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How Watershed Immigration Policies Affect American Public Opinion Over a Lifetime

Marisa Abrajano
University of California, San Diego

Lydia Lundgren
University of California, San Diego

Important political events are known to influence political socialization and development (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). It is also possible that such events impact political socialization within particular age cohorts, and also across important social groups who may be impacted differently by landmark events. This paper examines whether landmark immigration events can leave a permanent mark on an individual's views toward immigrants and immigration, and whether that impact varies across different ethnic/racial groups in the United States Specifically, we examine the cohort of individuals who were in their formative years during the passage of major US immigration bills that were proposed or enacted from 1965 to 2010. Altogether, we focus on four pieces of landmark immigration legislation. The findings reveal variations on the effect of these events depending on the group in question; a relationship also emerges between these landmark legislative events and attitudes on immigration policies. The analysis contributes to an ongoing debate regarding the ways in which political elites influence attitudes, and we discuss how the findings may apply to other contexts outside the US.

Political socialization serves as the foundation for one of the most well-understood theories of American politics – the Michigan model of partisanship. According to this framework, individuals acquire their partisanship from their family, friends, and social community. Given that partisanship and ideology have been found to be stable over the course of one's lifetime (Miller and Shanks 1996), it is largely believed that the process of socialization is powerful and enduring. The same literature,

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however, has also conceded that the prevalent political climate (or the "political Zeitgeist" as some refer to it), including certain events, such as war, violence, or major economic crises, can leave a permanent mark on an individual's political beliefs and attitudes (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Indeed, the existing research demonstrates how the occurrence of important events can influence partisan attachments (Converse 1976; Abramson 1979), candidate evaluations (Miller and Shanks 1982), political trust (Citrin 1974), as well as policy preferences (Hibbs 1979; Page and Shapiro 1992). MacKuen (1981) also offers evidence that direct experiences with a particular event can affect individuals' political attitudes.

Such events, however, can have a greater impact on certain groups in the population than others – one's stage of psychological development as well as one's social identity can interact with these events. Manheim's ([1928] 1952) seminal work on political socialization posits that an individual's "formative years" (which he considers to be the ages of 18–25) are largely influenced by her historical circumstances. As well, Putnam (1996) analyzes what he calls generational effects that influence "all people born at the same time" (10). But for Putnam, in "pure generational effects, no individual ever changes, but society does" (10). Cohort effects differ from generational effects on this point. Although society may be changing, as well, cohort effects pinpoint the time at which individuals *are* changing, shaping their opinions through important psychological and sociological developments. Given that these individuals have gone through the same events, the expectation is that they too will share a similar set of attitudes. Encounters that young people have with a significant political event are especially a key in shaping their views of the political world, as this may be their first encounter with politics. As such, individuals who "pass through their formative years during defined historical eras constitute a political generation characterized by shared dispositions or collective memories that outlast the era themselves" (Tessler, Konold, and Reif 2004).[1]

Along with the influence of these developmental stages on opinion formation, one's social identity has been found to influence issue attitudes

[1]Of course, while evidence exists that younger individuals tend to be less politically involved and interested than their older counterparts, events that are either directly and personally related to them can spur them to political action (*see*, Garcia Bedolla 2005; Félix, González, and Ramírez 2008).

(Junn and Masuouka 2013; Garcia Bedolla 2005). Therefore, we build on previous work that stresses the importance of analyzing important social groups independently – examining how opinions vary *within* not only *between* these groups (Junn and Masuouka 2013). And in particular, we focus on the most salient social identities in the United States that of race and ethnicity (Takaki 2008; Hattam 2007).

While previous work has focused on events such as periods of international warfare or violence, we focus on periods where landmark policies were initiated with respect to a policy area that has becoming increasingly contentious and emotional to the American public. Given the dramatic demographic changes that have taken place in this country, where Census projections expect that shares of the white and minority population will be on par with each other in decades to come, immigration and racial and ethnic change have stirred a wide array of concerns among the American public (Chavez 2001; Ngai 2004; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Newton 2008; Dunway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010; Hopkins 2010). Immigration has raised fears concerning the availability of jobs, increases in crime and welfare rates, as well as the demise of "American" culture (Borjas 2001; Huntington 2005). As such, we focus on the influence of national landmark immigration legislation since 1965 in the US for the three largest ethnic and racial groups – Blacks, Latinos, and Whites.

The goal of this article is to determine whether the period surrounding landmark immigration events can leave a permanent mark on an individual's views toward immigration and immigrants. Specifically, we focus on the cohort of individuals who were in their formative years during the passage of landmark immigration bills from 1965 to 2010. Over this 45-year period, four major pieces of immigration legislation were put forth in Congress. We examine the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996, and the events surrounding HR 4437 in 2006. As the existing literature suggests, being exposed to landmark events during one's formative years, which is typically between the ages of 18–25 (*see*, Tessler, Konold, and Reif 2004), can have a long-lasting impact on a variety of attitudes (Schuman and Corning 2000 2006; Davis 2004; Tessler, Konold, and Reif 2004; Anderson and Fetner 2008; Giuliano and Spilimbergo 2009; Jaegar et al. 2012). We therefore expect that the years surrounding the passage or discussion of these laws can serve as useful markers for documenting

moments when immigration rose to national salience in American politics.[2]

These legislative events reflect points at which the status quo regarding immigration was subject to change; such shifts could therefore affect groups within the population in distinct ways. In particular, we find that these critical policy events are consistently correlated with intergroup attitudes and to policy attitudes – although these effects vary depending on the legislation and the group in question. Therefore, the findings offer important insight into the impact of policy on opinion formation and social cleavages, establishing important differences within *and* between groups.

COHORT EFFECTS AND ATTITUDE FORMATION

Several studies have examined the impact of cohort effects on a wide array of political attitudes and behaviors. Schuman and Corning (2006) find that individuals in their formative years during the Vietnam War were more likely to liken the Iraq War to Vietnam as opposed to World War II. Davis' (2004) research reveals that individuals who were adolescents in the 1960s were more liberal on a wide range of questions relative to expectations based on long-term trends. Moreover, Giuliano and Spilimbergo's (2009) analysis of the General Social Surveys over a 20-year period finds that macroeconomic shocks, both good and bad, can affect people's trust in government institutions, and support for redistribution and their views on income inequality. In another study, it was found that younger cohorts are associated with more liberal views, particularly on issues pertaining to homosexuality (Anderson and Fetner 2008).

Extant research conducted outside of the US also reveals how such events can produce distinct cohort effects (Tessler, Konold, and Reif 2004). A study by Jaegar et al. (2012) shows that important political events in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict have also resulted in some cohort effects. In particular, Palestinians who were in their formative years during the First Intifada appear to be more radical, while those who spent their

[2]Therefore, we are not contending that the cohort group is restricted to those who were in their formative years, the year when the bill was signed into law. Instead, we believe that the year of passage serves as an important indicator when immigration rose to national salience in the US As such, the effect of these laws could have occurred either before or after the law's passage.

impressionable years during the Oslo negotiations tended to exhibit more moderate views.

As the literature on cohort effects demonstrates, it certainly seems to be plausible for these landmark immigration bills to have a long-lasting impact on one's immigration attitudes. In general, the American public has expressed either feelings of opposition or ambivalence toward newcomers (Alexander and Simon 1993; Simon 1993). An analysis of public opinion polls from 1955 to 2009 indicates that a majority of Americans either favor a decrease in current immigration levels or keeping immigration levels at its current level (the status quo).[3] In no instance do Americans ever favor increasing the number of immigrants entering the US Although the existing research has established certain patterns in opinions on immigration, there is still much to be explained – such as variation in attitudes between and within certain social groups, and explanations for these differences. The extant literature provides a useful foundation for understanding such variations, and by including cohort effects an additional explanatory factor, it helps to advance our knowledge about the influences on public attitudes toward immigration.

