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# Immigration, Latinos, and White Partisan Politics: The New Democratic Defection

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*Immigration is profoundly changing the racial demographics of America. In this article, we seek to understand if and how immigration and increasing racial diversity are shaping the partisan politics of individual white Americans. We show that whites' views on immigration and Latinos are strongly related to their core political identities and vote choices. Using a range of different surveys, we find that, all else equal, whites with more anti-immigrant views or more negative views of Latinos are less apt to identify as Democrats and less likely to favor Democratic candidates. This rightward shift harkens back to an earlier period of white defection from the Democratic Party and highlights the enduring but shifting impact of race on American politics.*

Immigration is transforming the demographics of America. In the last half century, the United States has become more diverse, Latinos have surpassed African Americans as the largest minority, and the proportion of the country that is white has fallen from roughly 90% to 65%. The future is likely to bring even more change. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by sometime in the middle of this century, the United States will no longer be a majority white nation.

In this article, we investigate the extent of the influence of immigration and racial diversity on the core political identities and voting preferences of individual white Americans. When white Americans choose to align with one of the two major parties, when they decide which candidate to support in presidential contests, and when they vote in a range of other elections, do attitudes about immigration and Latinos help shape the outcome?

Although widespread attention has been paid to the causes of our attitudes about Latinos and immigration more broadly, little research has focused on the consequences of immigrant-related views (on causes, see Brader,

Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Citrin et al 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Kinder and Kam 2012; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Schildkraut 2011; but see Hopkins 2010). To date, there is almost no direct evidence that the basic choices of individual white voters in American politics strongly reflect their views on immigration or the Latino population. Major recent studies of the presidential and congressional vote tend to fall into one of two categories. Most ignore immigration and race (Alvarez and Nagler 1995, 1998; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2007; Miller and Shanks 1996). Or, if they focus on race, they limit that focus to the impact of America's old black-white divide (Abramowitz 1994; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Lewis-Beck, Tien, and Nadeau 2010; Valentino and Sears 2005). No study that we know of has demonstrated a connection between immigration and the white vote in national contests or revealed a link between immigration and white partisanship.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, we believe that immigration and the Latino population do impact whites' electoral calculus, and we offer an account of how large-scale immigration

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<sup>1</sup>One important exception is work on California, which alternately shows that Proposition 187 led to growing white support of the Democratic Party (Bowler and Donovan 2006) or that the episode had no impact on white partisanship (Dyck, Johnson, and Wassson 2012).

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can have real partisan consequences for the white population. First, immigration and the rapid growth of the Latino population have dramatically altered the racial group membership and imagery of the Democratic Party. Further, we believe that an oft repeated Latino (or immigrant) threat narrative has fueled individual white fears and insecurities about Latinos. Finally, when Republican and Democratic leaders take increasingly divergent stances on immigration, the two parties present individual white Americans with a compelling partisan logic. For those who are concerned about the Latino population, there is a powerful motivation to choose the Republican Party.

## Does Immigration Matter?

There is incontrovertible evidence that race has mattered in American politics at different times in our history (Klinker and Smith 1999). And there is evidence that race still matters in American politics. Studies contend that whites' policy preferences on welfare, education, crime, and a host of other core issues are shaped by attitudes toward blacks (Gilens 2000; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; but see Sniderman and Carmines 1997). More critically, for our study, scholars have also linked partisan choices with racial attitudes. Several studies assert that whites defected from the Democratic Party in the 1960s in response to the civil rights movement, the increased political participation of African Americans, and growing black support of the Democratic Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Giles and Hertz 1994; Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt 1989). As blacks joined the Democratic Party in large numbers and as the Democratic and Republican parties diverged on the main racial policy questions of the day, white identification with the Democratic Party—especially in the South—sharply declined. According to this view, whites' sentiments about blacks helped Republicans dominate national elections (Edsall and Edsall 1991; Valentino and Sears 2005). And more recently, racial views had, by many accounts, a substantial impact on Barack Obama's presidential bid (Bobo and Dawson 2009; Lewis-Beck, Tien, and Nadeau 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010; but see Ansolabehere and Stewart 2009).

There are, however, two concerns with this line of research. First, there are a number of authors who dispute just how much of this partisan shift was due to racial considerations (Abramowitz 1994; Lublin 2004). According to this view, other factors like social morality and, more recently, war, terrorism, and economic crisis have replaced race as the underlying basis for partisan choice

(Adams 1997; Layman and Carmines 1997; Miller and Shanks 1996). If racial considerations do play an ongoing role in white partisan decision making, it is one that is questioned.

