---
Family Income (Midpoints)	62508	48000
Political Party (Strong Dem. – Strong Rep.)	4.20	2.12
Hispanic	.06	---
Percent Foreign-Born in Local region	7.86	7.20
Population	2798698	4894426
Percent Unemployed in Local region	5.70	1.76
Network Size	2.43	1.89
Number of Non-White Alters	.18	.60
Network Education	2.43	1.50
Network Age	37.29	21.31
Tie Strength	2.71	1.44

*Notes:* Whites in the General Social Survey, 2004. N=708. Data for population, foreign-born population, and unemployment come from the 2000 Census. Core network variables include persons without networks, for which they received a zero.

### *Whites' Attitudes toward Immigrants*

This part of the analysis examines the multilevel models that predict whites' attitudes toward immigrants. The deviance scores in the second models in Tables 2 and 3 indicate a significantly better fit for the data when the network variables are included compared to the first models, which only include the control variables and level-2 variables. As the second models

show in Table 2, whites who are embedded in more educated networks and networks with more non-white alters have greater odds of expressing a pro-immigrant attitude, holding constant other factors. For example, each non-white alter doubles the odds (2.22)—or increases the odds by 122 percent—of believing that immigrants improve American society [ $e^{.80}=2.22$ ;  $(e^{.80} - 1)*100=122\%$ ]. Tighter networks, which have greater frequency of communication, however, decrease the odds of holding this opinion by .84 or by 16 percent, all else equal [ $e^{-.18}=.84$ ;  $(e^{-.18} - 1)*100=-16\%$ ]. Moreover, each year in the average age of the core network decreases the odds by .98 or by 2 percent of rejecting the idea that immigrants swell the crime rates, holding other factors constant [ $e^{-.02}=.98$ ;  $(e^{-.02} - 1)*100=-2\%$ ]. In other words, older networks may encourage white individuals to believe that immigrants cause more crime.

**Table 2: Multilevel Models Predicting Whites' Attitudes toward Immigrants**

	Improve American Society			Not Cause Crime		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Fixed Effects</b>						
<b>Level-2</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Intercept	.30 (.14)	.38 (.14)	.42 (.14)	-.45 (.13)	-.43 (.13)	-.40 (.13)
% Foreign-Born	.01 (.01)	-.001 (.01)	.005 (.01)	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.03† (.02)
Logged Population	.14* (.06)	.12* (.06)	.10† (.06)	-.01 (.06)	-.02 (.06)	-.03 (.06)
% Unemployed	.03 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.05 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.02 (.06)	-.01 (.06)
<b>Level-1</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Education	.46*** (.07)	.34*** (.07)	.35*** (.07)	.33*** (.07)	.27*** (.07)	.26*** (.07)
Age	.02** (.01)	.02** (.01)	.02** (.01)	-.002 (.01)	.004 (.01)	.005 (.01)

Female	-.11 (.19)	-.10 (.19)	-.06 (.20)	.19 (.15)	.18 (.16)	.22 (.16)
Logged Income	-.02 (.08)	-.04 (.09)	-.02 (.09)	.06 (.06)	.04 (.06)	.06 (.06)
Political Party	-.14*** (.04)	-.13** (.04)	-.13** (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
Hispanic	.46 (.38)	-.23 (.44)	-.21 (.44)	-.12 (.34)	-.40 (.43)	-.49 (.44)
Network Size		.11† (.06)	.11† (.06)		.08 (.05)	.08 (.05)
Non-White Alters		.80** (.31)	1.11** (.31)		.28 (.18)	.44* (.20)
Network Education		.27** (.09)	.27** (.10)		.13 (.10)	.17† (.10)
Network Age		-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)		-.02* (.01)	-.02* (.01)
Tie Strength		-.18* (.09)	-.18* (.09)		.08 (.11)	.06 (.10)
<b>Interactions</b>						
% Foreign-born * Non-White Alters			-.05* (.02)			-.02 (.01)
% Foreign-born * Network Education			-.02† (.01)			-.03** (.01)
% Foreign-born * Network Age			.0004 (.01)			.001 (.01)
% Foreign-born * Tie Strength			.02* (.01)			.02 (.01)
<b>Random Effects</b>						
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.18	.04	.03	.34	.30	.20
Variance Component	.03	.01	.001	.12	.09	.04
$X^2$	86.30	78.49	75.43	99.68*	96.40*	89.18
Deviance	2178	2147**	2136*	2222	2209*	2200*

Notes: †  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (Two-tailed tests). The

multilevel models are generalized hierarchical linear models for binary dependent variables with a logit link function and Bernoulli distribution. Chi-square tests are used for changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. General Social Survey, 2004. N=708. Standard errors are in parentheses. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered.

The second models in Table 3 show a similar pattern for network age. Older networks decrease the odds that whites will believe that immigrants are good for the economy and lower the likelihood that whites will reject the idea that immigrants take jobs away from native-born citizens. Each increase in the education level of the core network increases the odds by 1.21 or by 21 percent that whites will doubt the argument that native-born citizens are losing employment opportunities to foreign-born residents [ $e^{.19}=1.21$ ;  $(e^{.19} - 1)*100= 21\%$ ]. In this table, the percentage of the foreign-born in the local regions also significantly predicts white public opinion. Whites who live in areas with greater numbers of immigrants have greater odds of expressing pro-immigrant attitudes, supporting the intergroup contact perspective and prior research (e.g., see Hood and Morris 1998).

**Table 3: Multilevel Models Predicting Whites' Attitudes toward Immigrants**

	Good for Economy			Not Take Jobs		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Fixed Effects</b>						
<b>Level-2</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Intercept	-.19 (.13)	-.18 (.12)	-.12 (.12)	-.80 (.16)	-.79 (.17)	-.77 (.16)
% Foreign-Born	.03* (.01)	.03† (.02)	.04* (.01)	.04* (.01)	.04* (.01)	.04** (.01)
Logged	.01	.001	-.03	-.09	-.10	-.11†

Population						
	(.05)	(.01)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)
% Unemployed	-.005	-.01	.01	-.04	-.05	-.03
	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)	(.07)
<b>Level-1</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Education	.43***	.37***	.37***	.38***	.32***	.33***
	(.07)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
Age	.03***	.04***	.04***	.02**	.03***	.03***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Female	-.32*	-.33*	-.29†	-.15	-.16	-.13
	(.15)	(.15)	(.15)	(.21)	(.21)	(.21)
Logged Income	.04	.02	.05	.11	.09	.10
	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
Political Party	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.10*	-.08	-.08
	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Hispanic	.60*	.45	.34	.59*	.34	.29
	(.30)	(.33)	(.31)	(.30)	(.34)	(.35)
Network Size		.08†	.08†		.05	.05
		(.05)	(.05)		(.06)	(.06)
Non-White		.19	.61*		.28†	.44*
Alters						
		(.19)	(.27)		(.17)	(.18)
Network		.18	.21*		.19*	.19†
Education						
		(.11)	(.11)		(.10)	(.10)
Network Age		-.02*	-.02*		-.02**	-.02*
		(.01)	(.01)		(.01)	(.01)
Tie Strength		.08	.06		.18	.16
		(.10)	(.10)		(.11)	(.11)
<b>Interactions</b>						
% Foreign-born			-.05**			-.02
* Non-White						
Alters						
			(.02)			(.02)
% Foreign-born			-.03**			-.01
* Network						
Education						
			(.01)			(.01)
% Foreign-born			.0004			.0001
* Network Age						
			(.001)			(.001)
% Foreign-born			.02*			.02
* Tie Strength						

			(.01)			(.01)
<b>Random Effects</b>						
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.17	.09	.04	.33	.32	.28
Variance Component	.03	.01	.002	.11	.10	.08
$X^2$	86.69	83.56	79.85	91.30†	91.56†	88.77
Deviance	2170	2157*	2141**	2122	2106*	2101

Notes: †  $p \leq .10$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (Two-tailed tests).

The multilevel models are generalized hierarchical linear models for binary dependent variables with a logit link function and Bernoulli distribution. Chi-square tests are used for changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. General Social Survey, 2004.  $N=708$ . Standard errors are in parentheses. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered.

Furthermore, Tables 2 and 3 present the models with the interaction terms, which estimate the extent to which core networks condition the effects of group threat and intergroup contact on immigration attitudes. Based on the deviance scores, three of the four models—improve American society, good for the economy, and do not cause crime—fit the data better than the main effects models. Accordingly, several of the interaction terms are statistically significant, yet not all in the expected directions. As presented in the third models, the percentage of the foreign-born in the local region is positively associated with a pro-immigrant attitude, suggesting that whites who live in areas with a greater number of foreign-born residents are more likely to believe that immigrants improve American society, are good for the economy, and do not cause more crime—presumably because they interact more frequently with immigrants. This effect, however, is reduced as core networks become educated (e.g.,  $b = -.03$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ) and non-

white (e.g.,  $b = -.05$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), as expected. Whites may look to their high status and trusted personal contacts rather than specific foreign-born residents, who they meet in the local region, when developing a general opinion on immigrants. However, whites who have tighter core networks—i.e., communicate more often with their personal contacts—are influenced to a greater extent by an increase in the number of foreign-born residents (e.g.,  $b = .02$ ;  $p < .05$ ), an outcome which was not expected. One explanation may be that because these particular whites venture less often into other social circles, an increase in intergroup contact experiences—from an increase in the percentage of foreign-born residents—may have an especially powerful and positive impact on them when such experiences occur.

#### *Whites' Attitudes toward Pro-Immigration Policy*

This part of the analysis examines the multilevel models that predict whites' attitudes toward pro-immigration policy. In Table 4, the deviance scores in the second models, which include the network variables, suggest a statistically better fit to the data than the first models. As expected, an increase in the education level in the core networks is associated with better odds of whites favoring equal rights for legal immigrants and not believing the notion that the government is spending too much on foreign-born residents, holding other individual and contextual factors constant. Similarly, core networks with more alters in general and more non-white alters in particular are associated with pro-immigrant attitudes, the former with respect to government spending and the latter with respect to immigrant rights. Older networks, however,

significantly influence whites to take a conservative position on government spending on foreign-born residents.

**Table 4: Multilevel Models Predicting Whites' Attitudes toward Immigration Policy**

	Equal Rights			Not Too Much Gov. Spending		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Fixed Effects</b>						
<b>Level-2</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Intercept	-.53 (.12)	-.51 (.12)	-.47 (.12)	-1.77 (.16)	-1.82 (.17)	-1.82 (.17)
% Foreign-Born	-.002 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.0001 (.02)	.002 (.02)	-.0003 (.02)	.005 (.02)
Logged Population	-.06 (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.08 (.06)	.04 (.07)	.02 (.08)	.02 (.08)
% Unemployed	-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.05)	-.03 (.07)	-.03 (.08)	-.01 (.08)
<b>Level-1</b>						
<b>Variable</b>						
Education	.27*** (.08)	.21* (.09)	.20* (.09)	.45*** (.10)	.31** (.11)	.31** (.11)
Age	-.01*** (.004)	-.01* (.005)	-.01† (.005)	.01 (.01)	.02* (.009)	.02* (.008)
Female	-.20 (.16)	-.20 (.16)	-.19 (.16)	-.09 (.19)	-.12 (.21)	-.10 (.20)
Logged Income	-.03 (.09)	-.04 (.09)	-.03 (.09)	-.01 (.09)	-.07 (.10)	-.06 (.09)
Political Party	-.10** (.04)	-.08* (.04)	-.08* (.04)	-.24*** (.05)	-.23*** (.05)	-.23*** (.05)
Hispanic	.22 (.41)	-.19 (.45)	-.32 (.46)	.54 (.43)	.63 (.45)	.60 (.44)
Network Size		-.04 (.06)	-.04 (.06)		.12* (.05)	.11* (.05)
Non-White Alters		.39* (.17)	.61** (.22)		-.03 (.12)	.06 (.15)
Network Education		.18† (.17)	.20* (.22)		.34* (.12)	.38** (.15)

	(.10)	(.10)		(.14)	(.14)	
Network Age	-.01	-.01		-.02*	-.02*	
	(.01)	(.01)		(.009)	(.01)	
Tie Strength	.06	.05		.12	.12	
	(.10)	(.10)		(.13)	(.13)	
<b>Interactions</b>						
% Foreign-born * Non-White Alters		-.02			-.01	
		(.02)			(.01)	
% Foreign-born * Network Education		-.01			-.01	
		(.01)			(.01)	
% Foreign-born * Network Age		-.001*			.001	
		(.0006)			(.001)	
% Foreign-born * Tie Strength		.02			.002	
		(.01)			(.01)	
<b>Random Effects</b>						
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.04	.04	.04	.07	.08	.06
Variance Component	.002	.002	.002	.004	.006	.004
$X^2$	77.61	80.91	79.82	75.52	78.20	77.97
Deviance	2184	2171*	2161*	1884	1866**	1864

*Notes:* †  $p \leq .10$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (Two-tailed tests). The multilevel models are generalized hierarchical linear models for binary dependent variables with a logit link function and Bernoulli distribution. Chi-square tests are used for changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. General Social Survey, 2004. N=708. Standard errors are in parentheses. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered.

In Table 5, model 2 shows educated networks have a positive relationship with supporting immigrant-friendly policies. With each unit increase in education in the core network, the odds of favoring citizenship for U.S.-born children to immigrant parents are increased by

1.27 or by 27%, controlling for other factors [ $e^{.24}=1.27$ ;  $(e^{.24} - 1)*100= 27\%$ ]. Yet, based on the deviance scores, this full model does not offer a statistically better fit to the data than the first model, which does not include any network variables. Lastly, the third model in Table 5 presents statistically significant interaction terms. When core networks are filled with more non-white alters, the percentage of the foreign-born in a local region exerts less influence on opinions toward citizenship status for children born in the U.S. to immigrants ( $b = -.04$ ;  $p < .05$ ), as expected. However, the opposite occurs when core networks have especially strong ties ( $b = .03$ ;  $p < .05$ ), which was not expected. Perhaps, the tighter core networks limit information that presents arguments against the traditional notion that all persons born in the U.S. are automatically entitled to U.S. citizenship.

**Table 5: Multilevel Models Predicting Whites' Attitudes toward Immigration Policy**

	Citizenship for Children		
	1	2	3
<b>Fixed Effects</b>			
<b>Level-2 Variable</b>			
Intercept	.94 (.12)	.95 (.12)	1.00 (.13)
Percent Foreign-Born	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Logged Population	.09 (.06)	.08 (.06)	.06 (.07)
Percent Unemployed	.03 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.04 (.08)
<b>Level-1 Variable</b>			
Educational Attainment	.09 (.07)	-.01 (.07)	.001 (.08)
Age	.0002 (.01)	.002 (.01)	.002 (.01)
Female	.14 (.17)	.15 (.17)	.17 (.18)

Logged Family Income			
	-.01	-.04	-.05
	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
Political Party	-.11**	-.11**	-.11**
	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Hispanic	.72*	.76*	.81*
	(.33)	(.37)	(.42)
Network Size		.06	.07
		(.06)	(.07)
Non-White Alters		-.02	.26
		(.20)	(.27)
Network Education		.24*	.24*
		(.10)	(.10)
Network Age		-.01	-.01
		(.01)	(.01)
Tie Strength		-.07	-.09
		(.10)	(.10)
<b>Interactions</b>			
% Foreign-born * Non-White Alters			-.04*
			(.02)
% Foreign-born * Network Education			.004
			(.01)
% Foreign-born * Network Age			-.002*
			(.001)
% Foreign-born * Tie Strength			.03*
			(.01)
<b>Random Effects</b>			
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.25	.23	.24
Variance Component	.06	.05	.06
$X^2$	84.71	85.34	84.65
Deviance	2098.26	2089.58	2081.02†

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Notes: †  $p \leq .10$ ; \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (Two-tailed tests). The multilevel models are generalized hierarchical linear models for binary dependent variables with a logit link function and Bernoulli distribution. Chi-square tests are used for changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. General Social Survey, 2004. N=708. Standard errors are in

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parentheses. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered.