Most of the existing research on this subject matter has largely found individual characteristics to influence immigration attitudes (Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997; Hood and Morris 1998; Branton 2007). For instance, individuals who are unemployed or possess low skills may hold negative views toward immigrants, as they may view them as a source of competition (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). Emotions (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008), along with psychological predispositions, such as racial prejudice, racial stereotyping, and political ideology, can also influence an individual's views on immigration (Allport 1954; Quillian 1995; Blinder and Lundgren 2012). Moreover, moving beyond the individual, environmental factors (such as place of residence and a neighborhood's ethnic and racial composition) and elite messaging (*i.e.*, newspaper reporting on immigration) can also influence immigration attitudes (Dunway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010; Hopkins 2010; Ha 2010; Tolbert and Hero 2001). As well, an individual's source for news and information can impact ones' views on the subject (Abrajano and Singh 2009).

[3]These public opinion polls are from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Data and analysis was comprised by, and is available from, the author.

While the influence of formative events has not been examined directly with respect to immigration attitudes, extant research conducted by Michelson (2001), Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura (2001), Barreto, Ramirez, and Woods (2005), and Garcia Bedolla (2005) is suggestive of the role that anti-immigrant hostility can play in the formation of Latinos' political attitudes and behavior. Garcia Bedolla's (2005) study of Latino youth in the wake of Proposition 187 in California demonstrated that their participation in school walkouts and protests against the ballot initiative shaped their views toward government, public policies, and their political attitudes. Moreover, Michelson (2001) notes that Mexican-Americans' concerns over racism and discrimination increased in periods where Latinos were the targets of national- or state-level legislation (e.g., Proposition 187), relative to periods when they were not the center of attention. Most recently, Cohen-Marks, Nuno, and Sanchez (2009) examine public reactions to the 2006 immigration rallies that took place in response to HR 4437. Their analysis of three county level exit polls from the 2006 election from more than 4,300 voters in New Mexico, California, and Washington revealed that Whites were more likely to view the rallies as having a negative association with Mexican immigrants, relative to Americans who ethnically or racially identified themselves in the "other" category. Latino voters, in contrast, felt that the rallies would lead to a positive perception of Mexican immigrants.

The question, then, is whether the period surrounding nationally salient immigration events – such as immigration legislation – influence public opinion not only contemporaneously (*i.e.*, in 1965, 1986, 1996, and 2006) as we may expect from the extant literature, but also over the course of a lifetime for those exposed to these events during their formative developmental years.

Demographic Changes and Immigration Policy in the US

Over the past five decades, the US has witnessed an enormous amount of demographic change. The proportion of White Americans in the country has fallen from roughly 90 percent in the 1960s to 65 percent at present; and in the decades to come, Census projections expect that shares of the white and minority population will be on par with each other. The bulk of this shift can be attributed to the steady rates of immigration primarily from Latin America and to a somewhat lesser degree, Asia.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act

Policymakers have responded to these newcomers in a variety of ways at the national level. The 1965 Immigration Nationality Act restructured the immigration preference system in the US making family reunification and skilled workers the main priority. This law is also notable for removing the national origin quotas that were at the core of American immigration policy since the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.[4] The very preference system that was established in the 1965 Immigration Nationality Act is the same one that is currently being used today. Among immigration scholars (Tichenor 2002), this law stands out from other US immigration, most of which are typically restrictive in nature. However, political leaders of the time, such as Senator Edward Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson, were careful not to publicly applaud the bill's progressive nature, understanding the general public's resistance to increased immigration or diversity of immigrants. (Tichenor 2002, 218) Therefore, as this bill was not necessarily in response to a public outpouring for immigration reform, we expect the passing of the bill itself and the debate that transpired during its passing would have made an impression on those youths in their developmental years.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)

Nearly 20 years later, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was passed.[5] This legislation was the first and continues to be the only immigration law that provided amnesty to undocumented immigrants residing in the US. Thus, the major provision of this law was to "stipulate legalization of undocumented aliens who had been continuously unlawfully present" since January 1, 1982.[6] While regularization programs are frequently conducted in Spain, Greece, and Italy, the US is notable, in that it has only carried out this single regularization program. It is estimated that approximately 3 million individuals, mostly of Latino or Hispanic descent, benefited from IRCA. The law

[4]While there were other immigration bills enacted prior to 1965, their scope and impact were much smaller in magnitude when compared with the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

[5]IRCA is also referred to as the Simpson–Mazzoli Act.

[6]A legalization program was also enacted for certain agricultural workers.

also imposed sanctions on employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers. By many accounts, the most controversial aspect of IRCA was the call for amnesty, as politicians and the public were skeptical that providing legal status to the millions of undocumented immigrants in the US was going to resolve the problem of illegal immigration.

Twenty-five years after the passage of IRCA, the law continues to be frequently discussed in the policy debates over immigration. In particular, the failure of IRCA to have any impact on deterring the number of undocumented immigrants in the nation, which is estimated to be 11.7 million, has often been used as one of the reasons why such strong public opposition exists toward regularization programs in the US A number of studies examining the impact of IRCA on the labor market have also been conducted, with some finding increased discrimination of foreign workers, while others noting a shift in hiring practices (Lowell, Teachman, and Jing 1995; Davila, Pagan, and Viladrich 1998). Much like the 1965 Act, IRCA was not enacted out of a public demand to provide amnesty for undocumented immigrants. In fact, it was quite the contrary. It is therefore highly likely that this period of heightened attention toward immigration left an impressionable mark on those individuals in their developmental years.

Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996

IIRIRA was also considered to be an important piece of legislation; it was over 200 pages in length and covered a wide range of topics. The bill was signed into law by President Clinton in 1996 and was touted as a significant step forward in deterring the increasing numbers of immigrants entering the US illegally. As such, IIRIRA included measures pertaining to improved border control and enforcement, alien smuggling, apprehension, detention, and deportation policies. It also included stipulations relating to employer sanctions and what restrictions and benefits would be afforded to immigrants.

As a watershed immigration act, we also expect IIRIRA to leave a permanent impression on the cohort between 18 and 25 during its passing. The law itself proposed several reforms that took steps to deter the number of immigrants from entering the country. But more than what the law did, its passage also signaled to the public that unauthorized entry into the US primarily via the US–Mexico border, was a

significant problem that required federal attention and action. As the law and debate surrounding it focused on the US–Mexican border, we contend that the public associated this federal law with the entire Latino population, given that they comprise the largest segment of the undocumented population. Therefore, non-Latinos who were exposed to IIRIRA during their formative years should feel less affect toward Latinos. In contrast, Latinos, feeling an increased sense that this immigration law and similar ones enacted at the state level were specifically anti-Latino and should increase their levels of group identity and solidarity.

HR 4437

Finally, the most recent immigration-related bill that we examine is known as HR 4437 or the Sensenbrenner Bill (named after Rep. James Sensenbrenner). While HR 4437 was never signed into law, a strong cohort may have formed surrounding this proposed legislation due to the response it generated from the public. Millions of individuals, a majority of whom were Latinos, participated in marches and protests in 39 states and more than 140 cities that were organized nationwide in opposition to the bill. In what organizers deemed as "a national day for immigration justice," the largest rallies took place in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC. What immigrant advocacy groups and its supporters found to be the most egregious aspect of the HR 4437 was the stipulation that entering the US without a valid visa as well as those involved in assisting or aiding an undocumented immigrant would be considered a felony. Under current law, unlawful presence in the US is a civil violation that would result in deportation; under HR 4437 unlawful presence would be a criminal offense. Again, we contend that the focused attention on the issue of immigration, in this case based on the mere proposal of immigration reform and the subsequent public responses to it, can have a significant and long-lasting impact on individuals in their formative years. In particular, this piece of legislation threatened to criminalize not only undocumented immigrants, but also those individuals assisting or aiding an undocumented immigrant, thereby shifting focus from those without legal presence in the country to a myriad of individuals, including American citizens.

Of course, as discussed above, variation exists in the aims and objectives of these four immigration bills. While the 1965 Immigration and

Nationality Act is distinct from the other bills in its aims and objectives, as well as being more "immigrant friendly," it may have stimulated group threat among White or Black Americans who resented the easing of restrictive barriers to entry in the US (Keely 1971; Tichenor 2002). And while IRCA may have been interpreted as a bill that was beneficial to the Latino population, it also could have infuriated Americans who felt that the immigrants eligible for amnesty were being "rewarded" for breaking the law.