Another concern with this research is that it focuses exclusively on the black-white divide while ignoring immigration and other racial dynamics. It is attitudes toward blacks and not views of Latinos or immigration that are purported to drive partisanship and the vote. However, given the dramatic growth in the Latino and immigrant populations, it is at least plausible that these groups have become more central in the political thinking of white America.

Perhaps more significant for our purposes is the literature on minority context. Here, an extensive set of studies has demonstrated the relevance of immigrant or Latino residential context for white Americans (Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2006; Ha and Oliver 2010; Hero and Preuhs 2007; Hopkins 2010). But these findings are limited in one important way. Rather than look at the consequences of immigrant or Latino context for broad political outcomes like partisanship and the vote, this literature tends to focus more narrowly on how immigrant or Latino context affects attitudes toward these minority groups (Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2006; Ha and Oliver 2010).<sup>2</sup> What research on the American case has not yet attempted to demonstrate is how immigrant context relates to the basic partisan choices of the white electorate. Comparative studies in Europe have identified clear links between the size of the national immigrant population and support for right-wing parties (Arzheimer 2009; Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002). But the same has not been done in the United States. Ultimately, what is missing is compelling evidence that immigration is a core element of American politics.

## Why Immigration, Latinos, Party, and the Vote Are Linked

But is there really reason to believe that immigration is driving major changes in white partisanship and the vote? From one well-supported perspective, partisan identities are psychological attachments that are stable and generally impervious to change (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002). Even Carmines and Stimson (1989), who so

<sup>2</sup>One important exception is an article by Hero and Preuhs (2007) that reveals a relationship between the size of the state immigrant population and welfare policy at the state level.

aptly demonstrated that an issue like race can dramatically alter the partisan landscape of the nation, contend that most issues fail to generate significant partisan change. How can immigration overcome the inertia of partisan attachments?

There are four different elements of immigration that we think make it a prime candidate to affect partisan evolution. First, immigration is salient—a factor that is critical according to Carmines and Stimson (1989) and Carsey and Layman (2006). Americans tend to pay limited attention to the political sphere, and their knowledge of the issues of the day is often quite restricted, but immigration is not an ephemeral phenomenon that is easily overlooked (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Immigrants and their children now represent almost one in four Americans (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The sheer size and racial diversity of the demographic change that has occurred and that continues to occur are impossible for white Americans to miss. Moreover, irrespective of the actual costs of immigration, there is an ongoing and oft repeated threat narrative that links America's immigrant and Latino populations to a host of pernicious fiscal, social, and cultural consequences (Chavez 2008; Hopkins 2010; Santa Ana 2003). This narrative emphasizes cultural decline; immigrants' use of welfare, health, and educational services; their propensity to turn to crime; and their tendency to displace native citizens from jobs (Borjas 2001; Gimpel and Skerry 1999; Huntington 2005).

Each of these concerns has been spelled out repeatedly and in great detail in the media, in the political sphere, and in scholarly outlets (Chavez 2008; Perez 2010; Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013). The result is that many Americans express real concerns about immigration. There is no doubt that views on immigration are diverse and that many Americans are either supportive or ambivalent about immigration. But it is also clear that many others are deeply concerned about immigration. Recent polls suggest that well over half of white Americans feel that immigrants are a burden on the nation, a slight majority think they add to the crime problem, about half believe they take jobs away from Americans, and, perhaps most importantly, an overwhelming majority of Americans view illegal immigration as a serious problem (CBS News 2010; CNN 2010; *USA Today* 2010). Immigration is not generally viewed as the nation's most important problem, but it is by almost all accounts a major phenomenon that produces real anxiety among large segments of the public.

Immigration, like Carmines and Stimson's (1989) racial example and like other issues deemed to have caused shifts in partisanship, is also a relatively simple, symbolic

issue (Adams 1997; Carmines and Stimson 1980, 1989; Layman and Carmines 1997). There is considerable debate about exactly why Americans feel the way they do about immigration, but studies suggest that attitudes toward immigration are linked to deep-seated, enduring predispositions like nativism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Citrin et al. 1997; Citrin, Reingold, and Walters 1990; Kinder and Kam 2012; Schildkraut 2011). How we think about Latinos, in particular, says a lot about our policy views on immigration (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Perez 2010; Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013). As such, attitudes about immigration may be sufficiently deeply held and stable enough to sway partisan considerations.<sup>3</sup>