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### *Discussion*

The results from this study have implications for two of the prominent theories on racial/ethnic attitudes. A network approach adds to contact theory by offering an explanation of how the interpersonal environment is still influential on whites' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy even when whites experience no interaction—or have no direct “contact”—with immigrants. Rather, whites come into “contact” with different attitudes through other persuasive and trusted individuals. Network ties transfer information to the individual, leading the individual to evaluate the situation differently in response to the perceived viewpoints of close personal contacts (French 1956; Friedkin 1990, 1999). A network approach also has implications for group threat theories. A network approach adds a nuanced explanation of how communication between dominant group members may result in perceptions of immigrants as threatening. Different network compositions and structures may circulate particular information on immigration and put pressure on individuals to conform to certain beliefs.

Furthermore, the findings in this study suggest that core networks may condition the relationships between intergroup contact, group threat and ethnoracial attitudes. Different core network characteristics make it more or less likely that intergroup contact and group threat will exert influence on white public opinion. For example, as whites develop more educated core networks, they are less likely to be affected by increases in the foreign-born population in their local regions when developing opinions on the social and economic impact of immigrants on the

U.S. society. These findings from the conditional models extend prior research that use main effects models to examine the influence of immigrant context in U.S. counties on white attitudes (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Hood and Morris 1998; Oliver and Wong 2003; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000), as well as research on the effect of the percentage black, Latino, and Asian in various geographical units (e.g., see Dixon 2006; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Hood and Morris 1997) and the effect of the perception—rather than the reality—of group sizes in certain areas (e.g., see Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005) on white attitudes.

Overall, core networks seem to have a stronger relationship with white attitudes toward immigrants than immigration policy. Other research has also documented a difference, even a contradiction, in whites' perceptions of ethnoracial groups and race-specific policies (e.g., see Krysan 2000 for a review). As Tichenor (2002) highlights, Americans tend to have a nostalgic or romantic view of immigrants as historical figures, especially any immigrants in their own ancestry, yet take a restrictionist position on public policy that supports modern-day immigration. This contradiction, he implies, may be due to a number of historical and current institutional factors that emerge from the complex interplay between political systems, coalitions, and actors, which influence policy perceptions and the passage of immigration policy. Consequently, the interpersonal environment may have a comparatively smaller impact on policy opinions than on opinions regarding individuals.

This study also offers a methodological contribution to the literature. It suggests that networks of interpersonal influence should be included in certain models of attitude formation. As Friedkin (1990, 316) states, “If a network of interpersonal influence has contributed to the development of individuals' actions, then estimates of the contributions of other variables (for

instance, socioeconomic status) will be flawed unless the contributions of this network have been controlled.” Regarding whites’ attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy, it appears that core networks have a statistically significant influence. This outcome extends Dixon’s (2006) and Dixon and Rosenbaum’s (2004) findings that network characteristics influence whites’ attitudes toward Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Future research may want to further verify the generalizability of these findings by examining network influence on the attitudes of ethnoracial minorities toward whites.

Moreover, this study builds on the comparatively few research reports that use multilevel modeling to understand whites’ ethnoracial attitudes (e.g., see Dixon 2006; McLaren 2003). Developing an ethnoracial attitude involves the social processes that occur at more than one theoretical level. The next questions therefore may be: when and between what groups are the effects of one level more consequential than the effects of another level with regard to ethnoracial attitudes and policy opinions? For example, with a different network dataset—one that maps the interpersonal connections and describes the sociodemographic attributes, geographical locations, and immigration opinions, of all of the individuals—three-way interactions may be possible. Individual characteristics would represent level-one, network characteristics level-two, and geographical characteristics (e.g., percent foreign-born) level-three. Such interactions may further elucidate the different effects of the theoretical perspectives.

Finally, as with other research, this study has limitations. The most significant weakness may be that, with cross-sectional data, the argument that core networks affect attitudes is unclear. The causal direction may be in the reverse, due to self-selection bias. It is possible, for example, that whites choose non-white core network alters because they have an ethnoracially tolerant

attitude and are already open to immigrants and liberal immigration policy. Panel data are necessary to ascertain this causal relationship. To my knowledge, however, panel data that measure the respondents' social network ties and opinions toward immigrants and immigration policy do not exist. At any rate, much evidence indicates that network contacts do influence individuals (e.g., see Dixon 2006; Mouw 2006; Pettigrew 1998). Furthermore, even racially tolerant whites may hold anti-immigrant attitudes. Thus, racially tolerant whites may be persuaded by their non-white contacts to think more openly about immigration, especially since recent evidence indicates that Blacks and Latinos are more sympathetic to immigrants than whites (e.g., see Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Sanchez 2006).

Another limitation is the size of the geographical units used in this study. The smallest units available from the GSS are the PSUs, which, in some cases, incorporate several counties and metropolitan areas. With smaller geographical units, the level-2 variables may have shown a stronger effect on whites' attitudes (cf. Oliver and Wong 2003). Nonetheless, the PSUs are sufficiently large to allow for enough whites to be in the same geographical area for multilevel modeling. They also add to the literature by introducing a geographical unit that is in-between counties and U.S. Census regions in size.

A last limitation may be the network variables. It is unknown in this study if the ego and alters discuss immigration. Similarly, the alters' opinions on immigration are unknown. Consequently, the network variables, such as average education, are only proxy measures for the opinions of network alters, based on prior research that shows a significant relationship between individual characteristics and white immigration attitudes (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Future research may benefit from gathering standard social

network data that ascertain the extent to which egos and alters exchange information on immigration issues, as well as the actual immigration opinions of network alters, to verify this study's assumptions and results.

### *Conclusion*

The recent waves of immigration have diversified the racial and ethnic landscape of the U.S., prompting inquiry about the likelihood that different ethnoracial groups will coexist in conflict or harmony (Dixon 2006). The current study adds to this area of research by introducing a core network perspective (French 1956; Friedkin 1990, 1999), which argues that any effects from the larger social environment on attitudes may be conditional on a person's core network and that a person's core network may have a direct effect on attitude formation. The findings suggest that whites who are embedded in educated core networks or core networks with many non-white alters are likely to believe that immigrants improve American society, are good for the economy, do not cause more crime or take jobs from native-born citizens, while whites who are embedded in older or tighter core networks are less likely to hold such opinions. Educated core networks and networks with non-white alters also weaken the effects of intergroup contact and group threat on whites' immigration attitudes, while tighter networks increase the effects. Thus, the interpersonal environment interacts with the broader social environment to affect the formation of white immigration attitudes. In the current period of increased immigration, these social dynamics may be particularly important in generating support for or opposition against

certain immigration laws that may influence the prosperity of all racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

## *Endnotes*

1. The response rate was calculated by following the guidelines of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (Davis and Smith 2005):  $\text{Response Rate} = I / (I + P) + (R + NC + O)$ , where I is a complete interview, P is a partial interview, NC is a non-contact, and O is Other.
2. Covariate analyses for missing data (i.e., respondents who answered “don’t know” or “refused” on one of the independent variables) revealed that respondents who did not answer the question on family income were statistically different ( $p < .01$ ) from the sample respondents in one model. The dropped respondents were less likely to agree that children born in the U.S. to non-citizens should be given citizenship status. I ran exploratory models with both the mean and the median values inputted for the missing data. I also estimated a regression model predicting family income and inputted the predicted values for the missing data. I also dropped the family income variable from the model. The outcomes for the other independent variables in these exploratory models were substantively similar to the ones presented below.
3. For each statement, the question wording is: There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By “immigrants” we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
4. I dropped the respondents who answered “don’t know” or “refused” on the dependent variables. However, in models that included them in the neutral category of “neither agree nor disagree,” there were no substantive differences in the outcomes from the ones presented below.
5. The question wording for these statements is the same as the question wording for the prior statements.

6. In exploratory analyses, I used the percent Latino and percent Asian instead of percent foreign-born. There were no substantive changes in the level-1 variables. See Hood and Morris (1997) and Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005) for more information on the extent to which areas with Latinos and Asians influence white immigration attitudes.

## CHAPTER 6

Approximately twelve percent of the United States population is foreign-born and, by 2050, scholars expect this number to increase to nineteen percent if the present immigration trends continue (Lee and Bean 2004; Passel and Cohn 2008). Not surprisingly, political representatives and the general public strongly debate the benefits of particular immigration policies, from guest worker programs to welfare use (Fox 2004; Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 2008; Pew Research Center 2006). Considering the significant impact that immigration policies have on the social and economic development of the United States (Espenshade 1995; Tichenor 2002), many scholars have strived to understand the reasons Americans hold different policy opinions on immigration.

Prior research has documented a number of important individual-level and contextual-level factors. At the individual level, Americans who have a cultural affinity for immigrant groups and who have a strong sense of minority group consciousness are likely to express pro-immigrant policy opinions (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Sanchez 2006), while Americans who are socially alienated and who are less educated are likely to express anti-immigrant policy opinions (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). At the contextual level, the demographic structure of particular geographic units is consequential. Counties with a high percentage of legal immigrants often contain native-born residents who are sympathetic to pro-immigrant policies (Hood and Morris 1997). The opposite relationship occurs in counties with a large number of undocumented immigrants (Hood and Morris 1998). Scholars suggest that in these areas native-born Americans have more contact with legal immigrants than undocumented immigrants and it is the intergroup contact that results in a pro-immigrant attitude (Hood and

Morris 1998; Pettigrew 1997). One of the most well-documented and strongest predictors of immigration policy opinions is group threat. Studies show that as the percentage of foreign-born residents in an area increases, Americans tend to feel socially, economically, and politically threatened by immigrants (Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; Berg 2009; McLaren 2003; Neal and Bohon 2003; Quillian 1995). This feeling of threat is associated with anti-immigrant policy opinions.

An explanatory factor, however, that has received less attention in the literature is racial and ethnic prejudice, that is, negative affect and stereotypes toward particular racial and ethnic groups (Quillian 2006). The comparatively modest focus on the relationship between racial and ethnic prejudice and immigration policy opinions is surprising, especially in the current period (i.e., post-1965) when most new immigrants arrive from countries outside of Europe (Warner 2001). Moreover, the existing literature documents mixed results as to the impact of racial and ethnic prejudice on policy opinions regarding immigration. For example, Wilson (2001:496) states, “as a determinant of Americans’ immigration policy views, group threat is distinct from and far more robust than the negative and irrational attitudes comprising classical prejudice.” Burns and Gimpel (2000:221), however, come to a different conclusion: “Turning to gauge the direct impact of racial prejudice and economic concerns on attitudes toward immigration policy, there is no question that racial prejudice plays the greater of the two roles.”

The current study engages this debate by testing the impact of a more recent form of racial prejudice on native-born citizens’ immigration policy opinions. In the broader literature on race relations, many social scientists argue that, in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the classical or traditional form of racial prejudice has been surpassed in general acceptance by a

socially subtler form of racial prejudice (e.g., Kinder and Sears 1981; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Sears 1988; Sears, Hetts, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). It does not overtly espouse ideologies that declare certain racial and ethnic groups to be biologically or culturally inferior, but rather combines traditionally accepted beliefs about individualism with negative racial attitudes. This new form of racial prejudice has been given different labels, such as symbolic racism, subtle prejudice, aversive racism, racial ambivalence, and modern racism (e.g., Krysan 2000; Sears, Hetts, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Each type represents a slightly different classification, yet, to my knowledge, none have been used to explain immigration policy opinions of native-born citizens in the United States. Consequently, the extent to which this new type of racial prejudice explains immigration policy opinions is unknown and it is also unknown how it compares in explanatory strength to group threat.

Understanding the significance of the relationship between this new racial prejudice and immigration policy opinions is important because it may have political implications. Pro-immigrant organizations spend a considerable amount of resources to dispel fears that reflect group threat, such as the beliefs that immigrants take jobs from native-born citizens and commit crime (cf. Espenshade 1995). They also focus their efforts on overcoming traditional stereotypes toward immigrants, such as being unintelligent and dependent on the government (e.g., see [welcomingidaho.org](http://welcomingidaho.org)). Yet, the majority of native-born Americans likely hold the subtler form of racial prejudice toward immigrants. This would suggest that pro-immigrant organizations may need to refine their political strategies to realize more political mobility.

This study, therefore, examines the impact of symbolic racism on native-born Americans' opinions toward immigration policies that target legal and undocumented immigrants. Symbolic

racism appears to have a comparatively long history in the literature on racial attitudes and it appears to be more developed than the other new racism theories (cf. Krysan 2000; Sears, Hetts, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Specifically, two questions are asked: Is symbolic racism significant in predicting native-born citizens' immigration policy opinions and, if so, how does it compare to group threat in terms of explaining the variation in native-born citizens' immigration policy opinions?

In the next section, prior research on the relationship between racial and ethnic prejudice and immigration policy opinions is reviewed. Following this, symbolic racism is described and extended to include immigrants. Then, the theory of group threat is summarized in more detail. After the theoretical discussion, the data and measures, which come from the General Social Survey, are outlined. Lastly, the results from logistic and OLS regression models are presented and the political implications are discussed.

### *Prior Research on the Relationship between Racial and Ethnic Prejudice and Immigration Policy Opinions*

The study of how racial and ethnic prejudice impacts immigration policy opinions is not new, yet the literature on this relationship is relatively consistent. The vast majority of the research represents racial and ethnic prejudice in a way that reflects traditional or classical prejudice. The most frequently analyzed stereotypes are laziness, proneness to violence, willingness to commit crime, lack of intelligence, and dependency on the government in the form of using state and federal welfare (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Calhoun

1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Fox 2004; Hood and Morris 1997; Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997; Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 2008; Wilson 2001). The stereotypes are targeted at immigrants in general (e.g., Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) and toward specific racial and ethnic groups that have large immigrant populations, such as Latinos (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000) and Asians (e.g., Hood and Morris 1997). Native-born Americans who hold these negative stereotypes toward immigrants, Latinos, and Asians are significantly more likely to oppose pro-immigrant public policies. For example, they desire lower levels of both legal and unauthorized immigration (Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997), less government spending on welfare (Fox 2004), and no guest worker programs or work permits for undocumented immigrants (Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 2008).

Only a few studies examine the impact of new racism on immigration policy opinions, and only one, to my knowledge, uses a sample of U.S. citizens. Pettigrew and Meertens (Meertens and Pettigrew 1997; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995) use data from a European sample to create a scale to measure “subtle prejudice” toward immigrants. This new form of prejudice represents the strong desire to defend traditional values, such as a good work ethic and individualism, the exaggeration of cultural differences between social groups, and the denial of positive emotions toward minority groups. Individuals from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany who score higher on the subtle prejudice scale are significantly more likely to favor restricting the rights of immigrants and to sending immigrants back to their own country. With a sample of U.S. citizens, Huddy and Sears (1995) represent new racism with questions about the work ethic and education level of Latinos. They find that Americans who believe that Latinos are poorly educated are more likely to oppose bilingual education programs.

Thus, there is a gap in the literature with respect to understanding how new forms of racial and ethnic prejudice affect the immigration policy opinions of U.S. citizens, such as viewpoints on immigration levels, welfare use, guest worker programs, and citizenship status for children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants. In particular, it is unknown whether symbolic racism affects immigration policy opinions and how it compares in explanatory strength to group threat. Additionally, the focus on traditional prejudice—or, the lack of examining new forms of prejudice—may also explain why some research finds that racial and ethnic prejudice has only a modest impact on immigration policy opinions (e.g., see Wilson 2001).

### *Symbolic Racism*

Since the 1970s, Sears and his colleagues (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Sears 1988; Sears and Henry 2003; Tarman and Sears 2005) have been developing and refining the theory of symbolic racism. The primary assertion is that symbolic racism represents a latent psychological belief system that disfavors racial minorities and then emerges in dominant group members when they are confronted with certain political symbols, resulting in the dominant group's opposition to various race-targeted policies (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988; Sears, Henry, and Kosterman 2000). The theory includes the concept “symbolic” in order to highlight the notion that dominant group members relate to racial minorities as members of abstract collectivities rather than as unique individuals and that this form of racial prejudice has

“its presumed roots in abstract moral values rather than concrete self-interest or personal experience” (Sears and Henry 2003:260).

As currently used in the literature, symbolic racism mainly focuses on white-black relations. Accordingly, Tarman and Sears (2005:733) outline the basic dimensions of this latent psychological belief system in the following way:

Most current writings consistently define symbolic racism as a belief system whose manifest content embodies four specific themes: that (1) racial discrimination is no longer a serious obstacle to blacks’ prospects for a good life, so that (2) blacks’ continuing disadvantages are largely due to their unwillingness to work hard enough. As a result, both their (3) continuing demands and (4) increased advantages are unwarranted.