The other two bills, IIRIRA and HR 4437, are very similar in spirit and purpose, in the sense of creating a hostile and unwelcoming environment for immigrants. Recall that IIRIRA followed on the heels of California's Proposition 187 in 1994, both in its timing and its policy aims (as it also restricted social service benefits to legal residents), heightening what many immigrants, and especially Latinos, felt was a period of intense anti-immigrant sentiment. Moreover, the fact that IRCA and IIRIRA were federal bills, as opposed to Proposition 187 being a state ballot proposition in California, meant that their potential effect on the public's attitudes toward immigration was potentially quite far-reaching. Finally, while HR 4437 is fairly recent, the unprecedented grassroots response to this legislation, and its ability to mobilize millions of individuals, has the potential to make a significant mark on the American public (*see*, Wong 2006 and Pantoja, Menjivar, and Magana 2008 for a more in-depth discussion of grassroots efforts). Therefore, this more recent bill stands apart from the preceding policies in terms of its ability to mobilize grassroots organizations.

In light of continued public debate over immigration, it is critical to know whether these moments of immigration policy development and increased political attention toward this issue can leave a permanent mark on the attitudes of the American public. We expect exposure to these critical political immigration events to impact the population differently. First, while the 1965 piece of legislation differed from the following laws in that the former reflected more expansionist politics of immigration, whereas the subsequent laws proposed reflected more restrictive politics, we do not expect the influence of these bills to vary due to substantive differences in content. As discussed above, although the 1965 law was more expansionist in nature, politicians also recognized a sizable majority in the publics that resisted and resented a more "open door" policy. As such, we expect exposure to each of these laws to give rise to more negative sentiments toward immigrants when compared to individuals who

were not exposed to such events during their formative developmental years. We expect this to be the case for White Americans, in particular, as they comprise the majority of the American public. As the group threat literature suggests, the dominant and largest racial group in the US – Non-Hispanic White Americans – will react negatively to immigrants if those immigrants seem to threaten the status quo, resources, or opportunities for the dominant group (Tajfel 1981; Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2003). The proposal and/or passage of immigration laws reflecting more restrictive stances could stimulate group threat responses by making salient the concerns about the consequences of immigration that merit national attention and policymaking. The passage of such laws may also influence cohort groups to prefer decreased levels of immigration and stricter borders for the same reasons.

These legislation-specific events should also influence the two other major ethnic/racial groups in the US Latinos, and African Americans.[7] In contrast to the impact of more restrictive bills on attitudes of Whites, we expect these pieces of legislation to affect Latinos differently since Latinos were the main targets in each of these bills. The attention directed to Latinos, and immigrants more broadly, post-IRCA was much more negative than positive. In part, these sentiments were fueled by popular images (Chavez 2001), media personalities such as Rush Limbaugh and Lou Dobbs, as well as political entrepreneurs like Jim Gilchrist of the Minute Men Project. Politicians have also used anti-immigration as a platform, most notably former Colorado congressman and 2008 presidential candidate Tom Tancredo as well as congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA). Even academics (*see*, Huntington 2005) have weighed in on the negative consequences of Mexican migration to the US.

Thus, Latinos from each of these cohorts may have personally experienced hostility toward them based on their racial/ethnic identity or they may have engrained in their memory the rise in anti-Latino sentiment during these specific periods (*see*, Garcia Bedolla 2005; Félix, González, and Ramírez 2008). This may, in turn, have activated their feelings of ethnic or racial group identity, therefore making them more sympathetic toward immigrants and immigration in general.[8] Therefore, we expect

[7]While it would be ideal to include Asian Americans in our study, however, the NES sample is not sufficient enough in size.

[8]See the work of Garcia Bedolla (2005) for a more in-depth discussion of this subject matter.

Latinos in these cohorts to exhibit more positive feelings toward immigrants and immigration policy and when compared to Latinos who are not in these cohorts.

Finally, African Americans' exposure to these critical immigration events should influence their opinions in unique ways, as well. In particular, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act took a more open stance toward immigration. As such, it may have stimulated concern among African Americans who were at the time fighting for their own rights within the country. It is possible that the group threat stimulus may have also been activated for African Americans; they may have perceived the influx of immigrants as a threat to their own economic interests and well-being. But as immigration legislation became more restrictive over time, this concern may have subsided. A *New York Times* article dated October 26, 1986, quoted Dr. Leonard Fuchs of Brandeis University on what he termed a "historical reversal" whereby "traditionally, the black leadership and communities strongly opposed immigration as a direct threat in jobs and services. Today [1986] blacks and Mexican-Americans have forged an alliance on immigration questions and black opinion in general is more sympathetic" (Howe 1986). These changing in-group and out-group distinctions are key to understanding how different groups within the American public perceive immigration.

HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Without a doubt, immigration and racial and ethnic changes have stirred a wide array of fears, such as economic loss and cultural demise, within large segments of the white population (Borjas 2001; Huntington 2005). For some Americans, such concerns may have "crystallized" in periods where immigrants are seen to have been receiving an unfair advantage, as was the case in 1986 with the passage of IRCA. The fact that the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 enabled immigrants to petition their family members and relatives, thereby increasing the immigrant population, may have also triggered feelings of group threat among Whites and African Americans.

We expect Whites who were in their formative years during each of these four periods to harbor more negative feelings toward immigrants and Latinos more broadly. We also hypothesize their views toward immigration policy to be of a restrictive position when com-

pared with individuals excluded from these cohorts. We also predict that African Americans in these cohort periods to behave similarly to Whites both in their feelings toward immigrants as well as their policy attitudes, as new immigrants would also pose a threat to their economic, social, and political status. However, among Latinos who were exposed to these landmark immigration events, we expect them to adopt a more pro-immigrant position on immigration policies and hold more sympathetic views toward immigrants relative to Latinos outside of these cohort groups.

We test these hypotheses using the 2008 American National Election Study (ANES). Altogether, more than 2,400 respondents participated in the pre-election survey. For the first time in its 63-year history, the 2008 ANES included an oversample of Latinos ($N = 507$) and African Americans ($N = 527$) in the study.[9] Prior to the 2008 ANES, the number of Blacks and Latinos interviewed for a given year was considerably less than two hundred, thereby making it virtually impossible for scholars wishing to compare the political behavior and attitudes of racial and ethnic minorities with White Americans. Another first in the 2008 ANES was that Latino respondents could take the survey in either English or Spanish. Altogether, more than 2,400 respondents participated in the pre-election survey. These minority oversamples therefore make it possible to use the 2008 ANES to analyze the immigration opinions of Blacks, Latinos, and Whites.[10]

The dependent variables can be divided into two categories – those that focus on immigration and policy and those that deal with affect toward immigrants. The first category of dependent variables consists of three questions that deal specifically with immigration policy preferences. The first policy question asks whether "the numbers of immigrants from

[9]The ANES 2008 Time Series Study was designed with a target of 2,470 total pre-election interviews, including a base target of 1,810 interviews plus 350 supplemental Latino interviews ("Latino oversample") and 310 supplemental African-American interviews ("African-American oversample"). Completion of 507 total Latino interviews and 527 total African-American interviews in the pre-election wave, including both base and supplemental interviews, was additional sample objectives. Differential sampling rates among race/ethnicity groups were needed to achieve the target distribution of survey participants" (Lupia et al. 2009).

[10]In other work on cohort effects, scholars have conducted a combination of tests examining period, age, and cohort effects using time series datasets (*see,* Yang and Land 2008). In subsequent iterations of the ANES, this will be possible.

foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live" should be increased or decreased. The response categories were on a 5-point scale and ranged from increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little and decreased a lot. The next immigration-related question asks how likely it is that "recent immigration levels will takes jobs away from people already here." Response categories included the following: extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, or not at all likely. Finally, respondents were asked whether more money should be spent to secure the US–Mexico border. Responses ranged on a four point scale from cutting this spending entirely, decreasing it, keeping it about the same, and increasing spending.