Third, and perhaps most importantly, immigration has done what few other issues can do. It has altered the group imagery associated with the two political parties. Even Green et al. (2002) and Goren (2005), who write forcefully about the immovability and durability of party identification, note that major shifts in partisanship have occurred over time as the social groups associated with each party have changed. With large-scale immigration and growing Latino support of the Democratic Party, there seems little doubt that party images are changing. The vast majority of Latinos now favor Democratic candidates, and the vast majority of Latino elected officials now represent the Democratic Party.<sup>4</sup> The growth of the immigrant population and the increasing attachment of Latinos and other immigrants to the Democratic Party means that a party that as late as 1980 was still 80%

<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it is important to note that immigration diverges in important ways from the black-white divide that has often dominated American politics. Importantly, immigration tends to occur at higher rates in states where the black population is relatively small and thus may be threatening to new and different segments of the white population. Attitudes on immigration across the many surveys that we examine below are correlated with attitudes toward blacks, but the two are far from synonymous. Correlations between the two typically range from insignificant to correlations of about .10 to .25. In short, not all Americans who oppose immigration have negative feelings toward African Americans. That means immigration has the potential to be an important crosscutting issue. Critically, until recent decades, Americans who expressed more anti-immigrant views were found equally in both parties. For example, in 1992 in the American National Election Studies (ANES) cumulative file, same percentage who identified with the Republican Party."

<sup>4</sup> Latino Democratic identifiers now outnumber Latino Republican identifiers by a two-to-one margin (Hajnal and Lee 2011). Over two-thirds of Latino Congress members and 84% of Latino state legislators are Democrats (NALEO 2013).



white is now more than 40% nonwhite.<sup>5</sup> A party that was supported by lower-class white interests increasingly became a party that was supported by the black community and since the 1980s has increasingly become a party that is supported by Latinos and other immigrants. In other words, what it means to be a Democrat has changed.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the two parties themselves have staked out increasingly divergent positions on the issue of immigration, another critical element in issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Carsey and Layman 2006). Through the early 1990s, elites in the two parties were hardly distinct on immigration, but that has slowly changed over time; partisan divisions first emerged at the state and local levels and then expanded to Congress and finally to the presidential level, where in 2012 candidates from the two parties offered sharply contrasting positions on immigration for the first time. A range of empirical studies demonstrates this growing partisan divide in Congress (Jeong et al. 2011; Miller and Schofield 2008; Wong et al. 2013).

There is also compelling evidence that Democratic and Republican leaders at the state and local levels are increasingly divided on immigration (Ramakrishnan n.d.). Partisan battle lines at the state level on immigration were most notably introduced in California when Governor Pete Wilson and the state Republican Party advocated for Proposition 187, the so-called “Save Our State” initiative. The state-level partisan divide had grown to the point that by 2010 no Democrat in the Arizona legislature supported the controversial immigrant enforcement bill, SB 1070, whereas all but one Republican voted for it (Archibold 2010).

These divergent stances on immigration are borne out by interest group ratings. Interest groups like Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the National Latino Congreso, and Numbers USA rate Democratic members of Congress as distinctly liberal on immigration and Republican members as strongly conservative.<sup>7</sup> When Republican leaders criticize immigrants, condemn their actions, and bemoan the costs to

America, and when many Democratic leaders offer support for the plight of immigrants, they present citizens with a choice on an issue that many feel is threatening America.

In short, many white Americans will see that America is changing, will believe that immigration is driving many of the negative changes they see, and will know that one party is backed by immigrants and stands largely on the side of immigrants, whereas the other party is opposed by almost all immigrants and stands largely in opposition to immigration. For many white Americans, this may be a powerful motivation to defect to the Republican Party.

## Research Design

In order to assess the impact of immigration and immigration-related views on the politics of white America, we turn to a standard tool of American public opinion survey research—the American National Election Study (ANES). We choose the ANES because it includes a long list of questions that get at each of the many different factors known to affect partisanship and the vote. This is critical, since we cannot know whether immigration matters unless we can control for other core aspects of American elections.

We begin with an analysis of the 2008 ANES for two reasons. First, it contains questions on immigration—a requirement that rules out most years of the ANES survey and many other surveys. Second, 2008 was ostensibly not about immigration. Barack Obama, the first African American nominee for president, was on the ballot; John McCain and Obama outlined similar plans on immigration; the nation was in the midst of two wars; and it faced an almost unprecedented fiscal crisis. Immigration was supposedly not a critical issue in the campaign. If anything, 2008 was going to be about whites’ acceptance of blacks and their concerns about the economy, war, and terrorism. As such, 2008 represents a relatively exacting test of our immigration hypothesis.