In more general terms, dominant group members have internalized a cluster of beliefs that represent latent antiblack feelings, strong esteem for traditional American moral values, and cognitive racial anxiety (Sears and Henry 2003).

Dominant group members, particularly native-born whites, adopt this latent psychological belief system through dynamics of preadult socialization (Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997), establishing the theory of symbolic racism on the assumptions of a social learning approach (Sears 1988). The principle assumption is that “for several centuries white Americans have grown up in a socializing culture marked by widespread negative attitudes toward African Americans, a socializing culture that seems unlikely to have been abruptly overturned within the relatively few years since the end of Jim Crow” (Sears, van Laar, Carrillo,

and Kosterman 1997:18). During their important developmental stages of identity formation, whites—to various degrees—learn from immediate family relations and larger social institutions to internalize the notion that racial minorities, particularly African Americans, do not follow certain normative behaviors, such as individualism and self-reliance, or, as Sears and Henry (2003:272) state, “symbolic racism is psychologically grounded to a significant degree in a racialized individualism, a concern that Blacks do not live up to conventional individualistic values.” Although the literature on symbolic racism has not fully identified the social institutions and social processes that result in adopting this new form of racial prejudice, prior studies imply that influential socialization experiences come from participating in American education and political systems (Sears and Henry 2003; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997; Tarman and Sears 2005). Another likely influential social institution is the media (e.g., see Gilens 1996). Thus, it is argued that dominant group members have internalized a predisposition to disregard the comparatively poor social conditions of racial minorities.

This predisposition then emerges in whites when they are confronted with certain political symbols, connecting symbolic racism to the theory of symbolic politics (Sears 1988). As Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman (1997:18) state, “socialization leaves individuals with strong, long-standing attitudinal predispositions, which can be evoked by appropriate political symbols.” Because prominent political symbols change over time, the dominant group members’ negative predispositions will correspond to the controversial policies of the particular political era (Sears and Henry 2003). For example, in the 1970s, legislature on busing evoked whites’ latent psychological belief systems regarding African Americans (Kinder and Sears 1981), while, in the 1990s, it was laws on Affirmative Action (Hughes 1997). Consequently,

even though many dominant group members may express support for racial equality, they disapprove of policies that aim to achieve social and economic parity between the race groups (Sears, Henry, and Kosterman 2000).

In operationalizing the theory of symbolic racism, prior studies have consistently scaled a cluster of questions that target blacks. Depending on the study, the wording of the questions varies slightly, yet all the questions attempt to measure the same outcomes, namely “denial of continuing discrimination, Blacks’ work ethic and responsibility for outcomes, excessive demands, and undeserved advantage” (Sears and Henry 2003: 263). These items merge ideas about individualism with ideas about racial minorities. For example, among other questions, Hughes (1997:54) uses the following question: “Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman (1997:26) also use the question: “Do blacks get much more attention from the government than they deserve, more attention, about the right amount, less attention, or much less attention from the government than they deserve?” Tarman and Sears (2005:738) include additional questions, such as “Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights” and “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough: if blacks would only try harder, they could be as well off as whites.” Typically, researchers use five to ten questions in a symbolic racism scale and the alpha reliability coefficients for the scales have ranged from .65 to .86 (e.g., see Hughes 1997; Sears and Henry 2004; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997; Tarman and Sears 2005).

## *Symbolic Racism and Immigration Policy Opinions*

In the current period, one of the significant political topics is legal and undocumented immigration (Cohen-Marks, Nuno, and Sanchez 2009; Espenshade 2001; Lee and Bean 2004; Waters and Jimenez 2005). The number of legal immigrants presently entering the United States is similar to the great immigration surge of the early 1900s and the number of undocumented immigrants entering the United States is unprecedented (Bean and Lowell 2007; Espenshade 1995; Warner 2001). As discussed in other research, many immigrant groups, from Latinos and Asians to Arabs and Afro-Caribbeans, have historically struggled and currently struggle against native-born social, economic, and political power, which has racialized the immigrant groups in addition to “othering” them as foreigners (e.g., Espiritu 2004; Suleiman 1999). Therefore, the theory of symbolic racism is likely relevant to understanding native-born Americans’ opinions toward immigration policy.

Yet, in order to extend symbolic racism based in prejudice toward African Americans to symbolic racism based in prejudice toward immigrants, at least two assumptions are necessary that are not tested in this study. First, given that symbolic racism argues that prejudice toward blacks has been embedded in American institutions for centuries, socializing individuals to view blacks negatively, one must assume that prejudice toward immigrants in general and specific immigrant groups in particular has also been embedded in American institutions, leading to negative viewpoints toward immigrants. Many scholars suggest that immigration was a concern for the United States on the institutional level with respect to the government, the economy, and the mass media as early as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., Calavita 1996; Espenshade

1995; Omi and Winant 1994; Simon 1985; Tichenor 2002). It is highly likely, therefore, that current native-born Americans are socialized through these social institutions to view immigrants in a particular, often negative, way.

Second, native-born Americans must not only think of immigrants as foreigners, expressing a certain amount of xenophobia, but also as ethnoracial minorities, which would call forth their racial attitudes when confronted with immigration policies. Historical and current evidence supports this assumption. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many immigrants arrived from certain European countries where skin tones were comparable to those of white Americans, such as Ireland, Germany, and Italy. Even these immigrants were typically considered non-white (Roediger 2005), indicating that the notion of immigration entails both foreignness and race/ethnicity. Consequently, it is highly likely that current immigrants from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, and other non-European regions, are considered ethnoracial minorities in the minds of native-born Americans (e.g., Suleiman 1999). As Burns and Gimpel (2000:204) state, “Of course it is well known that the term ‘immigrant’ is increasingly associated with ‘ethnic minority’ in both the United States and Europe.”

Accordingly, certain political symbols should evoke native-born Americans’ symbolic racism toward immigrants. For example, Calavita (1996) finds that Proposition 187, which was passed in California in 1994 and restricted undocumented immigrants from using social services, was a symbol that evoked negative attitudes toward immigrants. More recently, the proposed legislation H.R. 4437, which would have made undocumented immigration a felony, sparked mass protests across the U.S. in 2006. Cohen-Marks, Nuno, and Sanchez (2009) discuss in their study of reactions to the 2006 immigration demonstrations that many native-born Americans

used political speeches and the media, from news outlets to T-shirts, to negatively symbolize immigrants and to frame immigration policy issues. They note that even Mexican immigrants wrapped in the American flag did not persuade many native-born voters to hold pro-immigrant policy views. One reason may be that Mexican immigrants and the American flag are considered separate symbols that evoke different latent notions of race/ethnicity, individualism, and patriotism in the minds of many native-born citizens.

Most scholars who study public opinion toward immigration policy acknowledge a racial/ethnic dimension in opinion formation (e.g., Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade 2001; Hood and Morris 1998; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). For example, Burns and Gimpel (2000:204) argue that “the more the term ‘immigrant’ becomes associated with negatively-stereotyped minority groups, the more likely immigration policy will be decided on the basis of peoples’ racial attitudes.” Symbolic racism places the relationship between native-born citizens’ racial attitudes about immigrants and their immigration policy opinions in a theoretical framework. Public policies on legal and undocumented immigration are political symbols that evoke native-born Americans’ latent psychological belief systems regarding the connection between race/ethnicity, American individualism and immigrants. Thus, native-born Americans who score higher on measures of symbolic racism are likely to oppose any pro-immigrant policies, independent of the influence of other individual characteristics and regardless of the impact of the sociodemographic context of their communities (i.e., the level of group threat that results from certain demographically structured areas).

### *Group Threat Theory*

To explain immigration policy opinions, group threat theory rests on three postulates. First, the dominant ethnoracial group feels ownership over certain social, cultural, economic and political resources (Blumer 1958). Then, when another ethnoracial group grows in size and desires these resources, the dominant ethnoracial group feels threatened that it may lose power and privileges (Blalock 1967). Lastly, this feeling of threat leads the dominant ethnoracial group to oppose any policies that may change the order of the group hierarchy (McLaren 2003). One outcome of this process is that members of the dominant ethnoracial group develop prejudice attitudes and beliefs about members of the minority group in order to justify their relatively advantaged group position (Bobo 1999). Therefore, from this perspective, ethnoracial prejudice is a function of more fundamental forces of intergroup competition and conflict (Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995).

The empirical research that uses group threat theory to explain anti-immigrant policy opinions documents a diverse set of findings. Native-born citizens, for example, often feel threatened economically, particularly if they live in economically depressed areas (McLaren 2003; Neal and Bohon 2003; Quillian 1995.), and they often feel threatened socially and culturally (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993), from an increase in the foreign-born population. Some native-born citizens express concerns that immigrants exhaust social and health services (Espenshade 1995), while others fear that immigrants change traditional cultural and religious norms (McLaren 2003). These perceptions of threat may occur both on the individual level and the group level. For instance, many individuals, especially of

lower socioeconomic status, consider immigrants to be direct competitors in the labor market (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Most native-born citizens, however, believe that the presence of immigrants disadvantages their group rather than themselves personally (McLaren 2003). The possibility of the dominant ethnoracial group being disadvantaged by new immigrants may be realistic or unrealistic, that is, the threat may be objective or subjective. In either case, the feeling of threat is influential in forming policy opinions. Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005), for example, find that members of the dominant ethnoracial group often misperceive the actual population size of minority groups and, in response, favor lower levels of immigration. Finally, the geographic unit varies in the literature. Some studies estimate the impact of group threat by country (McLaren 2003), by national region (e.g., Quillian 1995), by county (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000) and by metropolitan area (e.g., Neal and Bohon 2003). For the present study, the implication of this research is that controlling for group threat may make the effect of symbolic racism on immigration policy opinions minimal to non-significant.

### *Data and Measures*

The source of data for this study comes from the 1994 General Social Survey (Davis and Smith 2005). This particular survey is utilized because it has a number of advantages over other surveys. The GSS uses a multistage probability sampling design that generates a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults (i.e., persons aged 18 or older) living in the United States. The 1994 survey had a response rate of 78 percent and it asked respondents about legal and undocumented immigration policies, such as immigration levels for legal immigrants,

legal immigrants' eligibility for Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare, work permits for undocumented immigrants (which reflects opinions on guest worker programs, e.g., see Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 2008), citizenship for children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants, and undocumented immigrants' eligibility to attend public universities at standard costs. These topics are central to debates about comprehensive immigration reform. This survey also asked a number of questions that represent the theory of group threat particularly well (e.g., see Wilson 2001). Yet, of critical importance for this study, the 1994 GSS asked questions that represent the theory of symbolic racism toward blacks and toward immigrants.

Although there are numerous surveys that ask questions about immigration, no other survey could be found that represented the theory of symbolic racism toward immigrants. Several relatively current surveys focus specifically on immigration, such as the 2006 Pew Research Center/Pew Hispanic Center's "Immigration Survey," the 2006 National Survey of Latinos—the Immigration Debate, and the 2004 National Public Radio's "Immigration in America." The Pew Research Center also conducts political surveys that ask questions about immigration (e.g., the June 2007 Political Survey and the January 2009 Political Survey). There are other organizations that conduct surveys annually that ask questions regarding immigration, such as the American National Election Studies, the World Values Survey Association, and the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (e.g., Transatlantic Trends Immigration Survey). There are also the news outlet surveys, such as New York Times/CBS News, Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, USA Today/Gallup, ABC News/Washington Post, Time Magazine, NBC/Wall Street Journal, Associated Press/Ipsos Public Affairs, and Newsweek, which are conducted annually, or even more frequently, and often ask a small number of questions about

immigration. The General Social Survey also conducted waves after 1994 that asked several questions about immigration. Additionally, there are a number of state-level surveys (e.g., The Field California Poll, The Texas Polls) conducted by private organizations that ask questions about immigration. Yet, none of the surveys asked questions that could represent the four themes of symbolic racism (discrimination is no longer an obstacle for minorities, minority disadvantage is due to an unwillingness to work hard, minorities are too demanding, and political attention on minorities is unwarranted). Therefore, the surveys are unable to parallel prior research with respect to representing symbolic racism toward blacks and the surveys are unable to extend symbolic racism to include racial attitudes toward immigrants. The majority of the surveys also had only a couple of questions that could represent group threat theory, and most had only a couple of questions about immigration policy, with the main one asking about the policy opinion of increasing or decreasing the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. legally.

Thus, even though the 1994 GSS is unable to directly capture current immigration policy opinions, it is able to test the theory of symbolic racism against the theory of group threat and to examine public opinion on several immigration policies regarding both legal and undocumented immigration. With the 1994 GSS, this study also sets a baseline for future research to evaluate the effect of symbolic racism toward immigrants on immigration policy opinions in the current period. It is reasonable to predict that native-born citizens' symbolic racism toward immigrants in the 2000s is similar to or even more pronounced than in the 1990s, given the institutional argument of symbolic racism and the political attention on comprehensive immigration reform in the last 10 years.

Furthermore, many immigration issues were being debated around the time of 1994. For example, voters in California passed Proposition 187, which limited undocumented immigrants' use of social services and public education in California (Calavita 1996). Several politicians, such as California Governor Pete Wilson, Representative Lamar Smith, and Senator Bob Dole, specifically used immigration as an election issue (Burns and Gimpel 2000). The Clinton Administration agreed with Cuba to take Cuban immigrants only if they made it to U.S. land but to send them back or to a third country if they were caught at sea, while the Immigration and Naturalization Service initiated "Operation Gatekeeper" to control other unauthorized migration (Hanson, Robertson, and Spilimbergo 2002). By 1996, welfare reform was signed into law, significantly limiting immigrants' access to federal aid (Kaushal, Reimers, and Reimers 2007). Thus, the 1994 GSS also offers insight into Americans' immigration policy opinions during the time of these issues.

The dataset contains 1474 respondents who were asked questions on immigration. The sample was subsequently restricted to native-born citizens ( $N=1361$ ).

### *Dependent Variables*

To examine native-born citizens' policy opinions toward legal and undocumented immigration, six dependent variables are represented by the following five questions. In the survey, four of the five questions are structured as dichotomous variables. The fifth question is an ordinal scale that is collapsed into a dichotomous variable to be consistent with the other variables and because analyses revealed that the proportional odds assumption was violated,

making the results of ordered logistic regression questionable (O'Connell 2006). Accordingly, the categories "not eligible," "not entitled," "Decreased a little," and "Decreased a lot" equal 1 and other responses equal 0. The sixth dependent variable is an additive scale of the five questions. It ranges from zero to five and has an Alpha coefficient of .63. The dependent variables, therefore, measure anti-immigrant policy opinions.

### *Undocumented Immigration*

"What about 'undocumented aliens,' that is, those who have immigrated to this country illegally?"

1) *No Work Permits for Undocumented.* "Should illegal immigrants be entitled to work permits, or not?"

2) *No Citizenship for U.S.-Born Children.* "Should they be entitled to have their children continue to qualify as American citizens if born in the United States, or not?"

3) *Different Costs for College.* "Should they be entitled to attend public universities at the same costs as other students, or not?"

### *Legal Immigration*

4) *No Welfare Assistance for Legal Immigrants.* "Under current law, immigrants who come from other countries to the United States legally are entitled, from the very beginning, to government assistance such as Medicaid, food stamps, or welfare on the same basis as citizens. But some people say they should not be eligible until they have lived here for a year or more. Which do you think? Do you think that immigrants who

are here legally should be eligible for such services as soon as they come, or should they not be eligible?”

5) *Decrease Immigration Levels*. “Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”

### *Independent Variables*

To test the independent significance of symbolic racism in predicting immigration policy opinions, two additive scales are created with questions that exactly match or closely parallel those from other symbolic racism scales (e.g., see Tarman and Sears 2005). The first scale focuses on blacks and uses four questions based on the scale created by Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman (1997), who use the same dataset as this study.<sup>5</sup>

### *Symbolic Racism toward Blacks*

1) *Work Ethic*. “The second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be hard-working or if they tend to be lazy. Where would you rate [blacks] in general on this scale?” The scale ranges from 1 (hard-working) to 7 (lazy).

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<sup>5</sup> To represent symbolic racism toward blacks, this study uses the same questions as Sears et al. (1997), except for one question. Sears et al. (1997) use a question about blacks working their way up without special favors. Unfortunately, this question was given to only half of the respondents who received questions about immigration. Therefore, the question about blacks working their way up is replaced with a question about blacks being hard working or lazy.