The second category of dependent variables focuses on a respondent's attitudes toward the immigrants themselves. We capture these sentiments in two ways. First, we examine favorability rating toward "illegal" immigrants as well as Latinos (given that the majority of undocumented immigrants are of Latino origin). As Pérez (2009) points out, there is a strong tendency to equate Latinos with immigrants; thus, perceptions about Latinos are likely tapping into general immigration attitudes. To gauge an individual's favorability toward the target groups of these policies, we use the group-feeling thermometer question asking respondents to evaluate their "warmth" of "feeling" toward "illegal" immigrants and Latinos. The thermometer ranges from 0 to 100 with 100 indicating a warm and very favorable feeling, 50 indicating neutrality toward illegal immigrants or Latinos, and 0 denoting that the respondent feels cold and very unfavorable toward illegal immigrants or Latinos. Feeling thermometers are advantageous because it allows respondents to evaluate candidates, or groups, on "those dimensions which come naturally to them, [those] which are [their] normal guidelines for thinking about candidates" (Weisberg and Rusk 1970).[11]

The key explanatory variable of interest is a measure of cohort effects. Because these immigration laws/proposals varied in their intent and purpose, it is necessary to control for each of their effects separately. Thus, we create four dummy variables that were coded as 1 if the respondent was in

[11]Feeling thermometers can also tap into those evaluative dimensions that individuals consider most important to them, as there are no frames that are imposed on respondents. This measure has also been shown to capture an individual's affective sentiments quite well (Abrajano and Poole 2011). As such, this question is a fairly accurate measure of one's feeling toward our group of interest.

their formative years when at the time of the law's passage/initiation, 0 otherwise.[12] In line with existing research, one's formative years are defined as those occurring between the age span of 18 and 25. So, for example, an individual who was 18 at the time of IRCA's passage would be 40 years old when he was interviewed by the 2008 ANES. These cohort variables are capturing, to the best extent possible, moments in history where immigration was on the minds of policymakers as well as the public. Further, these moments were salient in the media as well, most likely increasing the public's awareness of immigration at those times.[13]

It is also important to consider other factors that could influence individual attitudes toward immigration. Demographic controls such as gender, marital status, income, and education are also taken into account.[14] We also control for respondents' political orientations, as captured by their partisanship, as well as their interest in the news.[15] And to ensure that cohort effects are not simply capturing an age effect, the model also controls separately for age, which is measured as a continuous variable.[16] Contextual factors, such as the percentage of immigrants in an area, could also affect one's views. In line with Hopkins' (2010) findings, we control for the percent change in the state immigrant population. As Hopkins finds, it is not necessarily the *number* of immigrants within a population, but rather the change in the number that can stimulate con-

[12]Table A1 in the Appendix indicates which respondents were categorized into these four cohort groups.

[13]See Dunway, Branton, and Abrajano (2010) or Hopkins (2010) for evidence that increased media attention influences the perceived saliency of immigration among the public. Further, to ensure that the public was being exposed to these events, we perform a media content analysis for the time period that we focus on (1965–2010) in the *New York Times*. As expected, we see increased media coverage during the years when major immigration legislation was discussed prior to or during its passage – particularly the years of 1965, 1986, 1996, and 2006 – marked on the graph by the triangles. The fact that media coverage of immigration peaked in these years, relative to preceding years, provides us with reassurance regarding the amount of exposure that the public received regarding the proposed legislation as well as related issues concerning immigration.

[14]For our analysis on Latinos, we also take into account their generational status.

[15]We only control for party id and interest in news on our models when the dependent variables are the immigration policy-related questions.

[16]We also controlled for a second-order polynomial of age, as a way to account for the possibility of non-linearity. The results remain unchanged and therefore present the estimates without the second-order polynomial of age. Further, see Figure A2 in the Appendix for plots of mean attitudes by age for each demographic group.

cern among the native population. The other contextual factor that we consider is the possibility that individuals residing in states along the US–Mexico border may hold views about immigration that are distinct from individuals residing in non-border states (Dunway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010). Finally, to account for the possibility that immigrants are viewed as an economic threat, we also include controls for one's employment status and union membership. More detailed information about the question wording and coding of these variables is provided in the Appendix.

FINDINGS

We now move on to our analyses that examine the impact of cohort effects on attitudes toward immigrants as well as immigration policy for the three largest ethnic/racial groups in the US. Table 1 presents the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results that examine the impact of cohort effects on feelings toward Latinos as well as immigrants, for each racial/ethnic group. As the results indicate, Whites and older Blacks exposed to landmark immigration policies exhibit the opposite feelings toward Latinos as a group, relative to Latinos who witnessed important immigration-related legislative events during their formative years. White Americans in the 1996 cohort group and Blacks in the 1965 cohort exhibit very little warmth for Latinos, as indicated by the negatively signed coefficients. In contrast, Latinos in the later two cohorts exhibit greater affect for their own social group. In terms of the magnitude of these cohort effects, we see that for Whites, the coefficient estimate for the 1996 cohort is −3.97. This means that, *ceteris paribus*, Whites from these immigration cohorts shift to the left by approximately 4 points (or 4 percent) on the 0–100 scale. This shift to the left indicates less warmth or favorability toward Latinos. Likewise, the eldest generation of Blacks, those in the 1965 cohort, shifts to the left on the 0–100 thermometer scale by nearly 8 points. This is consistent with the quotation above regarding the initial resistance to immigration within the African-American community and seems to support our hypothesis above regarding perceived competition between African Americans and immigrants under more expansionist policies, and associating immigrants at large with Latinos specifically. Importantly, of these findings are true only of the influence of exposure to certain policies on feelings about Latinos, not undocumented immigrants.

TABLE 1
The Impact of Cohort Effects on Attitudes Towards Latinos and Illegal Immigrants

	Whites		Blacks		Latinos	
	Latinos, Coeff. (SE)	Illegal Immigrants, Coeff. (SE)	Latinos, Coeff. (SE)	Illegal Immigrants, Coeff. (SE)	Latinos, Coeff. (SE)	Illegal Immigrants, Coeff. (SE)
Demographics						
Female	4.90*** (1.38)	1.81 (1.63)	0.41 (1.89)	0.10 (2.36)	−1.51 (1.81)	2.70 (2.50)
Age	−0.02 (0.06)	−0.05 (0.06)	0.14 (0.09)	−0.02 (0.11)	−0.03 (0.06)	0.08 (0.09)
Married	1.12 (1.49)	1.00 (1.75)	−3.08 (2.69)	2.97 (3.39)	3.04 (2.06)	4.17 (2.81)
High Income	−0.06 (0.12)	−0.52*** (0.14)	−0.13** (0.19)	0.09 (0.24)	−0.28 (0.17)	0.03 (0.24)
Highly Educated	1.58*** (0.32)	2.62*** (0.38)	1.49*** (0.46)	0.98* (0.55)	0.19 (0.34)	−0.06 (0.48)
Union Member	−0.98 (2.01)	−0.74 (2.38)	3.19 (2.92)	−3.50 (3.59)	−3.57 (2.82)	−9.20* (3.89)
Foreign Born	–	–	–	–	−6.04 (4.00)	18.44*** (5.59)
2nd Generation	–	–	–	–	1.66 (2.13)	9.39*** (2.94)
Cohort Groups						
1965 Immigration and Nationality Act	1.27 (2.16)	−2.80 (2.56)	−7.69** (3.50)	−4.26 (4.33)	3.04 (3.60)	4.35 (4.98)
1986 IRCA	−0.06 (2.04)	−1.38 (2.41)	2.41 (2.77)	1.35 (3.48)	−1.02 (2.44)	−2.06 (3.36)
1996 IIRIRA	−3.97** (2.36)	−3.82 (2.79)	3.01 (3.14)	−0.05 (3.94)	4.58** (2.29)	0.15 (3.16)
2006 HR4437	−1.33 (2.83)	−0.90 (3.35)	6.40* (3.76)	2.48 (4.71)	5.26** (2.78)	−0.63 (3.86)
Context						
% Change in Foreign Born Pop	−0.01 (0.04)	−0.09** (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	−0.12** (0.06)	0.04 (0.08)	−0.07 (0.11)
US–Mexico Border	4.78*** (1.52)	5.75*** (1.79)	5.95** (2.63)	5.02 (3.25)	3.15 (2.07)	5.22* (2.88)
Constant	39.06*** (5.65)	8.88*** (6.71)	42.8*** (8.12)	39.88** (9.98)	76.58*** (6.56)	47.73*** (9.09)
N	968	973	468	471	419	414
R^2	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.11	0.18

Note: Numerical entries (unless otherwise indicated) are OLS regression estimates. ***Estimate significant at $p < 0.01$ level, **Estimate significant at $p < 0.05$ level, *Estimate significant at $p < 0.10$ level.