We realize, however, that if we want to make a more general statement about American politics, we need to assess the influence views of Latinos and immigrants have across a wider range of data sets, years, elections, and contexts. To do this, we repeat our analysis using the ANES cumulative file, the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Surveys (NAES), and the 2010 and 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). This allows us to test the immigration hypothesis across different years

<sup>5</sup>By contrast, roughly 90% of Republican identifiers are non-Hispanic whites. Figures are from the 1992 ANES cumulative file and 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).

<sup>6</sup>All of this is highlighted by the media. When *USA Today* writes about “White Males Fading among House Democrats” and the *New Republic* asks, “Why the GOP Is and Will Continue to Be the Party of Whites,” it highlights this massive racial shift in party support (Davis 2013; Tanenhaus 2013).

<sup>7</sup>FAIR’s ratings show little partisan divide on immigration as late as 1996, when Democrats averaged a score of 44 on immigration and Republicans received an average score of 52. But by early 2000, FAIR’s ratings by party sharply diverge.

(contests from 1970 to 2012), different types of elections (i.e., presidential, House, Senate, gubernatorial), different types of survey instruments (including a wide variety of questions that vary the wording of the key independent variable—immigration-related feelings—and the key dependent variables—partisanship and vote choice), and different survey methodologies and samples. Finally, since party choices may impact rather than be affected by immigrant-related views, we undertake causality tests on the three ANES panel data sets that include questions on immigration. If all of these different data points lead to the same story, we can be reasonably confident of that story. Because our theory focuses on the reaction of white Americans to America's changing racial demographics, we include only those individuals who identify themselves as white and as non-Hispanic.

Defining and operationalizing our key independent variable—views toward Latinos and immigration—is not straightforward. The process is complex because we believe that white Americans tend to conflate several distinct categories of people. Although in theory categories like illegal immigrant, immigrant, and Latino are all distinct, in the practice and rhetoric of American politics, these concepts often blur together (Chavez 2008; Perez 2010).<sup>8</sup> In light of these muddled categories, we will test a series of different measures of Latino and immigrant views to try to get a clearer sense of just who it is that white Americans are reacting to.

Since white Americans express the strongest reservations about illegal immigrants, we begin by focusing on a summary measure of views on illegal immigration. Specifically, we use the four questions in the 2008 ANES that explicitly address illegal immigration to create an alpha factor score for each respondent. The scale comes directly from the factor analysis and ranges from -2.8 to 1.7, with higher values representing more positive views of immigration. The four questions are (1) a standard feeling thermometer for "illegal immigrants" that ranges from 0 (*extremely negative feelings*) to 100 (*extremely positive feelings*), (2) "Should controlling and reducing illegal immigration be a very important . . . not an important

foreign policy goal?" (3) "Do you favor/oppose the U.S. government making it possible for illegal immigrants to become U.S. citizens?" and (4) "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose allowing illegal immigrants to work in the United States for up to three years after which they would have to go back to their home country?" The four items cohere well, with a scale reliability of .65 and an average inter-item correlation of .32. In practice, it matters little how we combine these questions or whether we focus on a subset of these questions or on just one of these questions. A simple additive scale performs similarly in the regressions that follow. Also, in alternate tests when we substitute each single question or combinations of two or three of these questions into the regressions, the pattern of results is similar.

Since we think concerns about a range of different groups (i.e., immigrants, illegal immigrants, Latinos) are clustered together in the minds of many white Americans, we incorporate a range of different measures of feelings toward these groups into our tests. Specifically, in alternate tests of the 2008 ANES data, we examine attitudes toward immigration in general (i.e., "Should immigration levels be increased a lot . . . decreased a lot?") and attitudes toward Latinos (i.e., a standard feeling thermometer for "Hispanics"). The results of these alternate tests are described below.

Across the other public opinion surveys that we examine, questions on immigration vary substantially. Earlier and later versions of the ANES address whether "immigration is a burden" and include a standard feeling thermometer toward "Hispanics." The NAES focuses on whether "the federal government should do more to restrict immigration," and the CCES asks about "spending on the border patrol." Despite substantial variation in the content of these questions, there is a consistency of findings. In each case, Latino- or immigrant-related views are significantly and substantively tied to partisan choices.

The main focus of this study is on partisanship and the vote. Our main measure of partisanship is the standard 7-point party identification scale. Respondents place themselves on a scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly Democratic*) to 7 (*strongly Republican*). To assess the robustness of our results, in alternate tests, we also direct our attention to party feeling thermometers, dummy variables isolating Democratic identifiers and Republican identifiers, and unordered party identification models (utilizing multinomial logistic regression).