2) *Government Attention*. “Do you think that blacks get more attention from government than they deserve? Would you answer much more attention from government than they deserve, more attention than they deserve, about the right amount of attention, less attention than they deserve, or much less attention from government than they deserve?”

“Now, I would like to ask whether you have ever felt the following ways about blacks and their families. For each of the feelings that I ask you about, please tell me whether you have felt that way very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?”

3) *Sympathy for Blacks*. “How often have you felt sympathy for blacks?”

4) *Admiration for Blacks*. “How often have you felt admiration for blacks?”

Given the balanced structure of the response categories for the four questions, responses that favor blacks are coded with positive numbers and responses that are unfavorable toward blacks are coded with negative numbers. Other researchers have used a similar coding scheme when examining racial attitudes toward blacks (e.g., see Bobo and Massagli 2001). The scale, therefore, ranges from -9 to 9, with higher numbers indicating a greater degree of symbolic racism toward blacks. The alpha coefficient for this scale is .68, which is in the range of alpha values of similar symbolic racism scales (e.g., see Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997; Tarman and Sears 2005).

The second symbolic racism scale focuses on attitudes toward immigrants. It uses six questions and is coded in the same manner as the scale for symbolic racism toward blacks.<sup>6</sup> Its alpha coefficient is .65, which is also similar to other symbolic racism scales and other scales from other research on attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Hood and Morris 1997; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997).

### *Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants*

1) *Work Their Way Up*. “Now I’m going to read you some statements and would like to get your reaction to them. After I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree no disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. The Irish, Italians, Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Today’s immigrants should do the same without any special favors.”

2) *Too Demanding*. “Now I’m going to read you some statements and would like to get your reaction to them. After I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree,

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<sup>6</sup> I recoded the other attitudinal variables in this study in the same manner, striving to identify pro- and anti-immigrant attitudes. Consequently, I combine middle categories with “don’t know” and “refused” categories. Because the three categories do not take a stand one way or the other, I consider them to be the same for this research and code all of them as “0.” However, I realize that some scholars prefer to consider “don’t know” and “refused” categories as missing data in all cases. Therefore, in Appendix A, I present the models with respondents in these categories deleted from the sample. Analyses for missing data did reveal a couple of instances of statistically different opinions between respondents who answered “don’t know” and “refused” on an attitudinal question and other respondents. Models, however, that either dropped these variables, imputed data, or included separate dummy variables for the missing data generated very similar coefficients in terms of statistical significance, direction and strength as the ones presented below.

agree, neither agree no disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.”

3) *Work Ethic—Legal Immigrants*. “Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I’m going to show you a seven-point scale which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are ‘hard working.’ A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are ‘lazy.’ A score of 4 means that you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand. Legal Immigrants?”

4) *Work Ethic—Illegal Immigrants*. This question has the same wording and coding as the previous question, except that the target group is “illegal immigrants.”

5) *Government Attention—Hispanics*. “Hispanics? Would you answer much more attention from government than they deserve, more attention than they deserve, about the right amount of attention, less attention than they deserve, or much less attention from government than they deserve?”

6) *Government Attention—Asians*. This question has the same wording and coding as the previous question, except that the target group is “Asians.”

Since there is no direct measure for government attention to immigrants in the GSS, I use these last two variables as proxies. Latinos and Asians have the largest percentages of new immigrants (Warner 2001), and, as Ha (2010) discusses, many native-born Americans assume Latinos and Asians are immigrants. Moreover, prior studies have used stereotypes targeting Latinos and Asians to predict the immigration policy opinions of native-born citizens (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Hood and Morris 1997).

### *Group Threat*

Six questions represent the group threat perspective (cf. Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; Wilson 2001). The first question measures perceived threat from an increase in ethnic group size: “Compared to 10 years ago do Hispanics and Asians make up a larger share of the population in your local community, the same share, or a smaller share?” Responses were coded as a set of dummy variables with “same share” as the reference category. The next three questions measure general perceptions of social and economic threat: “What do you think will happen as a result of more immigrants coming to this country? Is each of these possible results very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely? A) Making it harder to keep the country united; B) Higher unemployment; C) Higher economic growth.” The fifth question measures personal economic threat: “What about immigrants? Is it very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely that you or anyone in your family won’t get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified immigrant employee receives one instead?” Similar

to the coding scheme for the questions in the symbolic racism scale, anti-immigrant responses are coded with positive numbers and pro-immigrant responses are coded with negative numbers. The sixth question measures whether the respondent is employed or not.

### *Other Variables*

Eight other variables, which may affect respondents' immigration policy opinions, are included in the analysis: age (in years); sex (1=female; 0=male); family income (logged mid-points)<sup>7</sup>; educational attainment (1=less than high school; 2=high school degree; 3=some college; 4=college degree; 5=graduate degree); political party affiliation (dummy variables for Republican and Independent with Democrat as the reference category); race (dummy variables for black and other race with white as the reference category); ethnocentrism (following Wilson 2001, two questions that ask if respondents believe that life in America is better than life in other countries and how proud respondents are proud to be an American are combined into a scale that ranges from -4 to 4); and economic outlook (again following Wilson 2001, two questions that assess whether respondents believe that the economy has gotten worse in the past year and will get worse in the upcoming year are combined into a scale that ranges from -2 to 2). See Appendix B for a correlation matrix.

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<sup>7</sup> Some respondents did not know or refused to answer the question about family income (10.65%). I subsequently imputed the missing data based on age, sex, political party affiliation, education, and race. Nonetheless, all of the models except one showed no statistical difference in opinions between respondents with missing data and other respondents. With respect to the one model, exploratory analyses revealed that there was little difference in the coefficients of other variables when the income variable was dropped or when a dummy variable for missing data was included.

## *Results*

What are the opinions of native-born Americans regarding policies that target legal and undocumented immigrants? Table 1 shows that, in 1994, 64 percent of native-born Americans believe that legal immigration should be decreased, 64 percent believe that legal immigrants should not be eligible for Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare within the first year of residency in the United States, 83 percent believe that undocumented immigrants should not be entitled to work permits, 64 percent believe that undocumented immigrants should not be entitled to a college education at the same cost as other students, and 45 percent believe that children born to undocumented immigrants in the United States should not be entitled to citizenship status. Overall, in accordance with much of the prior research (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Hood and Morris 1998; Neal and Bohon 2003), this study finds that native-born Americans tend to hold restrictionist opinions toward immigration policies.

Moreover, according to the symbolic racism scales as defined in this study, 46 percent of native-born Americans express some degree of symbolic racism toward blacks and 57 percent of native-born Americans express some degree of symbolic racism toward immigrants, that is, they score 1 or higher on the respective scales.<sup>8</sup> Chi-square tests (not shown) also suggest that, at less

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<sup>8</sup> Five percent of respondents who self-identify as “black” express a degree of symbolic racism toward blacks. Prior research shows that the category of “black” is ethnically diverse and that some members of this category believe various negative stereotypes about other blacks (e.g., see Jackson and Cothran 2003).

than the 1 percent probability level, native-born Americans who score higher on the two symbolic racism scales are significantly more likely to express a restrictionist opinion on all five immigration policies. These results suggest that there is a statistically significant association between symbolic racism and immigration policy opinions.

Table 2 presents the logistic regression models that predict the policy opinions that legal immigration should be decreased and that legal immigrants should not be entitled to Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare within the first year of residency. The full models show that the group threat variables are statistically significant in predicting these immigration policy opinions. Native-born Americans who have experienced an increase in the number of Latinos and Asians living in their communities over the last 10 years, and individuals who fear immigrants may take their jobs or increase unemployment and social unrest are likely to desire lower levels of legal immigration and no Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare for newly-arrived legal immigrants.

The full models in Table 2 also indicate that symbolic racism toward blacks and symbolic racism toward immigrants significantly predict opposition to pro-immigrant public policies. With each unit increase on the scale for symbolic racism toward blacks, native-born Americans have 1.06 greater odds of desiring (or are 6 percent more likely to desire) lower levels of legal immigration [ $b = .066$ ;  $e^{.066}=1.06$ ;  $(e^{.066} - 1)*100= 6\%$ ] and 1.09 greater odds of opposing (or are 9 percent more likely to oppose) federal aid to legal immigrants [ $b = .091$ ;  $e^{.091}=1.09$ ;  $(e^{.091} - 1)*100= 9\%$ ]. The respective odds for the scale that measures symbolic racism toward immigrants are 1.11 on both policy issues. For instance, an individual who scores a five on this scale is 55 percent more likely to desire a decrease in legal immigration and oppose government assistance to newly-arrived legal immigrants than someone who scores a zero. In addition, it is

worthwhile to note that when the symbolic racism scales are included in the models, ethnocentrism is no longer statistically significant in predicting these two immigration policy opinions. This outcome may indicate that native-born Americans' expressions of nationalism actually may be code for feelings of symbolic racism toward racial and ethnic minorities.

Table 3 presents the logistic regression models that predict opposition to policies that would benefit undocumented immigrants. Two of the group threat variables are statistically significant. Native-born Americans who believe that immigrants do not generate economic growth but rather increase the unemployment rate in the U.S. are likely to oppose policies that entitle undocumented immigrants to work permits, standard costs for college, and citizenship for U.S.-born children. On all three issues, symbolic racism toward immigrants is also a statistically significant predictor of policy opinions. Holding other factors constant in the full models, each unit increase on the scale for symbolic racism toward immigrants is associated with 1.12, 1.06, and 1.08 greater odds of opposing (or being 12, 6, and 8 percent more likely to oppose) the three respective policies. Symbolic racism toward blacks only significantly predicts opposition to the policy that grants citizenship to children born to undocumented immigrants in the U.S. One reason that the two forms of symbolic racism differ in general effect may be that policies on undocumented immigration evoke different prejudices (cf. Calavita 1996; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). Native-born Americans may include mental pictures of African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants when imagining legal immigrants, yet, when envisioning undocumented immigrants, they predominately picture Mexicans or Latinos (Keogan 2002). Since Latinos are often associated with immigration (Ha 2010), the scale for symbolic racism toward immigrants

remains statistically significant compared to the scale for symbolic racism toward blacks in these models.

Although the results from the logistic regression models suggest that symbolic racism is a significant predictor of immigration policy opinions, independent of other individual characteristics and particular perceptions of threat, they do not clearly indicate the extent to which symbolic racism explains the variation in immigration policy opinions and how it compares in explanatory strength to a group threat perspective. Table 4 addresses these questions with OLS regression models. The response variable is an additive scale of the opinions regarding the five policy issues. When the symbolic racism scales are run in a model alone, they explain approximately 15 percent of the variation in immigration policy opinions, while the group threat variables explain 16 percent of the variation, when they are also run in a separate model alone (Models not shown). In Table 4, Models 1 and 2 incorporate the other independent variables, with symbolic racism and group threat still separated. Once again, the group threat variables explain approximately one percentage point more of the variation than the model with the symbolic racism scales. Model 3 presents the full model and shows both unstandardized and standardized coefficients. This model explains 25 percent of the variation in immigration policy opinions, and suggests that group threat adds about seven percentage points to the explained variation from Model 1 while symbolic racism adds about six percentage points to the explained variation from Model 2. Thus, symbolic racism and group threat each explain substantially more than the other variables and each account for nearly the same amount of variation in native-born Americans' immigration policy opinions. Lastly, and importantly, the standardized coefficients suggest that the scale for symbolic racism toward immigrants has a

much larger effect on immigration policy opinions than any of the other explanatory factors in the model.

### *Discussion*

In the current period, when the U.S. is debating comprehensive immigration reform, understanding the factors that form native-born Americans' immigration policy opinions is important. While much of the prior research explains these opinions with a group threat perspective, this study uses the theory of symbolic racism. As a theory grounded in social learning (Kinder and Sears 1981; Huddy and Sears 1995; Sears and Henry 2003), symbolic racism suggests that native-born Americans are socialized through institutional processes to hold a lower estimation of blacks and immigrants. This racialized belief system is subtler than overt, traditionally racist ideologies, because it fuses negative stereotypes about racial and ethnic minorities with revered moral values, such as working hard and being independent (Tarman and Sears 2005). The prejudice therefore derives from society's social institutions and is accepted because it explains the reason for a minority group's comparatively disadvantaged position as one that derives from moral weakness, such as lacking a strong work ethic (Sears 1988). Consequently, any government attention, particularly in the form of public policies, to ameliorate the minority group's social position is unwarranted (Sears and Henry 2003). The theory of symbolic racism suggests that such feelings and beliefs emerge when confronted with particular policies (Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997), and, as this study shows, the policies may represent a number of immigration issues. The results indicate that native-born Americans

who score higher on the symbolic racism scales are significantly more likely to oppose pro-immigrant public policies.

Symbolic racism toward immigrants had an effect on opinions toward a broader range of immigration policy issues than did symbolic racism toward blacks, in this study. The difference may suggest that prejudice toward immigrants is grounded in conceptions of ethnicity at least as much, or more, than it is based on conceptions of race. Thus, immigration policies (e.g., California's Proposition 187), call forth native-born Americans' latent psychological belief systems about certain ethnic groups, such as Latinos, in addition to racial ideologies about certain race groups, such as blacks. Therefore, it may be better to refer to "ethnoracial" prejudice rather than "racial" prejudice when explaining immigration policy opinions. At the same time, since symbolic racism toward blacks is predictive of a number of immigration policy opinions, especially regarding legal immigration, native-born Americans likely transfer some of their learned negative attitudes toward blacks to immigrants. That is, they likely group immigrants into the same social category of "minority" with blacks (cf. Burns and Gimpel 2000), and refer to the stereotypes that are attached to that social category when deciding on public policies regarding immigration.

The findings that show that symbolic racism has a significant effect on immigration policy opinions have important implications for the scholarly literature on immigration attitudes. Prior research on the relationship between prejudice and immigration attitudes document the association to be strong in some cases and weak in other cases (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Meertens and Pettigrew 1997; Wilson 2001). This study finds that a new form of prejudice, represented by symbolic racism, is predictive of a number of

different policy opinions toward both legal and undocumented immigrants. It also explains approximately the same amount of the variation in immigration policy opinions as the theory of group threat. Thus, one reason some studies show only a weak effect for prejudice may be because they operationalize the classical or traditional form of prejudice (e.g., Wilson 2001). Future studies may do well to consider operationalizing new forms of prejudice when including the concept in their models.

At the same time, this study strengthens the research of some prior work. Given that Pettigrew and Meerten's (1995) subtle prejudice is similar to symbolic racism, it is likely that subtle prejudice would also explain a number of immigration policy views in the U.S. as well as in Europe. The notion of symbolic racism also supports Calavita's (1996) qualitative research on California's Proposition 187. As she states (Calavita 1996:300), "Proposition 187 is primarily symbolic" and "evokes a belief system in which illegal immigrants are the scourge of efforts to control spending." Consequently, native-born citizens' support for this proposition in California likely reflects a form of symbolic politics, as she argues, and a measure of symbolic racism toward immigrants. That is, part of their motivation to deny undocumented immigrants social services is because they use a value system that racializes immigrants. Moreover, the findings from this study would support Huddy and Sears's (1995) conclusion that part of whites' opposition to bilingual education is due to feelings of new racism toward Latinos. One important implication of all of this research is that since native-born citizens hold the majority of positions of authority in the United States, and over half of native-born citizens in this study express a certain amount of symbolic racism toward immigrants, many potential policies that would benefit immigrants may not even be proposed let alone debated.

Consequently, the results from this study also have important implications for pro-immigrant organizations. Symbolic racism suggests that arguments that attempt to dispel any perceived threats from immigrants, such as legal and illegal immigrant workers generate more financial wealth than they incur in costs in social and health services (cf. Espenshade 1995), may be unlikely to fully persuade some native-born Americans from changing their anti-immigrant policy positions. Pro-immigrant groups may limit the chance for positive results if they publicize only the objective statistics and do not counter more stereotypical perceptions of new racism by advertising the immigrant group's adherence to traditional values, such as individualism. For example, post-estimation analyses reveal that the average predicted probability of opposing work permits for undocumented immigrants is .88 for individuals who score 1 or higher on the scale for symbolic racism toward immigrants and .89 for individuals who believe that immigrants threaten to increase unemployment and will not stimulate economic growth (the two statistically significant group threat variables in the model). Thus, the effect of symbolic racism is approximately the same as the effect of group threat, an outcome which would suggest that pro-immigrant organizations need to combat new racism toward immigrants while they also attempt to change the perception that immigrants pose economic and social threats to native-born citizens.