The observation that, today, the public and the media have a strong tendency to equate immigrants with Latinos squares well with these results (Chavez 2001; Junn and Masuouka 2013). Additional analysis reveals that these unfavorable evaluations are Latino-specific; when we use the Asian-American feeling thermometer as the dependent variable (as Asians are the second largest group of undocumented immigrants), the cohort group coefficient fails to reach statistical significance.[17] Moreover, the fact that these cohort effects are only observed when the group in question is Latinos, as opposed to undocumented immigrants, provides further evidence of who the public considers immigrants to be. The fact that the 1996 cohort, is the only cohort with differing opinions speaks to the influence of elite messaging on this association between negative attitudes and the focus on the Latino immigrant population. IIRIRA directed attention to increased enforcement of the US–Mexico border, thereby strengthening the association between immigration and Latinos. Such an emphasis may help to explain why Whites from this particular cohort exhibit less warmth for Latinos. These results are also suggestive of the long-lasting effects that landmark immigration policy can have on group attitudes and perceptions.

In stark contrast to the cohort effects we discuss above, Latinos who were in the latter two cohorts led to greater levels of affect for their own social group. Latinos exposed to the landmark immigration legislation in 1996 and 2006 exhibit more warmth toward co-ethnics, moving them to the right on the 0–100 scale by 4 points for those in the 1996 cohort and by about 5 points for those in the 2006 cohort. As our hypothesis predicted, the discrimination that Latinos faced during these periods when immigration rose to national salience also caused an increase in group pride and solidarity, thereby increasing their affinity for their own ethnic groups. However, this is not true for all Latinos. It appears to only be the case for Latinos in the later cohorts, and this could be due to the nature of the immigration events themselves or the how these events became crystallized into their minds. It is also worth noting that Blacks from the 2006 cohort exhibit greater warmth to Latinos as a group; this finding is consistent with the notion that Black attitudes toward Latinos have indeed changed over time, leading to less hostility and instead more affinity.

In addition to cohort effects, demographics and state context can also help to explain feelings toward Latinos and immigrants. Among

[17]Results available from the authors upon request.

Whites, the results also indicate that being female and highly educated increase one's affect toward Latinos as does one of our controls for contextual effects. As previous research indicates (Dunway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010), residing along the US–Mexico border can have an influence on immigration attitudes, and in this case, its impact is positive. Living in a border state moves an individual to the right on the 0–100 scale by approximately 5 points. For Latinos, their generational status also exerts a significant impact on his/her evaluations of undocumented immigrants and appears to be greater the closer a Latino is to the immigrant experience. First-generation Latinos move to the right by approximately 18 points on the 0–100 scale, and for second-generation Latinos, this effect is reduced by approximately half, 9.39 points. Thus, generational effects are important in explaining Latino affect toward undocumented immigrants, but exert no influence on their affect toward their own ethnic group. Among Blacks, education operates in the same way as it does for Whites, increasing their levels of affect for both Latinos and immigrants.

How Cohort Effects Influence Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy

Table 2 presents the ordered logit estimates on White opinions toward the three immigration policy-related questions. On the policy question pertaining to increased spending on border security, those from the 1965 cohort USsupport an increase on federal spending directed toward securing the US–Mexico border relative to individuals who are not in this cohort group. This finding may be a result of the expansionist tone of the 1965 policy, and a resistance to the consequences associated with this law. It is important to note that this cohort group effect persists even when controlling for the age of the respondent. As well, Whites in the 1996 cohort are also more likely to support increased spending on border security, which is most likely explained by the tone of the bill and its strong emphasis on the US–Mexico border. These are interesting findings that speak to the influence of policy on attitudes over a lifetime. Finally, the policy question pertaining to levels of immigration reveals that Whites in the youngest cohort group are actually less likely to support a decrease in current immigration levels. Although HR 4437 favored restrictive measures, its emphasis on criminalization of the behavior of undocumented immigrants as well as those aiding these individuals, coupled with the mobilization of minority and immigrant groups in protest to these measures, seems to have had a surprising and lasting effect on Whites who

TABLE 2
THE IMPACT OF COHORT EFFECTS ON WHITE OPINIONS TOWARD IMMIGRATION POLICY

	Immigration not at all likely to take jobs away, Coeff. (SE)	Decrease current levels of immigration by a lot, Coeff. (SE)	Increase federal budget on border security, Coeff. (SE)
Demographics			
Age	−0.01 (0.004)	−0.0004 (0.05)	0.01* (0.005)
Democrat	0.16 (0.15)	−0.31** (0.15)	0.38** (0.15)
Republican	−0.10 (0.14)	0.07 (0.13)	−0.25* (0.14)
High Income	−0.02* (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	−0.004 (0.01)
Highly Educated	0.24*** (0.03)	−0.22***(0.03)	−0.005 (0.03)
Union Member	0.06 (0.19)	0.13 (0.18)	−0.21 (0.18)
Pay Attn News	0.19 (0.15)	−0.05 (0.15)	0.10 (0.15)
Cohorts			
1965 Immigration and Nationality Act	0.24 (0.20)	−0.23 (0.19)	0.56*** (0.21)
1986 IRCA	−0.16 (0.19)	0.25 (0.19)	0.12 (0.18)
1996 IRIIRA	−0.09 (0.21)	−0.26 (0.22)	0.39* (0.21)
2006 HR 4437	0.35 (0.26)	−0.50 (0.26)**	0.40 (0.25)
Contextual Factors			
% Change in FB Pop	−0.01*** (0.003)	0.08*** (0.03)	−0.0001 (0.003)
US–Mexico Border	0.31** (0.14)	−0.34*** (0.14)	−0.22 (0.14)
N	979	965	1054
Cut 1	1.18 (0.51)	5.99 (0.55)	−4.54 (0.62)
Cut 2	2.59 (0.52)	−4.64 (0.53)	−1.35 (0.52)
Cut 3	4.85 (0.53)	−2.49 (0.52)	−0.50 (0.52)
Cut 4	–	−1.35 (0.51)	–

Note: ***Estimate significant at $p < 0.01$ level, **Estimate significant at $p < 0.05$ level, *Estimate significant at $p < 0.10$ level.

were in their developmental years during this time. It appears that this particular cohort, unlike others, is opposed to decreasing current levels of immigration. This position marks an important shift in the influence of policy on the opinions of young Whites and will be important to observe whether this shift maintains its strength over the years to come.

In addition to cohort effects, Whites' educational attainment levels play an important role in their immigration policy positions attitudes; in two out of the three policy questions, highly educated Whites hold less restrictive views toward immigration policy relative to their less-educated counterparts. Partisan considerations appear to have a mixed impact on immigration issue policies, with Democrats having a higher likelihood of supporting an increase in spending when compared to Independents. Republicans, on the other hand, are less inclined to support a larger allocation of federal funds going toward the border than are Independents.[18]

[18]We also interacted partisanship with each cohort group, and the results remain unchanged.