We assess the vote in as many ways as possible. The ANES has the vote for presidential, congressional, senatorial, and gubernatorial contests. In the 2008 presidential contest, we focus primarily on a simple dummy variable

<sup>8</sup>In reality, Latinos make up only a little over half of all foreign-born Americans, and undocumented immigrants represent only about 28% of all the foreign born (Passel and Cohn 2009; U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Nevertheless, the majority of Americans believe that most immigrants are illegal (Enos 2012), and studies show that the issue of immigration is strongly bound with one group: Latinos. Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) and Valentino, Brader, and Jardina (2013) demonstrate that images of Latinos more than non-Latinos elicit more opposition to immigration, and Perez (2010) finds that implicit attitudes toward Latinos are highly predictive of opinions on immigration policy.

that indicates either a vote for the Democratic candidate (0) or a vote for the Republican candidate (1). In other contests with significant third-party candidates, we utilize an unordered 3-point scale (Democrat, Republican, third party). With the ANES, we can also assess the effects of Latino- and immigrant-related attitudes on intended vote choice and candidate feeling thermometers.

One of the most difficult aspects of this empirical endeavor is ensuring that we include controls for all of the different factors that could drive whites' electoral decisions and be correlated with white views on immigration (see Miller and Shanks 1996 for an overview of the partisan choice literature). In short, our empirical models have to incorporate key elements of American politics. With that in mind, we include measures for (1) *basic ideology*—the standard 7-point liberal-conservative self-placement scale; (2) *military action*—support for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and views on expanding the war on terrorism; (3) *retrospective evaluations*—presidential approval and assessments of the economy; (4) *redistribution* higher taxes for the rich and welfare spending; (5) *morality and religion*—views on homosexuality and the importance of religion; (6) *views of blacks*—Kinder and Sanders' (1996) four standard racial resentment questions; (7) *other racial attitudes/ethnocentrism*—standard feeling thermometers for “blacks,” “Asian Americans,” and “whites”; and (8) in alternate tests, *other issues* like universal health care, women's rights, the environment, abortion, crime, schools, and science and technology (see the online supporting information for question wording).<sup>9</sup>

Also, since partisan choices have been linked to class, religion, and other individual demographic characteristics, we control for education (number of years of school completed), household income (divided into 25 categories), gender, age in years, whether the respondent is unemployed, whether anyone in the household is a union member, marital status (married or not), and religious denomination (Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or Other). In alternate tests, we also account for self-identified class status, church attendance, whether the respondent is born again, and years living in the community. All told, we have controls for basic ideology, retrospective evaluations, a range of core issues, racial attitudes, and individual social characteristics—many if not all of the factors that are presumed to dominate the vote.

<sup>9</sup>These “other issues” are not included in the main model because they are asked of only half of the respondents.

## Views on Immigrants and Latinos and Partisanship

In Table 1, we begin to assess the connection between immigrant- or Latino-related views and partisanship.<sup>10</sup> The table displays a series of regressions that control for an increasing number of factors from sociodemographic characteristics to issue positions, ideological views, and racial attitudes—all purportedly central to partisan choice in America. Each model is an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, with the standard 7-point party identification scale as the dependent variable.

We start with a basic model that includes a traditional set of socioeconomic characteristics and other demographic variables. Given claims about class- and religious-based support for each party, we include basic markers of class (i.e., education, income, employment status, union membership) and a series of dummy variables measuring religious affiliation (Adams 1997; Layman and Carmines 1997; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2007). Model 1 suggests that many of these measures are important for partisanship, but more importantly, it shows that net basic demographic controls attitudes toward illegal immigration are closely linked to partisan attachments. All else equal, non-Hispanic whites who have more negative feelings toward illegal immigrants are predicted to be just over 1 point more Republican on the 7-point party identification scale than are whites with less negative views.<sup>11</sup> Given that a 1-point shift equals the difference between a strong Democrat and a weak Democrat, immigrant views could be greatly reshaping American politics.<sup>12</sup>

Political choices in America are obviously about much more than immigration or Latinos. There is little doubt that recent elections have focused significantly

<sup>10</sup>Simpler, bivariate tests show that views on immigrants are strongly and significantly correlated with not only partisanship ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ) but also the presidential vote ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ), the congressional vote ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ), and the senatorial vote ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ).

<sup>11</sup>For this and all other predicted probabilities reported in the article, estimates were calculated using Clarify, holding all other independent variables at their mean or modal value and varying the independent variable of interest plus or minus one standard deviation.