Other post-estimation analyses reveal a significant interaction between symbolic racism toward immigrants and racial identity on two immigration issues. With each increase in symbolic racism toward immigrants, native-born whites are more likely than comparable native-born blacks to oppose entitling new immigrants to Medicaid, food stamps and welfare. The opposite relationship occurs when the issue is allowing undocumented immigrants to attend a

public university at the same price as other students. Native-born blacks are more likely to oppose such a policy than comparable native-born whites, with each increase on the symbolic racism scale. The difference in the effect of symbolic racism may reflect a difference in what each issue symbolizes to the two race groups. Welfare for whites may evoke the prejudiced notion that minorities do not follow the cultural tradition of individualism (cf. Fox 2004), while college may symbolize the main route to economic success for native-born citizens in the minds of blacks more than in the minds of whites, who are a comparatively privileged group economically. Therefore, because various social institutions, such as the media and the education system, socialize members of separate racial groups differently (cf. Gilens 1996), certain immigration policies likely evoke ethnoracial prejudice toward immigrants to a greater or lesser extent for whites compared to blacks. The implication for pro-immigrant groups is that certain strategies of educating the public may be more effective for one racial group than the other, with respect to reducing symbolic racism toward immigrants. For example, media that discuss the topic of welfare and immigrants' individualism may prove more effective with whites while advertising the topic of education and immigrants' work ethic may be more successful with blacks.

Furthermore, immigrants constitute a racially and ethnically diverse group. Due to data limitations, this study focuses on immigrants in general rather than specific immigrant groups. On the one hand, this focus may be informative to the national discussion on immigration, such as the congressional debates on comprehensive immigration reform, which often combines all immigrant groups. Yet, on the other hand, at the state and local levels, the discussions may revolve around particular immigrant groups, for example, Cubans and Haitians in Florida,

Mexicans in California, Afro-Caribbeans and Arabs in New York, and Filipinos in Washington State. Consequently, the immigrant group that whites and blacks associate with the term “immigrant” may vary depending on geographic location. It is possible, for instance, that symbolic racism has a greater influence on native-born whites’ policy opinions if they associate immigrants with Afro-Caribbeans than if they associate immigrants with Filipinos, due to the institutionalized differences in racial attitudes toward blacks and Asians. Pro-immigrant groups may benefit from considering this potential aspect of symbolic racism and its effects on native-born whites’ and blacks’ viewpoints on immigration policies.

### *Conclusion*

In this study, symbolic racism significantly predicts and explains opposition to pro-immigrant public policies, independent of group threat and other factors. Native-born Americans who score higher on the symbolic racism scales are more likely to favor immigration policies that decrease the rate of legal immigration, limit new legal immigrants’ ability to obtain Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare, prevent undocumented immigrants from acquiring work permits, prohibit undocumented immigrants from attending public universities at the same costs as other students, and prevent the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants from eligibility for U.S. citizenship. Immigration policy views are founded on learned assumptions about race and ethnicity in addition to intergroup fears and competition. Thus, with the projected increase in racial and ethnic diversity in the United States over the next fifty years, due in large part to immigration (Passel and Cohn 2008), considering the influence of symbolic racism on

immigration policy opinions may be even more necessary in order to realize intergroup cohesion and equality.

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables of Interest**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Decrease Legal Immigration	.64	---
No Federal Aid for Legal Immigrants	.64	---
No Work Permits for Undocumented	.83	---
No Citizenship for U.S.-Born Children	.45	---
Different Costs for College	.64	---
Immigration Scale	3.22	1.48
Age	45.73	16.92
Female	.56	---
Family Income	37981.04	28732.68
Educational Attainment	2.46	1.15
Republican	.27	---
Independent	.34	---
Black	.14	---
Other Race	.02	---
Economic Outlook	-.08	1.16
Unemployed	.05	---
More Latinos & Asians in the Community	.50	---
Fewer Latinos & Asians in the Community	.12	---
Immigrants May Take Job or Promotion	-.57	1.35
Immigrants Increase Unemployment	1.30	1.00
Immigrants Decrease Social Unity	.70	1.31
No Economic Growth from Immigration	.49	1.26
Ethnocentrism	3.07	1.06
Symbolic Racism toward Blacks	.05	3.60
Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants	1.33	4.10

*Note:* Native-born citizens in the General Social Survey, 1994. N =1361.

**Table 2: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Policy Views toward Legal Immigration**

Explanatory Variable	Decrease Immigration		No Federal Aid	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age	.001 (.004)	-.002 (.004)	.008* (.004)	.006 (.004)
Female	-.027 (.130)	-.039 (.134)	.127 (.121)	.149 (.126)
Family Income	.108 (.081)	.066 (.082)	.206** (.076)	.166* (.078)
Education	-.187** (.062)	-.117† (.064)	-.084 (.059)	-.001 (.062)
Republican	.195 (.172)	.081 (.176)	.325* (.162)	.221 (.167)
Independent	.083 (.154)	-.003 (.158)	-.001 (.143)	-.087 (.149)
Black	-.117 (.197)	.377† (.227)	.042 (.191)	.658** (.220)
Other Race	-.468 (.415)	-.376 (.424)	.349 (.413)	.560 (.431)
Economic Outlook	.036 (.057)	-.017 (.059)	.119* (.054)	.057 (.056)
Ethnocentrism	.116† (.062)	.054 (.064)	.129* (.058)	.062 (.060)
<i>Group Threat</i>				
Unemployed	-.084 (.287)	-.071 (.294)	-.199 (.269)	-.180 (.279)
More Latinos/Asians	.249† (.137)	.277* (.140)	.284* (.129)	.313* (.133)
Fewer Latinos/Asians	.216 (.215)	.307 (.217)	-.055 (.196)	.015 (.200)
Take Job	-.016 (.051)	-.057 (.053)	.176*** (.049)	.146** (.051)
Raise Unemployment	.422*** (.067)	.407*** (.068)	.144* (.063)	.115† (.065)
Decrease Unity	.400*** (.051)	.329*** (.054)	.202*** (.049)	.115* (.052)
No Econ. Growth	.331*** (.051)	.295*** (.053)	.127* (.049)	.070 (.051)
<i>Symbolic Racism</i>				
Toward Blacks		.066** (.024)		.091*** (.022)
Toward		.104***		.106***

Immigrants

		(.020)		(.019)
Intercept	-1.497	-.999	-2.609	-2.166
	(.849)	(.866)	(.799)	(.821)
Likelihood Ratio	282.21***	331.35***	124.60***	194.49***
	( $\chi^2$ )			

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*Notes:* † p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001 (two-tailed tests). Native-born citizens in the General Social Survey, 1994. N=1361. Reference categories are Democrat, White, and same number of Latinos and Asians in community as 10 years ago.

**Table 3: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Policy Views toward Undocumented Immigrants**

Explanatory Variable	No Work Permits		Costs for College		No Citizenship	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age	-.012* (.005)	-.015** (.005)	-.004 (.004)	-.006 (.004)	-.007† (.004)	-.009* (.004)
Female	-.376* (.159)	-.431** (.164)	-.296* (.120)	-.319** (.122)	-.253* (.117)	-.255* (.120)
Family Income	.156† (.094)	.110 (.096)	.169* (.074)	.153* (.074)	.247** (.075)	.229** (.076)
Education	.041 (.075)	.121 (.078)	.042 (.059)	.076 (.060)	-.010 (.058)	.039 (.060)
Republican	.762** (.232)	.670** (.235)	.361* (.160)	.316† (.161)	.387* (.154)	.332* (.156)
Independent	.005 (.176)	-.052 (.179)	.022 (.141)	-.013 (.142)	.254† (.141)	.207 (.143)
Black	-.402† (.221)	-.016 (.255)	-.052 (.184)	.122 (.211)	-.003 (.186)	.369† (.216)
Other Race	-.931* (.426)	-.811† (.445)	-.366 (.382)	-.298 (.385)	-.906* (.435)	-.819† (.438)
Economic Outlook	.041 (.069)	-.007 (.070)	-.005 (.053)	-.033 (.054)	.044 (.052)	-.002 (.053)
Ethnocentrism	.151* (.070)	.091 (.072)	.091 (.057)	.057 (.058)	.076 (.057)	.029 (.059)
<i>Group Threat</i>						
Unemployed	-.105 (.351)	-.095 (.357)	-.008 (.271)	-.001 (.272)	.243 (.265)	.276 (.269)
More Latinos, Asians	.087 (.166)	.129 (.169)	.208 (.127)	.211 (.128)	.093 (.124)	.088 (.125)
Fewer Latinos, Asians	-.116 (.249)	-.034 (.252)	-.364† (.190)	-.325† (.191)	-.572** (.198)	-.532** (.200)
Take Job / Promotion	.085 (.063)	.052 (.065)	.044 (.047)	.024 (.048)	.054 (.046)	.024 (.047)
Raise Unemployment	.275*** (.073)	.256** (.075)	.185** (.063)	.171** (.063)	.226** (.067)	.206** (.067)
Decrease Social Unity	.155* (.062)	.071 (.066)	.098* (.049)	.049 (.051)	.157** (.049)	.089† (.051)
No Economic Growth	.240*** (.060)	.204** (.062)	.125** (.048)	.102* (.048)	.219*** (.048)	.184*** (.049)
<i>Symbolic Racism</i>						

Toward Blacks		.045 (.028)		.013 (.021)		.045* (.021)
Toward Immigrants		.111*** (.024)		.063*** (.018)		.077*** (.018)
Intercept	-.303 (.985)	.313 (1.006)	-1.626 (.779)	-1.372 (.786)	-3.123 (.794)	-2.882 (.806)
Likelihood Ratio ( $\chi^2$ )	119***	152***	78***	94***	139***	172***

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Notes: † p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001 (two-tailed tests). Native-born citizens in the General Social Survey, 1994. N=1361. Reference categories are Democrat, White, and same number of Latinos and Asians in community as 10 years ago.

**Table 4: OLS Regression Models of Opposition to Pro-Immigrant Public Policy**

<b>Explanatory Variable</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>
Age	-.005* (.002)	-.002 (.002)	-.004† (.002)	-.050†
Female	-.154* (.075)	-.144† (.074)	-.140† (.072)	-.047†
Family Income	.148** (.046)	.172*** (.046)	.145** (.045)	.086**
Education	-.016 (.037)	-.041 (.036)	.012 (.036)	.009
Republican	.315** (.098)	.343*** (.097)	.274** (.094)	.082**
Independent	.066 (.089)	.085 (.089)	.036 (.086)	.012
Black	.413** (.129)	-.071 (.117)	.307* (.128)	.071*
Other Race	-.295 (.247)	-.427† (.245)	-.292 (.236)	-.029
Economic Outlook	.008 (.033)	.042 (.032)	-.006 (.032)	-.005
Ethnocentrism	.061† (.036)	.108** (.036)	.058† (.035)	.042†
<i>Group Threat</i>				
Unemployed		-.027 (.167)	-.006 (.161)	-.001
More Latinos, Asians		.178* (.078)	.175* (.075)	.059*
Fewer Latinos, Asians		-.199 (.121)	-.145 (.117)	-.032
Take Job / Promotion		.063* (.029)	.030 (.028)	.028
Raise Unemployment		.256*** (.040)	.230*** (.039)	.155***
Decrease Social Unity		.200*** (.031)	.127*** (.031)	.112***
No Economic Growth		.197*** (.030)	.154*** (.029)	.132***
<i>Symbolic Racism</i>				

Toward Blacks	.058*** (.013)		.046*** (.013)	.112***
Toward Immigrants	.114*** (.010)		.081*** (.010)	.224***
Intercept	1.575 (.480)	.708 (.487)	1.057 (.471)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.18	.19	.25	

Notes: † p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001 (two-tailed tests). Native-born citizens in the General Social Survey, 1994. N=1361. Reference categories are Democrat, White, and same number of Latinos and Asians in community as 10 years ago.  $\beta$  represents the standardized coefficients for Model 3.

**Appendix A: Regression Models of Immigration Policy Opinions**

Explanatory Variable	Logistic					OLS
	Decrease Imm.	No Federal Aid	No Work Permits	Diff. Costs for College	No Citizenship for Kids	Anti-Imm. Policy Views
Age	.001 (.006)	.013* (.005)	-.006 (.007)	.0003 (.005)	-.004 (.005)	.001 (.003)
Female	-.015 (.166)	.284† (.157)	-.336† (.203)	-.258† (.150)	-.123 (.146)	-.057 (.087)
Income	.135 (.101)	.176† (.096)	.077 (.121)	.129 (.091)	.230* (.091)	.147** (.054)
Education	-.163* (.079)	-.050 (.076)	.161† (.098)	.032 (.073)	-.022 (.071)	-.026 (.042)
Republican	.001 (.221)	.275 (.210)	.610* (.297)	.355† (.201)	.319† (.190)	.272* (.114)
Independent	-.116 (.196)	-.275 (.184)	-.083 (.222)	-.057 (.175)	.082 (.174)	-.061 (.104)
Black	.684* (.296)	.801** (.285)	.345 (.339)	.036 (.271)	.329 (.272)	.414* (.161)
Other Race	-.305 (.527)	.703 (.547)	-.274 (.566)	-.231 (.480)	-1.470* (.652)	-.268 (.294)
Econ. Outlook	.037 (.074)	.021 (.070)	.010 (.088)	.012 (.067)	.003 (.066)	.008 (.039)
Ethnocentrism	.093 (.080)	.094 (.075)	.057 (.091)	.044 (.072)	.031 (.072)	.065 (.043)
<i>Group Threat</i>						
Unemployed	-.104 (.351)	.036 (.340)	-.145 (.415)	-.046 (.320)	.338 (.319)	.033 (.188)
More Lat, Asn	.157 (.180)	.133 (.171)	-.204 (.228)	.111 (.165)	-.055 (.158)	.026 (.095)
Less Lat, Asn	.238 (.265)	-.129 (.247)	-.263 (.317)	-.338 (.234)	-.671** (.237)	-.244† (.141)
Take Job	-.045 (.064)	.197** (.063)	.065 (.079)	-.026 (.057)	-.013 (.055)	.025 (.033)
Raise Unemp.	.395*** (.087)	.035 (.084)	.224* (.096)	.126 (.079)	.159† (.082)	.178*** (.048)
Less Unity	.293*** (.065)	.062 (.062)	.055 (.079)	.063 (.061)	.095 (.060)	.110** (.036)
No Econ. Growth	.288*** (.063)	.063 (.062)	.142† (.075)	.122* (.058)	.152** (.057)	.141*** (.034)
<i>Symbolic Racism</i>						
Toward Blacks	.074* (.034)	.091** (.034)	.048 (.034)	-.019 (.034)	.039 (.034)	.039* (.034)

	(.029)	(.028)	(.035)	(.026)	(.026)	(.015)
Toward Imm.	.103***	.099***	.121***	.056**	.076***	.079***
	(.024)	(.023)	(.029)	(.021)	(.021)	(.012)
Intercept	-1.701	-2.188	.439	-1.128	-2.726	1.091
	(1.063)	(1.022)	(1.278)	(.967)	(.971)	(.569)
Likelihood Ratio	230***	139***	90***	51***	113***	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>						.23

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Notes: † p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001 (two-tailed tests). Native-born citizens in the General Social Survey, 1994. N=919. Missing data removed from the sample, except for imputed data for family income. Reference categories are Democrat, White, and same number of Latinos and Asians in community as 10 years ago.