Whites who identify as Democrats are also less likely to favor a decrease in current immigration levels. Finally, contextual factors help to explain two of the three immigration policies that we examine. Residing in states that have experienced a sizable increase in the foreign-born (immigrant) population influence Whites' policy positions on immigration. It makes them more likely to favor a decrease in immigration levels; they also perceive that immigrants are likely to take jobs away from Americans relative to Whites residing in less immigrant dense states. Whether or not Whites live in a border state has a positive affect on their immigration policy views, which is similar to its impact on attitudes toward immigrants. Border residents hold a positive perception of immigrants' roles in the economy and therefore do not perceive them to take jobs away from the native born population. Moreover, they are less likely to favor a decrease in the current immigration levels when compared to non-border residents. The interaction and exposure border state residents have with the immigrant population appear to positively impact their views toward both immigrants and immigration policy.

With regards to Blacks' and Latinos' policy positions on immigration, cohort effects play a very minimal role in explaining their positions. We present these estimates in Table 3. Being a part of the 2006 cohort leads to a more expansive view on existing immigration levels as opposed to Blacks who are not witness to major legislative events over immigration. Recall that it is the same cohort that helped to explain Black affect toward Latinos. Thus, it seems to be the case that the events surrounding HR 4437 had a lasting impact, and a positive one at that on Blacks' perceptions of immigrants and immigration policy. The only other cohort effects that emerge are with respect to increased border spending. Blacks from the 1996 cohort are less likely to support an increase in border spending when compared to Blacks who are not exposed to any landmark immigration legislation. Again, it is for these younger cohorts that policies seem to be having a less restrictive impact on their immigration attitudes. Finally, the demographics of education, union membership, and interest in news also helps to explain Black opinions on immigration policy.

Cohort effects also have some influence on Latinos' attitudes toward immigration policies. Latinos in the 1965 and 1996 cohort have a lower probability of believing that immigration would take jobs away from native-born Americans than Latinos from outside these cohort groups. Thus, for these two cohort groups, exposure to significant pieces of immigration legislation leads to a more favorable outlook toward the role of

TABLE 3
THE IMPACT OF COHORT EFFECTS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRATION POLICY: BLACK AND LATINO RESPONDENTS

	Blacks			Latinos		
	Immigration not at all likely to take jobs away, Coeff. (SE)	Decrease current levels of immigration by a lot, Coeff. (SE)	Increase federal budget on border security, Coeff. (SE)	Immigration not at all likely to take jobs away, Coeff. (SE)	Decrease current levels of immigration by a lot, Coeff. (SE)	Increase federal budget on border security, Coeff. (SE)
Demographics						
Age	−0.003 (0.01)	0.01(0.01)	0.01(0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (01)	0.005 (01)
Democrat	−0.23 (0.19)	0.07 (0.19)	−0.02 (0.21)	0.28 (0.21)	0.06 (0.20)	0.28 (0.21)
Republican	−0.08 (0.04)	−0.48 (0.58)	−0.13 (0.61)	−0.14 (0.30)	−0.58*(0.32)	0.06 (0.31)
High Income	0.03 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)
Highly Educated	0.09** (0.04)	−0.09** (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	−0.01 (0.04)	−0.05 (0.04)
Union Member	−0.26 (0.27)	0.68** (0.28)	0.01 (0.29)	−0.27 (0.28)	−0.42 (0.31)	0.04 (0.31)
Pay Attn News	−0.06 (0.23)	0.09 (0.22)	0.50** (0.26)	0.03 (0.24)	−0.21 (0.24)	0.79*** (0.29)
Cohorts						
1965 Immigration and Nationality Act	0.11 (0.31)	−0.16 (0.32)	−0.37 (0.35)	−0.84** (0.36)	−0.24 (0.37)	0.15 (0.40)
1986 IRCA	0.27 (0.26)	−0.05 (0.26)	−0.41 (0.27)	−0.17 (0.25)	0.30 (0.26)	−0.05 (0.25)
1996 IRIIRA	0.44 (0.29)	−0.09 (0.28)	−0.51* (0.30)	0.45* (0.23)	0.36 (0.24)	−0.17 (0.22)
2006 HR 4437	0.33 (0.35)	−0.66** (0.27)	−0.39 (0.26)	0.21 (0.28)	−0.06 (0.29)	0.09 (0.23)
Context						
% FB Pop	−0.01* (0.004)	0.01** (0.004)	0.001 (0.005)	−0.01* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	−0.003 (0.01)
US–Mexico Border	0.06 (0.25)	−0.36 (0.25)	0.28 (0.27)	0.04 (0.22)	−20 (0.22)	0.37 (0.22)
N	484	482	531	424	421	473
Cut 1	0.02 (0.75)	−3.42 (0.76)	−4.16 (0.99)	−1.43 (0.67)	−2.13 (0.69)	−5.11 (0.87)
Cut 2	1.15 (0.75)	−2.55 (0.75)	−1.28 (0.82)	−0.15 (0.66)	−1.08 (0.68)	−2.71 (0.73)
Cut 3	3.07 (0.77)	−0.42 (0.74)	0.44 (0.81)	1.58 (0.67)	1.27 (0.68)	−0.87 (0.71)
Cut 4	–	0.83 (0.74)	–	–	2.61 (0.69)	–

Note: ***Estimate significant at $p < 0.01$ level, **Estimate significant at $p < 0.05$ level, *Estimate significant at $p < 0.10$ level.

immigrants in the economy. Further research is necessary to assess this finding, which goes beyond the scope of this paper. It would be important, however, to examine both the effect of the legislation as well as the general group response at the time. For example, there may be a way in which minority group leaders were organizing members at each of these times that varied in important ways – as in the case with the African Americans between the 1960s and the 1980s. Importantly, however, this paper establishes that these pieces of legislation have a long-lasting impact on individuals' views on immigrants and immigration and those views vary between and within social groups.

Latinos' policy opinions toward immigration also are influenced by their partisanship, interest in news, and the percentage of foreign-born individuals in their respective states. Relative to Independents, Republicans favor a reduction in immigration levels by a considerable amount. Those living in a state with large foreign-born populations are more likely to disagree that immigrants are not at all likely to take jobs away. This is an interesting finding, which again goes beyond the scope of this paper, but suggests that the experience of living in areas with large immigrant populations changes the opinions of Latinos on the economic contributions of immigrants. Among Latinos who are frequent consumers of the news, they support an increase in more federal funds being allocated to border security.

Finally, to ensure that our estimation procedure is correct, we perform a series of robustness checks that include placebo tests, alternative specifications as well as explanations. All these robustness checks are explained in detail in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

Overall, our research findings suggest that increased attention toward immigration policy carry long-lasting effects for the American public, though its effect varies considerably depending on which social group one belongs to and to which legislation one was exposed. These moments where immigration rose to the national spotlight during policy discussion led Whites to harbor more negative opinions toward immigration and immigrants, whereas for Latinos, it led them to have more positive views toward their own social group. African Americans were not as clear-cut in their attitudes; later (*i.e.*, younger) cohorts adopted a position that sided with Latinos, whereas earlier cohorts were more closely aligned with Whites' views. Again, this is consistent with the idea of the "historical

reversal" that shifted African Americans, in general, from a position of resistance to immigration toward an alliance with immigrant populations over time. These findings also suggest how the immigration views of the major ethnic and racial groups in the US are not only shaped by their individual characteristics (Hood and Morris 1998), emotions (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008), or environmental factors (Hopkins 2010), but also by the timing of their exposure to landmark immigration events during their formative years.

These findings indicate that landmark political events can and do help to shape an individual's policy preferences. In fact, the findings presented in this paper suggest that cohort effects can and do persist for a significant period of time. These findings contribute to the literature on public opinion in three ways. First, these findings demonstrate how moments of heightened political attention toward immigrants can leave a long-lasting and permanent mark on the public's attitudes toward these highly controversial policies and the groups about which those policies are concerned. Unfortunately, because most of this political attention (and media coverage) has been negative in nature, it has led Whites to harbor more negative sentiments toward immigrants' roles in society and increase spending on border security, but for Latinos, this attention seems to have had a mobilizing effect over time and a stronger feelings of affect toward their own ethnic group.