<sup>12</sup>To assess the robustness of these results, we repeated the tests in Table 1 with a range of different measures of immigrants and Latinos. Specifically, when we substituted a measure of feelings toward Latinos (a Hispanic feeling thermometer), a measure of feelings toward legal immigration (should immigration levels be increased or decreased), and a simpler measure of feelings toward illegal immigrants (an illegal immigrant feeling thermometer), all were significant in the regression model. Regardless of how we measure attitudes toward immigrants or Latinos, these attitudes are closely connected to party identification.

TABLE 1 Views on Immigration and White Partisanship, 2008 ANES

	Party Identification (High = More Republican)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Immigration				
Positive Views Toward Illegal Immigrants	−.61 (.09)**	−.24 (.09)**	−.22 (.09)*	−.19 (.09)*
Demographics				
Education	−.01 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.01 (.03)	.01 (.03)
Income	.04 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**
Unemployed	.16 (.33)	.22 (.29)	.25 (.29)	.29 (.29)
Age	−.08 (.04)*	−.05 (.03)	−.03 (.03)	−.07 (.04)
Female	−.20 (.14)	.06 (.12)	.04 (.12)	.03 (.12)
Married	.57 (.14)*	.14 (.12)	.14 (.11)	.16 (.12)
Union Member	−.53 (.21)*	−.51 (.16)**	−.52 (.17)**	−.54 (.17)**
Jewish	−1.30 (.52)*	−.23 (.42)	−.14 (.42)	−.31 (.42)
Catholic	.16 (.18)	−.09 (.16)	−.05 (.16)	−.11 (.16)
Protestant	.80 (.16)	.17 (.14)	.21 (.14)	.11 (.14)
Ideology				
Conservative		.62 (.05)**	.60 (.05)**	.61 (.05)**
Issue Positions				
War and Terrorism				
Expand War on Terror		.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)
Support War in Iraq		−.02 (.04)	−.02 (.04)	−.02 (.04)
Support War in Afghanistan		−.08 (.04)*	−.08 (.04)*	−.08 (.04)*
Economy/Retrospective				
Economy Improving		−.10 (.09)	−.09 (.09)	−.10 (.09)
Approve President		−.43 (.05)	−.42 (.05)	−.43 (.05)
Redistribution				
Favor Higher Taxes on Rich		−.14 (.06)*	−.12 (.06)*	−.15 (.09)*
Increase Welfare Spending		−.01 (.03)	−.02 (.03)	−.01 (.03)
Morality/Religion				
Favor Gay Rights		−.05 (.04)	−.06 (.04)	−.05 (.04)
Religion Important		.05 (.03)	.06 (.03)	.06 (.03)
Racial Resentment to Blacks				
Blacks Deserve Less			.17 (.07)*	
Blacks Get Special Favors			.12 (.06)*	
Little Discrimination			−.02 (.06)	
Blacks Should Try Harder			.03 (.06)	
Other Racial Considerations				
Warmth toward Blacks				−.81 (.52)
Warmth toward Asians				1.18 (.52)*
Warmth toward Whites				.59 (.43)
Constant	4.39 (.50)**	3.36 (.69)**	2.46 (.74)**	3.36 (.69)**
N	803	581	578	569
Adj. R-squared	.12	.60	.61	.61

Note: \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.



on America's ongoing economic recession, its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the enduring terrorist threat facing the nation, social morality issues like gay rights, and a core ideological dimension—liberalism versus conservatism (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2007; Fiorina 1981; Layman and Carmines 1997; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989). In Model 2, we incorporate each of these different elements in our model of party identification.

What we find confirms much of what we know about American politics. Most of these issues, the basic ideological orientation, and retrospective evaluations greatly influence which party individual Americans choose to support. What is striking, however, is that the inclusion of all of these different elements of American politics does not eliminate the impact of views on immigrants. Views of illegal immigrants still significantly shape white partisanship after controlling for a range of measures of issues, ideology, and retrospective evaluations.<sup>13</sup>

### **Immigrants and Latinos or Blacks and Ethnocentrism?**

One element of American politics that we have largely ignored to this point is the black-white divide. When race has mattered in American national elections, the main issue has usually been the rights and interests of African Americans (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Key 1984; Klinker and Smith 1999). Especially in 2008, with Barack Obama, the nation's first black presidential nominee on the ballot, and evidence that racial resentment played a role in the white vote, these kinds of racial attitudes need to be integrated into the analysis (Bobo and Dawson 2009; Lewis-Beck, Tien, and Nadeau 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010; but see Ansolabehere and Stewart 2009). Thus, in Model 3, we add four different questions from the racial resentment scale developed by Kinder and Sanders (1996) and included in most biannual editions of the ANES. All four measures explicitly ask about attitudes toward African Americans, and combined, the four

measures have been shown to play a critical role in white public opinion (Kinder and Sanders 1996).