**Appendix B: Correlation Matrix of Variables of Interest**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Decrease Legal Immigration	1					
2 No Federal Aid for Legal Immigrants	0.25	1				
3 No Work Permits	0.22	0.23	1			
4 No Citizenship	0.22	0.19	0.32	1		
5 Different Costs for College	0.15	0.17	0.42	0.43	1	
6 Immigration Scale	0.59	0.58	0.65	0.70	0.68	1
7 Age	0.03	0.08	-0.06	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01
8 Female	-0.01	0.03	-0.09	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07
9 Family Income	-0.01	0.03	0.08	0.11	0.09	0.09
10 Educational Attainment	-0.15	-0.08	0.02	0.01	0.04	-0.06
11 Republican	0.07	0.08	0.14	0.09	0.10	0.15
12 Independent	0.01	-0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	-0.01
13 Black	-0.03	0.01	-0.08	-0.04	-0.04	-0.05
14 Other Race	-0.04	0.01	-0.06	-0.06	-0.03	-0.06
15 Economic Outlook	0.08	0.10	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.08
16 Unemployed	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00
17 More Latinos & Asians	0.01	0.05	0.01	0.04	0.06	0.06
18 Fewer Latinos & Asians	0.04	-0.01	-0.02	-0.08	-0.07	-0.05
19 Immigrants Take Job	0.06	0.13	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.09
20 Imm. Increase Unemployment	0.32	0.15	0.18	0.17	0.13	0.29
21 Imm. Decrease Social Unity	0.33	0.19	0.13	0.15	0.10	0.29
22 No Economic Growth from Imm.	0.25	0.12	0.16	0.18	0.11	0.26
23 Ethnocentrism	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.05	0.06	0.13
24 Symbolic Racism toward Blacks	0.21	0.19	0.17	0.17	0.10	0.26
25 Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants	0.31	0.29	0.21	0.22	0.15	0.37

	7	8	9	10	11	12
7 Age	1					
8 Female	0.05	1				
9 Family Income	-0.09	-0.11	1			
10 Educational Attainment	-0.14	-0.01	0.41	1		
11 Republican	-0.05	-0.04	0.11	0.07	1	
12 Independent	-0.09	-0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-0.43	1
13 Black	-0.06	0.03	-0.15	-0.14	-0.20	-0.11
14 Other Race	-0.10	0.04	-0.06	-0.02	-0.01	0.01

15	Economic Outlook	-0.03	0.09	-0.10	-0.17	0.07	0.07
16	Unemployed	-0.17	-0.04	-0.11	-0.05	-0.01	0.03
17	More Latinos & Asians	-0.04	0.04	0.06	0.09	-0.04	0.02
18	Fewer Latinos & Asians	0.00	0.01	-0.03	-0.13	-0.01	-0.03
19	Immigrants Take Job	0.02	0.03	-0.18	-0.19	-0.05	-0.06
20	Imm. Increase Unemployment	-0.05	-0.01	-0.04	-0.14	0.04	0.01
21	Imm. Decrease Social Unity	0.07	0.02	-0.09	-0.19	0.07	0.01
22	No Economic Growth from Imm.	0.06	-0.06	0.06	-0.05	0.06	0.04
23	Ethnocentrism	0.21	-0.03	0.03	-0.11	0.15	-0.12
24	Symbolic Racism toward Blacks	0.02	-0.12	0.08	-0.09	0.16	0.08
25	Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants	0.19	0.05	-0.03	-0.20	0.12	0.02

		13	14	15	16	17	18
13	Black	1					
14	Other Race	-0.06	1				
15	Economic Outlook	-0.02	0.01	1			
16	Unemployed	0.02	0.03	0.04	1		
17	More Latinos & Asians	-0.02	0.05	0.00	0.01	1	
18	Fewer Latinos & Asians	0.08	-0.04	0.00	-0.02	-0.36	1
19	Immigrants Take Job	0.27	0.01	0.10	0.07	0.04	0.03
20	Imm. Increase Unemployment	0.02	-0.03	0.10	-0.01	0.01	0.05
21	Imm. Decrease Social Unity	0.05	-0.02	0.13	0.02	-0.04	0.05
22	No Economic Growth from Imm.	-0.13	-0.02	0.03	0.01	-0.06	-0.02
23	Ethnocentrism	-0.08	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	-0.03	0.03
24	Symbolic Racism toward Blacks	-0.49	-0.02	0.15	0.00	-0.03	-0.02
25	Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants	-0.15	-0.05	0.19	-0.02	0.01	-0.03

		19	20	21	22	23	24
19	Immigrants Take Job	1					
20	Imm. Increase Unemployment	0.11	1				
21	Imm. Decrease Social Unity	0.19	0.39	1			
22	No Economic Growth from Imm.	0.02	0.20	0.16	1		
23	Ethnocentrism	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.09	1	
24	Symbolic Racism toward Blacks	-0.05	0.13	0.15	0.22	0.12	1
25	Symbolic Racism toward Immigrants	0.15	0.21	0.35	0.22	0.22	0.42

*Note:* Native-born whites in the General Social Survey, 1994. N=1361.

## CHAPTER 7

Even a cursory glance through the popular media will reveal the intensity of the debate over undocumented immigration. As one policy analyst remarked in a recent *USA Today* article, “The phrase ‘illegal immigrant’ is just radioactive at the moment” (Wolf 2008). According to several press outlets, many U.S. citizens believe that illegal immigrants place an unwarranted burden on taxpayers by using social and health services without insurance, while others believe that they further local and national economic progress by taking hard-to-fill jobs (e.g., see Thornburgh 2007). There appears to be general agreement, however, that the U.S. government needs to control the situation by creating pathways to legalize the approximately 12 million unauthorized residents or by passing public policies that would compel them to return to their countries of origin and that would minimize future unauthorized migration. Popular media, however, are not obligated to provide a scientifically supported picture of the state of public opinion on an issue, especially an issue as complex and controversial as undocumented immigration.

Considering the prevalence of the debate and the importance of the issue, the social science literature on public opinion toward undocumented immigration is remarkably modest. This study therefore endeavors to add to the existent body of knowledge in two ways. First, I test the significance of threat and contact theories over two time-points, 1996 and 2004. This analysis extends the research that investigates attitudes toward legal and illegal immigrants during various years in the early 1990s (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Second, I introduce a social network approach to the literature. Few studies examine the relationship between social networks and racial/ethnic attitudes in general (for

exceptions, see Dixon 2006 and Jackman and Crane 1986), and none to my knowledge do so when the target group is undocumented immigrants.

The broader theoretical and empirical implications of this study apply to the areas of intergroup prejudice and intergroup relations. Often dominant groups and minority groups share the same citizenship status. This is not the case with undocumented immigrants. Members of the dominant group may not afford undocumented immigrants the same degree of genuine or invented tolerance as they do toward other minority groups. Moreover, much of the research in these areas focuses on individual characteristics, economic dynamics of self-interest, group threat and intergroup contact as explanations of public opinion (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Krysan 2000; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997). A social network approach that focuses on core networks argues that individuals discuss their thoughts and experiences with personal contacts during opinion formation (French 1956; Friedkin 1990, 1999). The core network may consequently influence public opinion toward undocumented immigrants independent of the other theoretical factors, and, accordingly, influence how dominant group members relate to racial and ethnic minorities.

In the following section, I review the literature on undocumented immigration and whites' immigration attitudes over the last century. Then I discuss two theories of threat—group threat and labor market competition—and two theories that focus on the interpersonal environment—contact theory and a social network approach. Next, I define the sample, which comes from the General Social Survey, the annual population estimates of the U.S. Census, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and I describe the measures. After this, I analyze the data with

generalized hierarchal linear modeling, discuss the findings, and offer some comments on the implications of the research.

### *Background*

According to available data from sources such as the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Census, and the Current Population Survey, the annual number of persons who entered the U.S. without legal visas—i.e., undocumented immigrants, illegal aliens, unauthorized migrants, etc.—over the last century has experienced several highs and lows.<sup>9</sup> During the early 1900s apprehensions were relatively infrequent at just over 125,000 per decade (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2007). The Immigration Act of 1924 set-up a quota system that limited legal immigration to 2 percent of the population of the particular nationality living in the U.S. during the 1890 census, and then later the 1920 census, which were before and after the turn-of-the-century surge of new immigrants (Edwards 2001). At this time, immigration control was decidedly in the American mind-set (Simon 1985). The poor economic situation in the U.S. after the stock market crash of 1929 also likely contributed to comparatively low levels of unauthorized migration (Passel and Cohn 2008). It was not until the 1940s when undocumented immigration jumped considerably, peaking in 1954. In this year, the U.S. Border Patrol initiated “Operation Wetback” and apprehended over a million individuals, many of

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<sup>9</sup> Bean and Lowell (2007) make the point that the various terms used to represent “unauthorized migrants,” such as “illegal aliens” and “undocumented immigrants,” have different meanings. In this paper, however, because the differences in meaning are technical and the general public likely considers the labels to be similar in definition, I use them interchangeably.

whom were U.S. citizens (Espenshade 1995). For years after this event, the level of undocumented immigration remained low.

However, with the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which emphasized family-sponsored and employment-based immigration over the previous national origins quota system, the number of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. rose once again (Espenshade 1995; Warner 2001). In addition, the Bracero Program, which began in 1942 and offered foreign-born workers temporary employment in the agricultural industry, ended in 1964 (Espenshade 2001a). The guest-workers continued to come to the U.S., only with unauthorized status. The annual number of apprehensions of illegal immigrants by the Immigration and Naturalization Service increased from around 110,000 in 1965 to almost 2 million by 2000 (Warner 2001). There was a slight dip in undocumented immigration after 1986 when the U.S. passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which granted amnesty to nearly 3 million illegal residents (Baker 2001). Yet, the 1990 Immigration Act gave greater preference to employment-based immigration and the number of illegal migrants increased in response (Espenshade 2001a).

Now, as of 2006, the population of unauthorized residents nears 12 million (Camarota 2007), over half of which originate from the border country of Mexico (Bean and Lowell 2007). Yet, many are also “over-stayers,” persons who enter the U.S. with legal visas and remain after the visas expire, and come from non-border countries, such as Honduras, Haiti, and the Philippines (Espenshade 2001a; Warner 2001).

## *White Public Opinion Toward Immigration*

Since the early 1900s, public opinion toward immigration in general and undocumented immigration in particular has only somewhat paralleled the numeric path of incoming immigrants. During the high levels of immigration between 1900 and World War I the general public typically voiced anti-immigrant opinions, which continued through World War II (Simon 1985). By the 1950s and through the 1960s, however, whites expressed more tolerance toward immigrants than they did in previous decades, likely easing the passage of the pro-immigrant act of 1965 (Espenshade 1995). Yet, by the 1970s and early 1980s, whites adopted a restrictionist attitude once again (Espenshade 2001b). This sentiment subsided somewhat in the late 1980s, corresponding to the government's decision to provide amnesty to certain illegal aliens in 1986 (Espenshade 1995). After this, however, the majority of whites desired strong restrictions on legal immigration in addition to illegal immigration, especially whites who lived in target states, such as California, Texas, Florida and New York (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). The percentage of them fell, then increased, and then fell again to around 50 percent by the early 1990s (Espenshade 2001b).

No empirical study to my knowledge has systematically examined white public opinion toward undocumented immigrants after the mid-1990s. Given the dynamic nature of white immigration attitudes in the past, it is highly unlikely that the opinions have remained static. Therefore, I subsequently discuss four theoretical perspectives that may offer insight into white immigration attitudes. The four theoretical perspectives fall within two general explanations of public opinion: threat and interpersonal interaction.

### *Group Threat*

The group threat perspective suggests that dominant group members form their attitudes in response to the real or perceived population size of a racial or ethnic minority group (Blalock 1967). Whites, who hold relative social and political power, may develop fears of losing valuable and limited resources when other racial or ethnic groups increase their share of the population. In these situations, whites feel threatened by the other group and, in the case of public opinion toward immigrants, begin to express anti-immigrant sentiments (McLaren 2003). Burns and Gimpel (2000) find that whites who live in residential areas with greater numbers of Latinos tend to hold negative stereotypes toward this ethnic group and are less open toward liberal immigration policy. Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005) find that even the perception of an increase in the population sizes of Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, increases the likelihood that whites will express feelings of group threat and desire lower levels of Latino and Asian immigration.

### *Labor Market Competition*

The labor market competition perspective suggests that individuals form their immigration attitudes in response to perceived competition in the labor market. Even during times of economic growth, individuals may believe that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs away from native-born citizens (e.g., see Neal and Bohon 2003). During economic

stagnation or recession, individuals, especially of lower socioeconomic status (Espenshade 1995, 2001b), are particularly likely to develop negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants, due to fear of losing limited employment opportunities (cf. Blalock 1967). If the labor market is split, where the dominant group is being undercut by an immigrant group that is willing to do the same work for less pay, members of the dominant group are also likely to express anti-immigrant opinions until the labor market structure changes (Bonacich 1972). Empirically, Quillian (1995) and McLaren (2003) find that whites in European countries are more likely to express negative attitudes toward immigrants in regions that are economically depressed. Several studies find similar outcomes in the U.S. (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996).

### *Intergroup Contact*

In contrast to theories of threat, the intergroup contact perspective suggests that an increase in the size of the racial or ethnic minority group is likely to have a positive effect on the attitudes of the dominant group, because members of the different groups may have more opportunities to interact with each other (Allport 1954[1979]). Under certain conditions, even when they are less than ideal, such as differences in occupational status, intergroup interaction often results in members of the dominant group relinquishing their negative stereotypes of minority groups (Dixon 2006; Pettigrew 1998a). Smaller geographical units may facilitate more interaction and friendly intergroup feelings, such as neighborhoods (Oliver and Wong 2003), yet studies using larger areas, such as counties, also find that greater numbers of Latino and

immigrant residents are often associated with whites expressing pro-immigrant attitudes (e.g., see Hood and Morris 1997). However, while this may be the case particularly for white-legal immigrant relations, it may not be the case for white-illegal immigrant relations. Hood and Morris (1998) find that whites who live in counties that have more unauthorized migrants tend to express anti-immigrant opinions. Nonetheless, given the lower likelihood of white-illegal immigrant interaction, potentially due to language barriers, ethnic enclaves, and fear of deportation, the intergroup contact perspective may suggest that whites will express more sympathy toward immigrants in general, including undocumented immigrants, when they have more opportunity to interact with legal immigrants and members of groups that have large immigrant populations, such as Latinos and Asians.

### *Core Networks*

While the three previous perspectives may explain whites' immigration opinions to a certain extent, they focus on individuals as solo agents. They pay less attention to the social networks in which individuals are embedded. Social networks are typically defined as social structures that have a set number of units that are tied together in some way (Wasserman and Faust 1994), such as strong and weak ties between people (Granovetter 1973). Among the many types of social networks, the core network is particularly relevant for studying public opinion, because it refers to the individuals with which a person is most likely to discuss a variety of matters—both mundane and important, including the topic of illegal immigration (cf. Bienenstock, Bonacich, and Oliver 1990). The ties between the person, or ego, and his or her

emotionally close contacts, or alters, represent pathways for information exchange and social pressure. As Friedkin (1990, 1999) notes, individuals modify their actions and opinions based on the responses they perceive from their personal contacts.

Although this approach may appear to be similar to the perspective of intergroup contact, because it uses the theoretical mechanism of interpersonal interaction to explain attitude formation, it broadens the interpersonal environment from “contact” with out-group members to interaction with persons who may or may not belong to that designated out-group. Therefore, regardless of the number of immigrants in the local region, the interpersonal environment through the network structure remains consequential for developing attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. Accordingly, several characteristics of the network contacts are significant in terms of influencing the immigration opinions of the individual.

**Education.** The education level of the group may be significant. Well-educated persons tend to express sympathetic viewpoints on undocumented immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Hood and Morris 1998). Individuals who have well-educated core network contacts may therefore be persuaded to hold a similar attitude, regardless of their own level of education.

**Age.** Older individuals often express restrictionist attitudes toward undocumented immigration (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). Older core networks may present a negative picture of unauthorized migrants to the person, leading the person to adopt the same attitude.

**Family.** The family status of the network contacts may reflect the likelihood of receiving redundant information rather than new information and thereby affect opinions (cf. Marsden 1987). Since family members typically come from the same social class in society, core

networks that consist of many family members may reduce the chance of hearing a variety of viewpoints on undocumented immigration. The result is that the person is limited in his or her ability to make connections and associations with different information to construct a well-informed opinion. Controlling for other factors, this should lead native-born whites to consider the presence of illegal immigrants to be a problem.

Race/Ethnicity. The race or ethnicity of the network contacts may be influential. Blacks tend to be more open to immigration in general than whites (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996) and Latinos typically sympathize more than other racial or ethnic groups with the difficult circumstances that undocumented immigrants face (Sanchez 2006). These contacts therefore may encourage whites to view undocumented immigrants more positively. Asian contacts may have the same effect on individuals, in light of the fact that a significant portion of the legal and illegal migrant population, as well as those with refugee status, comes from various countries in Asia (Warner 2001).