Second, these findings are important from a real-world standpoint. Taking into consideration an individual's psychological development, as well as her social position within society contributes to a better understanding of how groups perceive each other. These perceptions regarding out-groups or regarding one's own group have important consequences for social integration and social strife. That so much negativity surrounds the issue of US immigration reform does not bode well for immigrants, and in particular for Latinos, as these unfavorable sentiments can have long-lasting effects on how the young Americans view immigrants as well as their feelings toward them, not only today, but over their lifetime. Thus, if the threats derived from immigration persist in their prominence, we will continue to have a public that is divided over the issue of immigration. Further, targeted groups may respond to hostility in policy debates by tightening their own intra-group bonds, contributing to further segregation within society. While our study focused exclusively on the US public, we expect exposure and cohort effects to operate in similar ways in countries where immigration has increasingly captured national

attention, for example France, Britain, and the Netherlands. As well, it is worth considering how certain immigrant groups in these countries become associated with a certain policy debate or become conflated with undocumented immigrants, as has occurred for Latinos in the US. This is an area that is ripe for future research, and we hope that our findings can spark further inquiry on this subject matter.

Finally, these findings demonstrate how cohort effects continue to play an important role in affecting not only the public's political dispositions, but also on their views toward specific issues and groups that have not been examined before. This is an important finding, for it encourages us to look at variation in opinion formation *between* groups, but also *within* them. For example, examining Latino immigration attitudes in the US is more complex than we originally thought. There may be subsets of this population that hold varying opinions on issues as a result of exposure to an event during a critically developmental period in their lives, which goes beyond partisanship or current contextual and socioeconomic factors. Therefore, support for immigration and immigration policy as well as intergroup relations may vary not only over time, but also across cohorts within these groups.

The relationship between public opinion and policy has been long-debated in social science, but we find that the effects of policy may not only occur when a policy is implemented, but also well after its implementation. As such, the question is not simply whether policy influences individual attitudes or vice versa, but also whether and how deeply does policy affect entire cohorts of individuals over the course of their lifetime. In particular, immigration policy and the debate it inspires will not only produce a policy decision. It appears that these policies will also produce a cohort of thousands of individuals for whom the exposure to that policy and its debate, during their formative years, will inform their opinions on immigration policy and immigrants over their lifetime.

APPENDIX

CODING OF VARIABLES

Political Variables

Democrat: coded as 1 if respondent self-identifies as a Democrat, 0 otherwise.

Republican: coded as 1 if respondent self-identifies as a Republican, 0 otherwise.

The baseline category is respondents who self-identify as Independents.

Demographics

Female: coded as 1 if respondent self-identifies as a female, 0 male.

Married: coded as 1 if respondent is married, 0 otherwise.

High Income: categorical variable that ranges from: (1) none or less than $2999 to (25) $60,000–$150,000 and over.

High education: coded as a continuous variable based on the following question, "What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?"

Union member: coded as 1 if the respondent is a union member, 0 if she is not a union member.

Unemployed: coded as 1 if the respondent is unemployed or has recently been laid off from work, 0 otherwise.

Contextual Variables

Perchange.
US–Mexico border.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Several robustness checks were conducted:

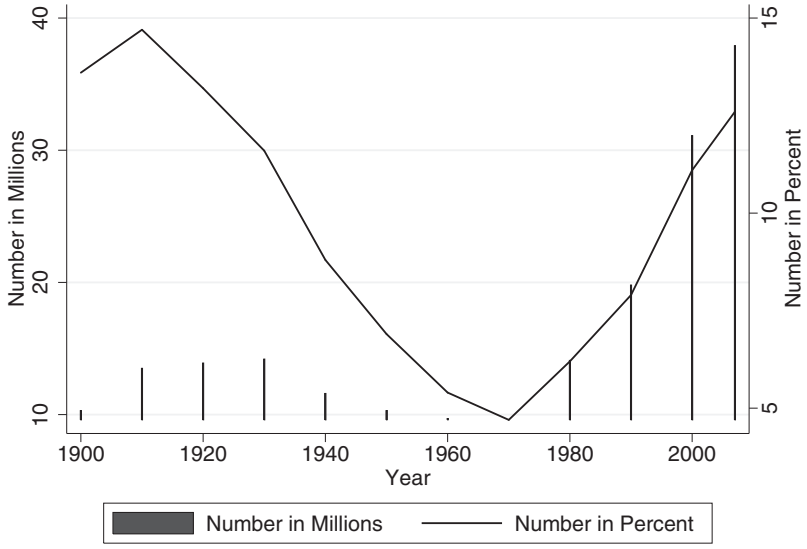
1. Placebo Tests: First, it should be the case that immigration-specific experiences during one's formative years should matter only to immigration attitudes and not for other types of policy opinions. Thus, we replicated the analysis with the same set of independent variables but instead of immigration opinions as the dependent variable, assessments of President Bush's handling of the economy serves as the dependent variable. Respondents could have either approved or disapproved of the President's economic performance. These results are available upon request from the authors. In the same vein, we

also substituted illegal immigrants as the group of interest with feminists and liberals. The explanatory variables remain the same as the original model specification.

The findings from the analyses indicate that experiencing landmark immigration-related moments in the US had no bearing on opinions on how well President Bush dealt with the economy. The cohort group coefficient was not statistically significant in explaining ones' evaluations of Bush's economic performance. Likewise, the cohort group coefficient estimate played no role in their feelings toward other groups, such as Blacks and the working class. These results provide reassurance that the relationship between cohort group effect and the issue of immigration is not spurious. It does not appear to be the case that these cohorts think about all issues differently from those individuals not included in the cohort. Rather, the immigration-related experiences (*i.e.*, immigration legislation proposals and debate) that occurred while they were between the ages of 18–25 seem to have influenced the opinions of these cohorts on the issue of immigration, but not other issues or preferences unrelated to immigration. Therefore, our identification of these cohorts based on the dates of immigration legislation appears consistent with the extant literature on cohort effects. Distinctions do appear to exist in their opinions on immigration, when compared to the rest of the population.

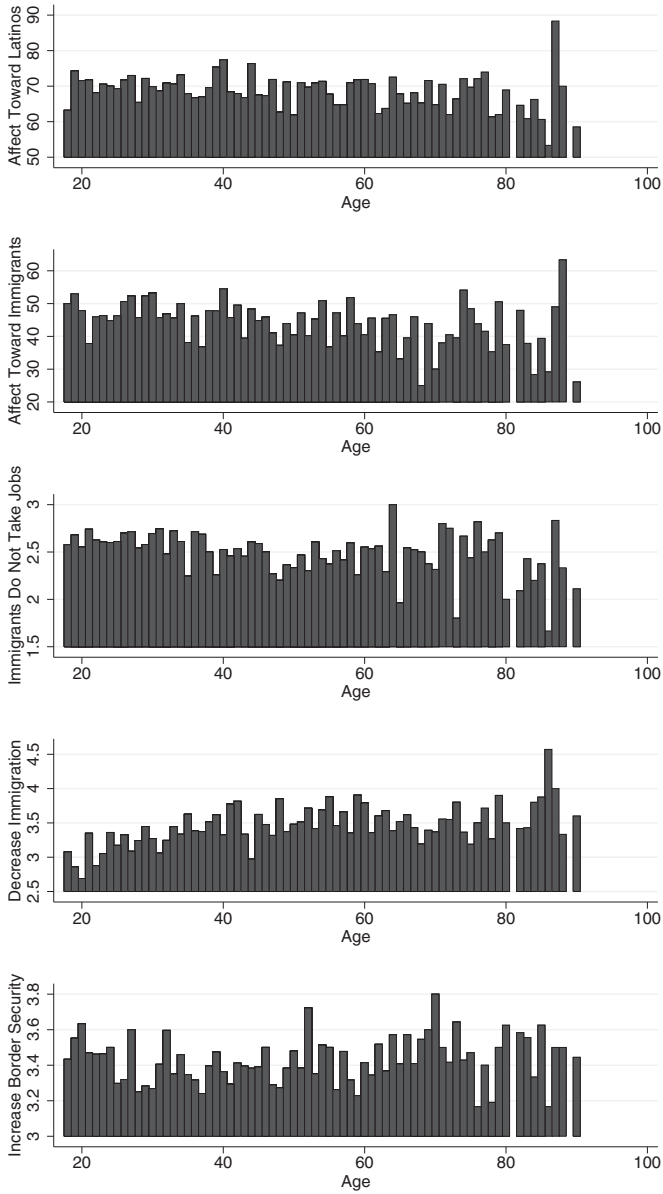
2. We also address the issue of possible over-identification of age in the models. As addressed in footnote 17, we reran the models with both age and an age-squared variable. Even with this specification, the main results remain unchanged. Further, we wanted to be sure that the period of age, the developmental period of 18–25, is in fact what matters here. One way to determine whether these impressionable years matter more than other periods in life is to account for these years outside the developmental range in a series of new models (Giuliano and Spilimbergo 2009). We reran the models with a new variable that identifies individuals who were never exposed to major immigration legislation during their formative years; this analysis failed to yield any statistically significant results. Estimates are available from the authors.