The results in Model 3 indicate that the black-white divide remains significant in white partisanship. Whites who are more racially resentful of blacks are predicted to be 1.1 points more Republican on the party identification scale than are whites who are less resentful of blacks. But the results also suggest that immigration represents a distinct dimension that helps to shape white partisan ties. Even after considering the effects of racial resentment toward blacks, those who have more negative views of illegal immigrants continue to be significantly more apt to identify as Republican. Attitudes on immigration are not merely proxies for racial attitudes.

In the last model of Table 1, we further investigate the role of race and the possibility that immigrant-related views are a stand-in for some deeper aspect of America's racial dynamics like racial prejudice or ethnocentrism (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Kinder and Tam 2009). Specifically, we incorporate whites' views of African Americans, their views of white Americans, and their views of Asian Americans.<sup>14</sup> In each case, we utilize a basic feeling thermometer toward each group. Despite the inclusion of feelings toward the three different racial groups in the model, we still find that immigrant-related views are important for white partisanship. Whites with the most negative views of illegal immigrants are predicted to be one-third of a point higher on the 7-point party identification scale than are whites with the most positive views of illegal immigrants. The impact of immigration on American politics cannot be wholly reduced by incorporating traditional measures of stereotypes and ethnocentrism.<sup>15</sup>

One concern with the analysis that we have presented is the possibility of reverse causation. It is possible that party identification may impact rather than be impacted by immigrant-related views. Indeed, much of the literature in American politics suggests that party identification stands near the beginning of a funnel of causality that

<sup>13</sup>Moreover, alternate tests indicate that it does not matter which issues we include or how we measure issues, ideology, and retrospective evaluations. When policy questions on health care, crime, foreign aid, schools, women's rights, the environment, and science are added to the model, the impact of immigrant-related views on partisan attachments is largely unaffected. Further, immigrant-related views remain significant when we substitute alternate measures of economic policy preferences or retrospective evaluations. No matter what one's views on the economy, the war, abortion, and other factors, views of illegal immigrants are strongly associated with being a Republican.

<sup>14</sup>Since we believe that attitudes toward immigrants and Latinos are closely linked, we do not include a Latino feeling thermometer.

<sup>15</sup>In alternate tests, we also assessed different party-based dependent variables. Specifically, we examined feeling thermometers toward each party, dummy variables for identity with each party, and an unordered 3-point party identification scale (multinomial logistic regression model). In each case, views toward illegal immigrants remained significant and the effects were generally substantial. For example, all else equal, those with more positive views of immigrants scored 6 points higher on the Democratic Party feeling thermometer. Regardless of how one measures partisanship, it appears to be closely linked to views on immigration.

TABLE 2 Assessing Causality: Immigration’s Temporal Impact on Party Identification in 2009

	Model 1	Model 2
Party Identification in 2008 (High = Rep.)	.89 (.01)**	.68 (.03)**
Views on Illegal Immigrants in 2008 (High = Pro-Immig.)	-.03 (.01)*	-.09 (.03)**
Liberal–Conservative Ideology (High = Cons.)		.11 (.03)**
Favor Higher Taxes on the Rich		-.08 (.05)
Favor Banning Gay Marriage		.11 (.09)
Iraq War Positive		.12 (.09)
Terrorists Have No Rights		.11 (.05)*
Govt. Should Provide Health Care for All		-.01 (.05)
Income		-.00 (.01)
Education		.02 (.04)
Gender		.10 (.08)
Age		-.07 (.02)*
Unemployed		1.09 (.31)**
Constant	.21 (.06)**	.45 (.40)
N	1171	607
F	2603**	138**

Note: \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.

drives factors like issue positions (Campbell et al. 1960; but see Dancey and Goren 2010). We do not dispute that party identification is the prime mover in American politics, but we nevertheless maintain that deep-seated attitudes on immigration and race can shift the partisan leaning of some members of the population. In the ensuing pages, we test that proposition in several ways: (a) assessing the impact of immigrant views on vote choice *after* controlling for party identification; (b) looking separately at Democrats, Independents, and Republicans to see whether views on immigrants matter *within* each party; and c) focusing on aggregate data to see whether lagged immigration views predict subsequent changes in white macropartisanship.