### *Data and Methods*

The primary data come from the General Social Survey, which is conducted biennially by the National Opinion Research Center (Davis and Smith 2005). It is a probability survey that represents non-institutionalized individuals over the age of 18 in the U.S. In 1996 and 2004, it asked respondents about undocumented immigrants: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants.”

Of the 2583 respondents who were asked this question in the combined years, I restricted the sample to self-identifying whites (2081) and used the method of listwise deletion to drop 226 respondents who answered “don’t know” or “refused” on at least one of the independent variables (Allison 2002), leaving sample sizes of 980 in 1996 and 875 in 2004.<sup>10</sup>

### *Dependent Variable*

To represent the dependent variable, I use the previous question on illegal immigrants. In the GSS, it is a five-point ordinal scale ranging from “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly.” In preliminary analyses, I used ordered logistic regression—a cumulative (proportional) odds model—with this variable. Yet, after running several multinomial models with different base outcomes and separate binary logistic regression models for each response category to test the robustness of this statistical method, the pattern of the data appeared to violate the assumption of proportional odds. The odds for the independent variables were not stable across the five response categories. The tests revealed that respondents in the “agree strongly” category were distinct from respondents in the other categories, including the “agree” category. I subsequently recoded the ordinal scale into a dichotomous variable so that “agree strongly” equals 1 and all other responses equal 0.

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<sup>10</sup> Overall, of the respondents who were asked about illegal immigrants, those who were dropped because they answered “don’t know” or “refused” on one of the independent variables were not statistically different from the sample respondents in any of the models. However, covariate analyses for the missing data revealed that the respondents who answered “don’t know” or “refused” on the income question were statistically different from the sample respondents in 1996. They were less likely to favor the idea of taking stronger actions to exclude illegal immigrants. I ran several exploratory analyses in response. I inputted the median and then the mean income values for the missing income data. I estimated a regression model to predict income and then inputted the predicted values for the missing income data. I also dropped income from the model. In the end, the outcomes of the other independent variables in these exploratory models were substantively similar to the outcomes presented below.

### *Independent Variables*

In order to test the theories of group threat, labor market competition and intergroup contact, I use two group-level variables: the percentage of Latinos and the percentage of unemployed in the respondents' local regions. The smallest geographical unit in the GSS is the primary sampling unit (PSU), which in some cases represents a single county and in other cases represents several counties and metropolitan areas. Respondents are selected from the PSUs to complete the survey (Davis and Smith 2005). With permission, NORC allowed me to obtain the respondents' PSUs. In this study, I designate the PSUs as local regions. I then gathered data on the percentage of Latinos in these local regions from the annual population estimates of the U.S. Census for 1996 and 2004 and I gathered data on the percentage of unemployed in the local regions from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1996 and 2004. I subsequently merged these files with the GSS data. I use the data on unemployment to represent the labor market competition perspective and I use the data on the Latino population to represent both the group threat and intergroup contact perspectives. Scholars often use the same measure to represent these two perspectives (for a review, see Krysan 2000). A negative relationship between the size of the Latino population and pro-immigrant attitudes would support a group threat perspective and a positive relationship would support an intergroup contact perspective.

In 2004, the GSS survey also contained a module for social networks with the question: "From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Looking back over the last six months—who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to

you?” Respondents could identify up to six personal contacts and were asked for more information on a maximum of five of them. Based on this information, I measure four independent variables to represent whites’ core networks. Network age is the average age of all network contacts. Network education is the average education level of all network contacts (less than a high school degree, high school degree, some college, college degree and graduate degree). Network family is the proportion of family members in the network. Network race is the proportion of other race/ethnic groups, including Blacks, Asians, and Latinos, in the network. Zeros in these network variables indicate that the respondent lacks a network or network characteristic, such as having no members of a minority group in the network. The assumption is that, in both cases, if a person does not have a network or does not have a network characteristic, there will be no effect on the respondent.

### *Control Variables*

Additionally, I include nine control variables, which may influence immigration opinions: native-born (1=yes), educational attainment (less than high school degree, high school degree, some college, college degree and graduate degree), female (1=yes), region (1=west)<sup>11</sup>, political party affiliation (dummy variables for Democrat, Republican, and Independent, with Democrat as the reference category), family income (logged mid-points, adjusted to 2004

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<sup>11</sup> West includes the Mountain and Pacific regions, while the other regions are New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central. Since most U.S. citizens typically consider undocumented immigrants to be Mexican (Bean and Lowell 2007) and since California, Washington, Arizona, and New Mexico have large numbers of Latino immigrants, the West seemed the best choice for this variable.

dollars), age (in years), employment status (1=unemployed), and the logged population of the local regions.

### *Statistical Model*

To examine the likelihood that whites will strongly agree that America should take more aggressive measures to exclude illegal immigrants, I employ multilevel modeling with the statistical software program HLM 6. This program accounts for the correlated errors among respondents who live in the same local region and who consequently experience the same percentage of regional unemployment and percentage of Latino residents by adjusting the standard errors to offer more accurate significance tests. Specifically, I conduct generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a Bernoulli distribution and Laplace estimation in order to attain reliable estimates and deviance scores (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), which make it possible to compare the fit of nested models (Luke 2004). I also use grand mean centered continuous variables and uncentered dichotomous variables, following prior research (e.g., Dixon 2006; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). Below is an example of the full model for 2004, which includes the network variables.

Level 1:

$$\text{Prob}(\text{Strongly Agree to Exclude Illegal Immigrants}=1 | \beta) = \varphi$$

$$\text{Log}[\varphi/(1 - \varphi)] = \eta$$

$$\eta = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} (\text{Native-Born}) + \beta_{2j} (\text{Educational Attainment}) + \beta_{3j} (\text{Female}) + \beta_{4j} (\text{Age}) + \beta_{5j} (\text{West Region}) + \beta_{6j} (\text{Republican}) + \beta_{7j} (\text{Independent}) + \beta_{8j} (\text{Logged Family Income}) + \beta_{9j} (\text{Unemployed}) + \beta_{10j} (\text{Network Education}) + \beta_{11j} (\text{Network Age}) + \beta_{12j} (\text{Network Family}) + \beta_{13j} (\text{Network Race})$$

Level 2:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Logged Population})_j + \gamma_{02} (\text{Percentage Latino})_j + \gamma_{03} (\text{Percentage Unemployed})_j + u_{0j},$$

where  $\beta_{0j}$  is the average attitudinal score for each local region;  $\beta_{1j} - \beta_{10j}$  are the slopes in level-2 areas;  $\gamma_{00}$  is the level 2 intercept;  $\gamma_{01} - \gamma_{02}$  are the level 2 slopes; and  $u_{0j}$  is the level 2 random error/effect.

### *Results*

As Table 1 shows, in both years, significant proportions of whites desire stronger government action against undocumented immigrants, yet more so in 1996 than in 2004. A Pearson's chi-square statistic indicates that these opinions are statistically different by year ( $\chi^2=27.08$ ;  $p<.001$ ), suggesting that white public opinion, while still negative toward undocumented immigrants, has become less restrictionist in the recent time-period. In a table not shown, the combined percentages of respondents who "agree strongly" and "agree" with the statement for 1996 and 2004 are 76.73 and 70.74, respectively. This significant decline in the

percentages of restrictionist attitudes is somewhat surprising, given the current public debate on undocumented immigration. As discussed below, however, the immigration theories outlined in this study offer explanations for the differences in opinion between the two years.

Additionally, in 2004, when including persons who do not mention any network contacts and, therefore, received zeros on the network characteristics, the mean level of education in whites' networks was 2.40, or a high school degree, and the mean age was 36.76.

Approximately half of whites' core networks consisted of family members (47 percent) and only 7 percent of the contacts were of another race. The corresponding numbers for whites who name at least one network contact, that is, excluding the respondents who have no networks, are 2.98 or some college, 45.62 years old, 58 percent family members, and 9 percent other race. In both cases, the numbers suggest that, on average, whites are embedded in core networks that tend to have an average level of education and that tend to be middle-aged, racially homogenous, and dominated by family members.

### *Threat and Interpersonal Environment*

Table 2 presents the generalized hierarchical linear models that predict the odds that whites in 1996 will strongly favor greater government action against undocumented immigrants. In all three models, several individual characteristics affect white public opinion. Similar to prior research (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996), age, unemployment, and membership in the Republican Party, increase the odds for whites of strongly disapproving of undocumented immigration. Higher levels of education and being

female have the opposite effect. Extending this prior research with group-level indicators, the full model in Table 2 also indicates that the level of unemployment in the local region influences whites' immigration opinions. Holding constant other factors, each percentage increase in unemployment in the local regions is associated with whites having 1.05 greater odds of strongly agreeing (or being 5 percent more likely to strongly agree) that the government should take tougher action against illegal immigrants [ $b = .053$ ;  $e^{.053} = 1.05$ ;  $(e^{.053} - 1) * 100 = 5\%$ ;  $p = .063$ ]. This outcome offers support to the labor market competition perspective, suggesting that whites in 1996 were influenced by the level of unemployment in their local regions. Areas that had a higher percentage of unemployment tended to have whites who expressed stronger opinions against undocumented immigrants, arguably due to fears of losing employment opportunities.

In 2004, however, whites do not appear to be significantly influenced by fear of labor market competition at the individual level or at the group level. Both personal unemployment and the percentage of unemployment in the local regions are non-significant predictors of white public opinion toward undocumented immigrants in the models in Table 3. One reason for the different outcomes between the two years may be due to the differences in the economy prior to each time-point. Even though economic recessions occurred in the early 1990s and in the early 2000s, the 2001 recession was arguably easier than the 1991 recession on workers and consumers: the unemployment rate was lower; certain industries, such as defense, increased in productivity; the federal reserve made major rate cuts; inflation slowed; consumer spending continued to increase; home sales were high; and the overall economy began to rebound after 2003 (cf. Hatch and Clinton 2000; Su 2007). Consequently, undocumented immigrants may not have stimulated economic fears in whites to the same extent in 2004 than in 1996.

Furthermore, over the period of 1996 to 2004, there was a substantial increase in the Latino population, much of it due to immigration from Latin America (Passel and Cohn 2008). This demographic shift is reflected in this study as well. The average percentage of Latinos in the local regions increased from 8.57 percent in 1996 to 12.11 percent in 2004 (see Table 1). As Model 3 in Table 3 indicates, the percentage of Latinos in the local regions significantly affects whites' immigration attitudes. With each percentage increase in the Latino population in the local regions, whites have .98 lower odds of strongly agreeing (or are 2 percent less likely to strongly agree) that America should take greater measures to exclude illegal immigrants, controlling for other factors [ $b = -.015$ ;  $e^{-.015} = .98$ ;  $(e^{-.015} - 1) * 100 = -2\%$ ;  $p = .046$ ]. This outcome offers support to the intergroup contact perspective. Whites who live in areas with more Latino residents are more likely to be comparatively sympathetic to undocumented immigrants, arguably due to the greater frequency of intergroup interaction with native-born Latinos and Latino immigrants. Thus, in 2004, the demographic situation may influence whites' immigration attitudes more than the economic situation.

#### *Core Networks and White Public Opinion*

Table 3 also indicates that core networks influence whites' opinions of undocumented immigrants. In Model 4, educated networks and networks with non-white contacts significantly decrease the odds that whites will favor taking stronger action against illegal immigrants, regardless of the economic and demographic characteristics of the local regions. Older networks have the opposite effect, increasing the likelihood that whites will favor excluding illegal

immigrants. While these outcomes were expected, the effect of the proportion of family members within the network was not. Whites with more family members in their core networks were less likely to strongly agree. Perhaps, the information that is circulated in these family-weighted networks is comparatively restricted in its diversity of topics, leading individuals to be hesitant to “strongly” agree on a statement regarding a relatively unfamiliar intergroup situation. Overall, however, these outcomes suggest that whites are not forming their immigration opinions independently. Rather, they are influenced by their personal contacts to hold a sympathetic or restrictionist perspective toward undocumented immigrants, notwithstanding their own age, political party affiliation, level of education, and other individual characteristics.

Furthermore, in Model 4, the percentage of Latinos in the local regions is no longer statistically significant in predicting white immigration attitudes once the network variables are included. This outcome may mean that the effect of the Latino population on white public opinion is indirect. If the percentage of Latinos in the local region reflects a certain degree of intergroup contact between whites and Latinos, the positive influence may be altered by the network structure. For example, whites who interact with Latinos on a more frequent basis because they live in regions that have comparatively high numbers of Latinos may communicate their intergroup experiences to their personal contacts. These personal contacts as a group change any preliminary evaluations of the intergroup experiences. Even if one of the personal contacts were Latino, the white individual is embedded in a network structure that still exchanges information and ultimately influences the eventual formation of an opinion on undocumented immigrants. Therefore, this outcome may suggest that, within larger sociodemographic structures, such as the demographic make-up of neighborhoods or counties,

individuals are also embedded in smaller network structures that ultimately affect attitudinal formation more directly than particular community characteristics.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

The U.S. is currently experiencing a high level of legal immigration, similar to the immigration surge of the early 1900s. Yet, unlike a hundred years ago, the present number of undocumented immigrants entering the country is unparalleled (cf. Espenshade 1995; U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2007). Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) find that upwards of 70 percent of Americans believe that the majority of immigrants today are illegal immigrants, even though the empirical evidence suggests otherwise (e.g., see Warner 2001). Consequently, to understand public opinion toward immigrants and immigration policy in general, it is important to understand Americans' opinions toward undocumented immigrants. This study contributes to the literature on this topic by examining whites' attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in 1996 and in 2004.

In terms of theory, the findings offer support to the labor market competition and intergroup contact perspectives. White Americans may fear the loss of employment opportunities because of the presence of illegal immigrants, who may be willing to work the same jobs for less pay. Prior research has found some evidence for this type of fear at the individual level (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993). Whites, especially of lower socioeconomic status (cf. Espenshade 1995), may feel threatened that they will personally lose a job to an illegal immigrant. However, other research finds no such effect (e.g., see Neal and

Bohon 2003). Much of this prior research investigates immigration attitudes in specific states, such as California and Georgia, while this study examines national data. This study also extends the findings on economic threat to the group-level—whites may form immigration opinions based on their perceptions of the employment situation in their local areas and regions, independent of their own labor market position. If the economic situation is unfavorable, illegal immigrants may serve as economic scapegoats. Both employed and unemployed whites therefore may hold similar opinions toward undocumented immigrants in this case.

However, by 2004, these labor market fears were no longer statistically significant in predicting white immigration opinions, possibly due to a change in the economy. Rather, the percentage of Latino residents in local regions significantly influenced white attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. Whites who live in areas with more Latinos are less likely to favor stronger restrictions against undocumented immigrants in this study. The intergroup contact perspective suggests that, because of the numeric increase in Latino residents, more interaction occurred in 2004 than in 1996 between whites and Latinos, who tend to express greater sympathy toward immigrants in general and undocumented immigrants in particular compared to other racial and ethnic groups (cf. Sanchez 2006). Presumably, therefore, during times of interaction, Latinos convince whites to form immigrant-friendly opinions. Considering the projections that the Latino population will triple in size by 2050 (Passel and Cohn 2008), scholars may expect public opinion toward undocumented immigrants in the U.S. to become less restrictionist over time, holding constant any dramatic changes in the economy.

Moreover, the result that Latino residents influence white immigration opinions suggest that whites may associate this ethnic group with immigration, or the term “immigrant” with

members of this ethnic group. Other research also suggests that such an association exists in the minds of white Americans (e.g., see Burns and Gimpel 2000). Consequently, when whites are considering various immigration policies, such as H.R. 4437 in 2006, which would make unauthorized migration to the U.S. a felony, they may imagine that the group of people being targeted is undocumented immigrants from Mexico or other parts of Latin America—immigrants who may have comparatively brown skin tones. Immigrants from Europe who tend to have lighter colors of skin may not experience the same stereotypes about their legal status. Therefore, to a certain extent, whites' attitudes toward undocumented immigrants are likely based on their racial/ethnic attitudes more broadly—in this case, feelings toward Latinos in general—than only beliefs about immigrants per se, who originate from many parts of the world.