Figure A1. **Immigrants in US Number and percent 1900–2007. Source: Decennial Census for 1900 to 2000. For 2007 we used the March Current Population Survey, which does not included those in group quarters. The 600,000 immigrants in group quarters have been added to the 2007 CPS to make it comparable with the historic censuses (Camarota 2007)**

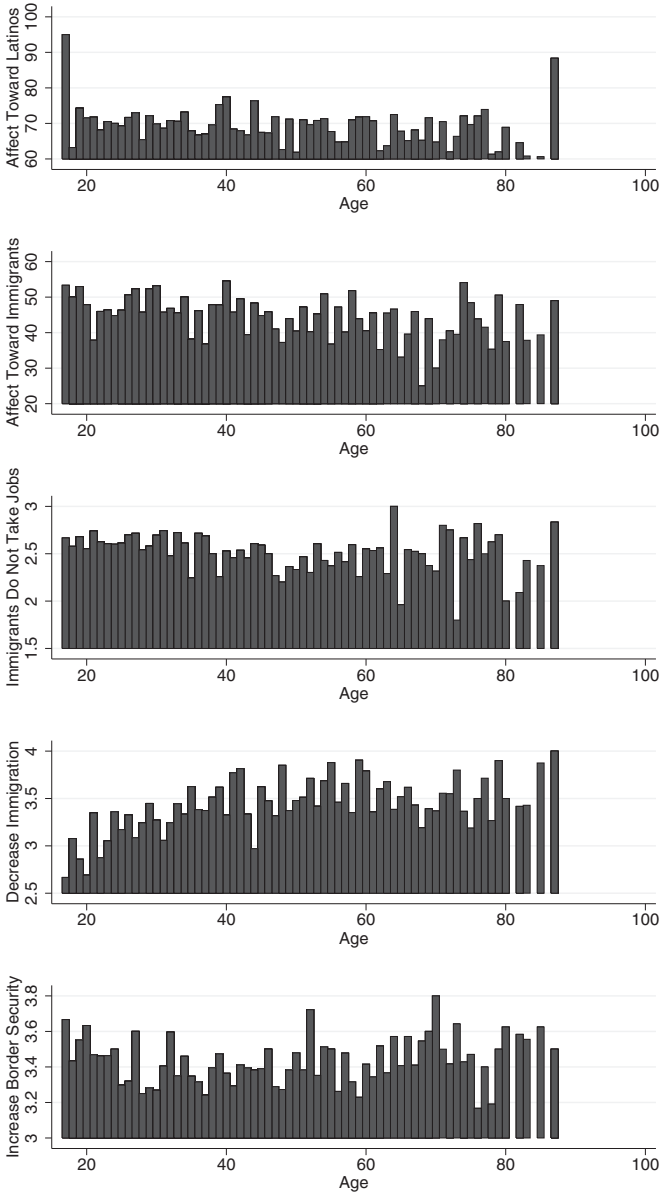


3. Alternative Explanation: Finally, we may only be capturing a spurious relationship between cohort effects and immigration attitudes if there is another major event that occurred in the years that we look at (1965, 1986, 1996, and 2006). One possible explanation could be a sudden and unexpected rise in the number of immigrants entering the US during each of these years. To determine whether this is the case, we examined data from the Decennial Census (*see*, Figure A1). In 1960, immigrants were 5.4 percent (or 9.7 million) of the US population. By comparison, immigrants were 4.7 percent of the total population in 1970 and 6.9 percent in 1950. As such, there was no marked change in the immigrant flow when the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was passed into law, relative to the immigration flows both before and after its passage. The Census estimates approximately 14.1 million foreign-born individuals by 1980, representing 6.2 percent of the US population. In 1990, this percentage increases to 7.9 percent. And as of 2007, the immigrant population is estimated at 12.6 percent of the US population. Over these three dec-

Figure A2. Plots of Mean Attitudes by Age
White Respondents



Latino Respondents



Black Respondents

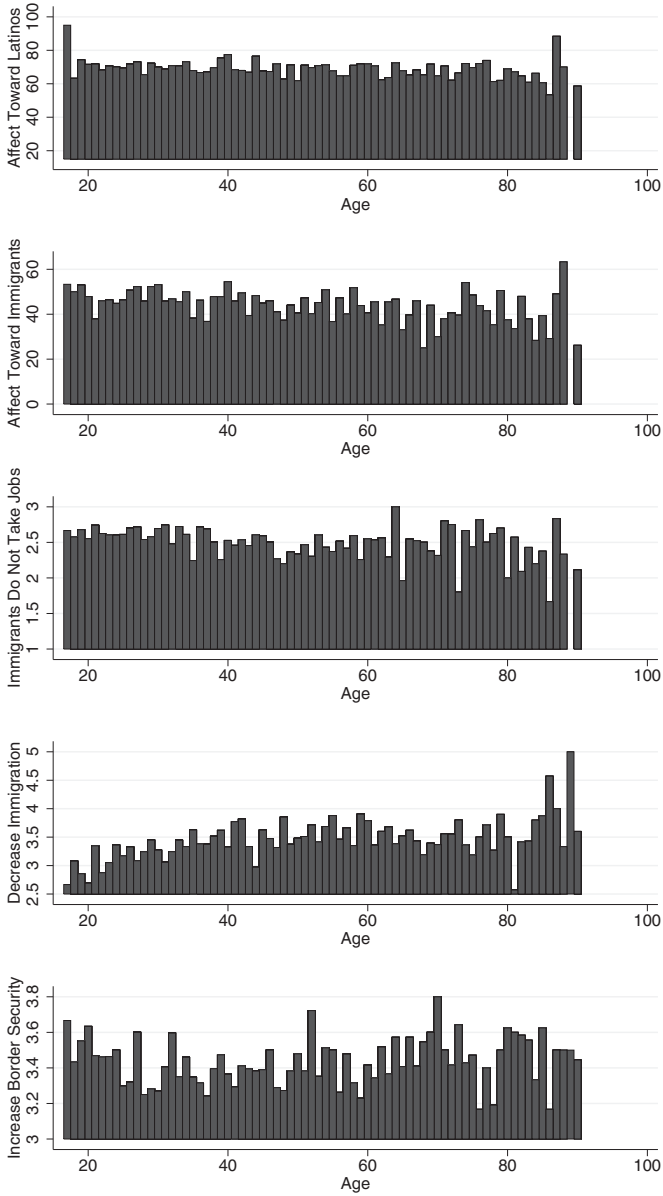


TABLE A1
SELECTION OF COHORTS

Period of saliency	2008 Ages of matching cohort
1965 Immigration and Nationality Act	61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68
1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act	40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47
1996 IIRIRA	30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37
2006 HR4437	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
No Cohort	18, 19, 28, 29, 38, 39, 48–60, 69–94

ades, we therefore see a steady increase in the size of the immigrant population. However, in none of these periods do we see a double-digit spike in the size of the immigrant population. The biggest increase that we see is from 1990 to 2000, where the number of immigrants in the US increases by 3.2 percent. Overall, these patterns suggest that immigration rates since the 1960s have steadily been increasing, with no drastic changes in the time periods that we focus on.

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