This association between undocumented immigrants and Latinos may be exclusive to Americans. Pettigrew and Meertens (Pettigrew 1998b; Meertens and Pettigrew 1997) find that the majority groups in various European countries focus their attention on different immigrant groups, such as the French expressing attitudes toward North African immigrants, and Britons expressing attitudes toward West Indian immigrants. However, even though the particular immigrant groups were different in each country, all of the majority groups expressed the greatest amount of subtle prejudice toward immigrants when they believed that the immigrants were in the country without legal documents. This subtle prejudice is based on “the perceived threat of the minority to traditional values, the exaggeration of cultural differences with the minority, and absence of positive feelings toward them,” compared to blatant prejudice which is founded on the beliefs that an immigrant group is biologically inferior (Pettigrew 1998b:83). If Americans associate undocumented immigrants with Latinos, then native-born Latinos and legal

Latino immigrants may experience a similar form of subtle prejudice in the U.S. (e.g., see Huddy and Sears 1995).

Another important result in this study involved core networks. These smaller social network structures influence white public opinion toward undocumented immigrants independent of significant individual-level and group-level characteristics. This adds a nuanced look at the impact of interaction with other people in addition to “contact” with immigrants, which is a theoretical perspective used by much of the prior research (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000; Dixon 2006; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Hood and Morris 1998; McLaren 2003; Stein, Post and Rinden 2000). Based on the findings in this study, educated networks and networks with non-white contacts decrease the likelihood that whites will desire stronger government action against undocumented immigrants, while older networks increase such a desire. Considering the unlikelihood of many native-born whites having significant “contact” with undocumented immigrants, a network approach offers insight into how the interpersonal environment remains consequential for the formation of public opinion toward a relatively exclusive social group or a social group with which the individual experiences limited interaction. These results therefore have implications for understanding attitudes and policy opinions regarding a number of other groups, such as gays/lesbians, welfare recipients, the upper class, military veterans, AIDS victims, victims of natural disasters, and persons with disabilities.

**Limitations.** Similar to other research, this study has weaknesses that offer directions for future research. A primary assumption is that intergroup contact and core networks affect public opinion. While theoretically powerful, this assumption needs panel data rather than cross-sectional data to validate. The problem is selection bias. With cross-sectional data, it is

unknown whether contacts actually influence an individual to hold a certain viewpoint or if a person who already holds a certain viewpoint selects particular contacts. Although the causal direction of the relationship is ultimately indiscernible in this study, there is substantial evidence that shows that contacts and networks influence a person's behavior and attitude (e.g., Dixon 2006; Mouw 2006; Pettigrew 1998a). Further, it is entirely possible that a white person who selects a non-white contact may still hold a negative public opinion toward undocumented immigrants (cf. Espenshade 1995). After discussing the immigration issue with this non-white contact, however, the white individual may change his or her viewpoint, since Blacks, Asians, and Latinos typically hold more sympathetic attitudes toward immigrants in general than whites (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996).

Similarly, it is assumed in this study that the contacts and the individual actually discuss undocumented immigration. Prior research suggests that individuals and their personal contacts do discuss a number of public issues and policies (e.g., see Bienenstock, Bonacich, and Oliver 1990; Jackman and Crane 1986; Pettigrew 1998a). However, in this study, the contacts' opinions on undocumented immigration are unknown. Thus, the network characteristics, such as education, act as proxy measures for such opinions, based on the findings of prior research regarding certain individual characteristics (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead; Hood and Morris 1998). Future research may advance knowledge on this topic by testing these assumptions.

Future research may also want to double check the measurement of the dependent variable, which is based on the question: "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants."

This study assumed that whites who did not agree with the statement were more sympathetic to undocumented immigrants than whites who agreed. However, it is possible that whites who did not agree with the statement actually believe that the government is taking appropriate actions against illegal immigrants rather than feeling any more sympathy toward them than other whites. Consequently, what is being measured is a difference in public opinion toward government action instead of illegal immigrants. Yet, given the fact that the issue of undocumented immigration is widely discussed in the popular media and is considerably controversial (e.g., see Wolf 2008), it seems reasonable to think that respondents are reacting to the phrase “illegal immigrants.” In addition, if respondents were actually judging the actions of “America,” we might expect to see a more balanced set of opinions, that is, fewer respondents would agree that the government should do more than the 77 percent in 1996 and the 71 percent in 2004.

Lastly, due to data limitations, this study only focuses on white public opinion toward undocumented immigrants. Black, Latino, and especially Asian viewpoints receive comparatively little attention in the literature. One of the benefits of comparing the opinions of different groups is that the social factors that specifically affect each group may be examined. Core networks, for example, may affect whites and not blacks in terms of their attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. At the very least, however, this study contributes to a growing body of literature on public opinion toward undocumented immigrants by examining the racial group that is a numeric majority with significant social power in the U.S., which makes its public opinion on undocumented immigration particularly consequential.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study suggests that a number of factors influence whites to form public opinions toward undocumented immigrants: the economic and

employment structures of the regions in which they live; the population size of certain ethnic minority groups, such as Latinos, which may have a cultural affinity for undocumented immigrants (cf. Espenshade 1995), and the corresponding potential for contact with these ethnic minority groups in local regions; and core networks, which likely circulate a range of pro- to anti-immigrant information. In the end, understanding the social factors that influence individuals to hold particular public opinions on an issue and toward a racial or ethnic group will assist in forming public policies that may benefit all social groups living in the U.S.

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables of Interest**

Variable	1996		2004	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Agree Strongly to Exclude Illegal Immigrants	.47	---	.35	---
Native-Born	.94	---	.94	---
Educational Attainment	2.54	1.16	2.78	1.22
Female	.54	---	.55	---
Age	44.86	16.05	46.06	16.39
West Region	.22	---	.23	---
Democrat	.28	---	.30	---
Republican	.32	---	.34	---
Independent	.39	---	.35	---
Income (2004 dollars)	35135.93	14395	31684	10930
Unemployed	.03	---	.03	.16
Population	2687481	4684358	3003626	5017352
Percentage Latino	8.57	10.94	12.11	15.03
Percentage Unemployed	5.28	2.09	5.61	1.32
Network Education	---	---	2.40	1.52
Network Age	---	---	36.76	21.57
Network Family	---	---	.47	.41
Network Other Race	---	---	.07	.23

*Note:* Whites in the General Social Survey. N=980 in 1996; N=875 in 2004.

**Table 2: Generalized Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Strongly Agree Opinions that America Should Take Greater Measures to Exclude Illegal Immigrants, 1996**

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Fixed Effects</b>			
<b>Level-2 Variable</b>			
Intercept	-.315 (.311)	-.310 (.313)	-.328 (.316)
Logged Population	-.043 (.036)	-.051 (.037)	-.030 (.042)
Percentage Latino		-.004 (.006)	.001 (.006)
Percentage Unemployed			.053 (.028) †
<b>Level-1 Variable</b>			
Native-Born	.258 (.274)	.264 (.275)	.282 (.274)
Educational Attainment	-.144 * (.061)	-.144 * (.061)	-.136 * (.060)
Female	-.391 ** (.128)	-.395 ** (.128)	-.392 ** (.128)
Age	.015 *** (.004)	.015 *** (.004)	.015 *** (.004)
West Region	-.048 (.160)	-.101 (.174)	-.121 (.173)
Republican	.397 * (.162)	.397 * (.162)	.397 * (.161)
Independent	.128 (.158)	.127 (.158)	.132 (.157)
Logged Income	.165 † (.100)	.166 † (.099)	.168 † (.100)
Unemployed	.670 † (.343)	.668 † (.342)	.679 * (.338)
<b>Random Effects</b>			
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.22	.22	.21
Variance Component	.05	.05	.04
$X^2$	113.05	112.78	111.79
Deviance	3108.20	3107.92	3105.96

†  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (Standard errors in parentheses)

Notes: Whites in the General Social Survey, 1996. N=980. Chi-square tests for

changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered. Democrat is the reference category for political party affiliation.

**Table 3: Generalized Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Strongly Agree Opinions that America Should Take Greater Measures to Exclude Illegal Immigrants, 2004**

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Fixed Effects</b>				
<b>Level-2 Variable</b>				
Intercept	-1.296 (.354)	-1.297 (.353)	-1.294 (.352)	-1.247 (.353)
Logged Population	-.080 † (.045)	-.053 (.047)	-.039 (.047)	-.038 (.048)
Percentage Latino		-.011 † (.007)	-.145 * (.007)	-.011 (.007)
Percentage Unemployed			.083 (.068)	.090 (.069)
<b>Level-1 Variable</b>				
Native-Born	.317 (.314)	.278 (.320)	.261 (.317)	.213 (.313)
Educational Attainment	-.008 (.068)	-.016 (.068)	-.015 (.067)	.015 (.075)
Female	-.127 (.155)	-.123 (.156)	-.127 (.157)	-.127 (.157)
Age	.029 *** (.004)	-.029 ** (.004)	-.029 ** (.004)	.023 ** (.004)
West Region	-.159 (.168)	-.025 (.185)	.0002 (.189)	-.038 (.200)
Republican	.778 *** (.194)	.782 ** (.196)	.791 ** (.194)	.759 ** (.196)
Independent	.579 ** (.197)	.585 ** (.198)	.584 ** (.198)	.583 ** (.199)
Logged Income	.056 (.119)	.058 (.119)	.057 (.119)	.081 (.123)
Unemployed	.169 (.487)	.169 (.488)	.166 (.483)	.125 (.498)
Network Education				-.142 † (.076)
Network Race				-.869 * (.427)
Network Age				.015 ** (.005)
Network Family				-.404 † (.208)
<b>Random Effects</b>				
Intercept, $U_{0j}$ (St. Dev.)	.29	.27	.26	.28

Variance Component	.08	.07	.07	.08
X <sup>2</sup>	91.00	88.63	86.88	87.82
Deviance	2668	2665	2664	2652 *

† p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001 (Standard errors in parentheses)

Notes: Whites in the General Social Survey, 2004. N=875. Chi-square tests for changes in Deviance scores from Model 1 to Model 2 and from Model 2 to Model 3. Continuous variables are grand mean centered and dichotomous variables are uncentered. Democrat is the reference category for political party affiliation. Income is adjusted to 2004 dollars.

## CHAPTER 8

The general state of native-born white attitudes toward immigration appears to reflect a restrictionist ideology, yet it may be moving toward expansionist ideals or, at least, toward a more open-minded perspective, based on the descriptive statistics from the GSS samples for the years 1994 to 2004. At the same time, similar to other ethnoracial groups, individual white Americans do not hold a uniform opinion on immigration. Prior research has suggested that the differences in whites' opinions may be due to different levels of group threat, labor market competition, intergroup contact, new racism, and cosmopolitan world-views. In this doctoral dissertation, I offer two new theoretical perspectives that improve understanding of why whites express certain attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy: core networks and symbolic racism.

Whites are not only embedded in broad social structures but also in core networks, which influence the development of their opinions on immigration and moderate the effects of their larger social environments. The core network approach is comparable to an intergroup contact perspective, because it focuses on interpersonal interaction as a key explanatory mechanism and its fundamental argument assumes that attitudes rest on dynamic factors—e.g., the composition of the core network, as far as age, education, number of racial contacts, and tie strength, will change over time and thereby change a person's perception of immigrants. The core network approach, however, is unique in that it is able to explain how the interpersonal environment remains consequential for the development of white immigration attitudes, regardless of the number of immigrants in the designated geographical area. Whites turn to their personal contacts to form an opinion, which suggests that the small social structure of core networks is

another significant factor in explaining white immigration attitudes independent of the other theoretical factors.

I also find that one out of every two whites expresses a certain degree of symbolic racism, which is a newer and more subtle form of racism than the traditional ideological claims that racial minorities are biologically inferior. Symbolic racism suggests that whites are socialized during childhood and even during adulthood by important social institutions, such as the family and the education system, to view immigrants in racialized terms, which include negative stereotypes regarding individualistic values and undeserved special treatment from the government. As their level of symbolic racism increases, whites are more likely to hold negative perceptions of immigrants and to disfavor pro-immigrant policies. This theoretical perspective compliments the core network approach because it suggests that whites adopt certain values and belief systems that are relatively static over the life course. Consequently, despite changes in the broader social environment, such as an increase in the number of immigrants in the local area, certain aspects of whites' anti-immigrant opinions are unlikely to transform unless whites are re-socialized, and one social structure that may perform this task is the core network. Although certain parts of the education system may encourage symbolic racism, such as many secondary school history classes, other parts may positively influence whites' world-views on immigration, as the cosmopolitan approach suggests, such as post-secondary classes in the social sciences and humanities. Further, as an individual's core network becomes comprised of more highly educated contacts, he or she is more likely to develop an immigrant-friendly perspective, suggesting that it is not only the education of the individual that is important in terms of socialization but also the education of his or her personal network contacts.

Considering the particular social processes that lead to a white individual's immigration opinions, there are a number of implications for public policy regarding immigration specifically, and intergroup relations more generally. The implications involve the passage of policy and the effectiveness of policy once implemented. As an example, presently one of the main debates regarding immigration is a "guest worker program," which commonly refers to a policy that would allow foreign workers and undocumented residents to apply for visas to legally work and live in the U.S. for a period of time. As Tichenor (2002) cogently argues, broad public opinion does not predict the passage of immigration law very well, suggesting that it would not have a powerful effect in this case of passing a bill in support of guest workers. However, at the same time, policy makers are also embedded in core networks, similar to the general public. These core networks may have a certain level of tie strength and may include contacts that have a certain education level, age, and race/ethnicity. Thus, controlling for political party affiliation and other individual characteristics, we might expect educated, non-white, younger and more open networks to influence individual policy makers to favor the guest worker program, given that the guest worker program is arguably a pro-immigrant policy, in a similar way that such networks have a positive influence on the immigration attitudes of the general public.

In addition, most policy makers are white, and, therefore, may hold a certain degree of symbolic racism toward immigrants. The white policy makers who have been socialized in their childhood and adult lives to view immigrants as racial or ethnic minorities may unconsciously—or consciously to a certain extent—perceive immigrants in stereotypical terms of being economically poor, uneducated, comparatively lazy and too demanding for government help. In these cases, scholars may predict that the policy makers would disapprove of the guest worker

program, or various components of it which would benefit immigrants, despite their proclamations of supporting racial and ethnic equality. Consequently, public opinions or immigration attitudes may have a significant effect on the likelihood of immigration laws passing.

Once implemented, the effectiveness of the laws may also be influenced by whites' immigration attitudes. Predictably, those with certain core networks and certain levels of symbolic racism may be more or less willing to abide by the law. For example, employers, coworkers and consumers who work in the agricultural industry may take on certain behaviors to support or oppose the workers and the rights of the workers, from using it lawfully to using it but not following its guidelines to not using it at all. Such behavior, which is presumably influenced by immigration attitudes, may lead to fair wages and reasonable working conditions for the farm workers or, as recently occurred, low wages and unobserved guidelines regarding drinkable water in the fields, which have led to a number of fatalities from heat stroke (e.g., see Khokha 2008).

One subsequent question is: based on the knowledge about core networks and symbolic racism, what social policy ideas may improve the situation for immigrants and their relations with native-born whites? With a core network approach in mind, policy makers may benefit from expanding the focus from individuals—individual whites who may be threatened, for example, or individual immigrants who may be impacted—to groups of individuals who are interconnected. A relational perspective may reveal how individuals are not autonomous actors or thinkers, consequently policies that incorporate, in this case, individuals' interpersonal environment may be able to increase the likelihood of passing laws that aim to further social

equality and that emerge to be effective in real-life situations. One example would be to have oversight and knowledge about the interconnections between congressional members. In the business world, affirmative action policies may consider the core interconnections of employers and workers who make hiring and promotional decisions.

With respect to symbolic racism, social policies that recognize actors do not make decisions without being influenced by past experiences in particular social institutions may broaden understanding on why individuals' make certain choices. That is, individuals develop their values and beliefs from knowledge of certain social systems, which have established ideologies. In this case, one dramatic example may be to require certain occupational positions of authority to have successfully completed post-secondary classes in the social sciences. Such a policy may increase the likelihood that racial and ethnic minorities would realize fairer hiring and promotion opportunities.

In the end, a combination of social structural change (e.g., social policy) and perceptual change (e.g., public opinion/attitudes) may be the key to achieving progressive intergroup relations and curbing interracial conflict. In a time of increased levels of immigration and increased ethnoracial diversity, native-born citizens and foreign-born residents may do well to consider their interdependence and value-orientations toward each other to attain better life-chances in the U.S.

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