But we begin with a more direct test of causality using ANES panel data. The basic idea is to determine whether past views on immigration predict current partisanship net the effects of past partisanship. In other words, do past views on immigration help predict future changes in party identification? We perform the first causality test on the 2008–2010 ANES panel. As the first model in Table 2 illustrates, there is a clear temporal link between immigrant views and partisanship. Views on immigration (measured by a question about whether illegal immigrants should be given a chance to become citizens) in 2008 have a significant effect on party identification measured in 2009 after controlling for party identification measured in 2008. Indeed, even after controlling for past partisanship, a one standard deviation shift in views of illegal immigrants is tied to about a one-quarter-point shift on the 7-point

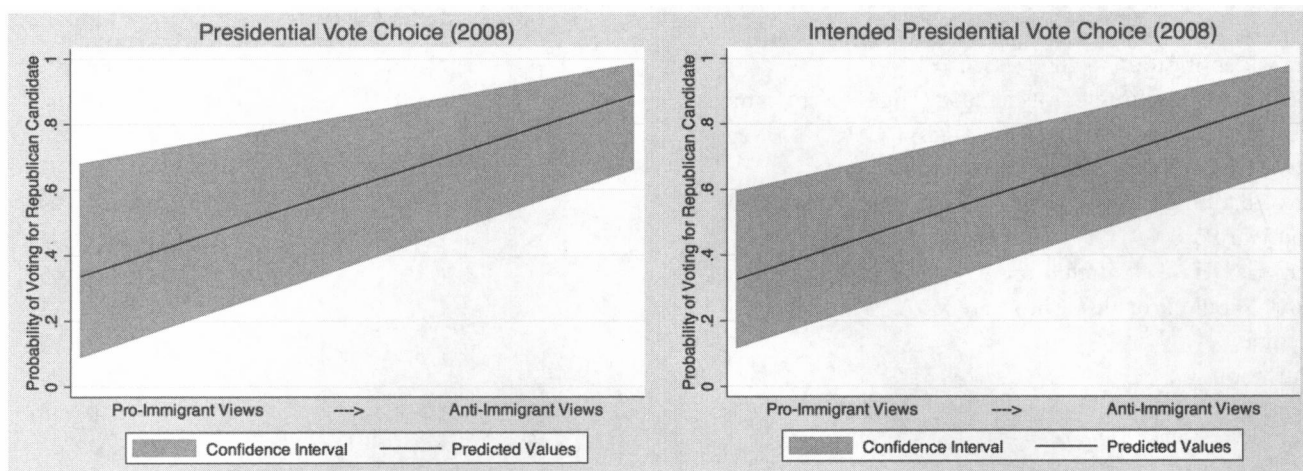
party identification scale. Attitudes on immigration are not leading to a wholesale shift from strong Democrat to strong Republican over the course of a year, but feelings about immigrants do appear to be leading to some very real changes in partisanship.<sup>16</sup> This is true whether we use the 2008 ANES panel or instead perform the test on the 1992–1996 or 2000–2004 ANES panels (see the online appendix supporting information).

Importantly, as the second model in Table 2 demonstrates, the influence of immigrant-related views on partisanship persists even when we control for past partisanship and a range of other major issues typically linked to partisanship.

Immigrant Views and the Vote

Are the rightward shifts that we see on partisan attachments accompanied by a shift to the right in national electoral contests? To answer this question, we analyze the vote in the 2008 presidential election (logistic regression). The dependent variable in each case is a dummy variable indicating support for the Republican candidate, McCain (1), or support for the Democratic candidate, Obama (0). In one regression, we focus on the reported vote of respondents queried after the election. In the second regression, we examine intended vote

<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it is important to note that by the same test, party identification does cause changes in immigrant-related views. The relationship between party identification and immigrant-related views is reciprocal.

**FIGURE 1 The Estimated Impact of Immigration Views on Vote Choice**

choice for those surveyed before Election Day. We include the same list of controls that we did earlier for party identification, with one exception. Since we are particularly interested in determining whether immigration has an effect on the vote that goes beyond party affiliation, we add the standard 7-point party identification scale to the list of controls. By including party identification in our vote models, we can conclude with some confidence that views on immigration have an independent effect that is not wholly driven by party identification. The regression results are displayed in the online supporting information. Figure 1 illustrates the effect of immigration on the presidential vote net all of the controls.

Figure 1 shows that how we think about immigrants is strongly related to the vote. As we saw before, whites with more negative attitudes toward illegal immigrants are significantly more likely to opt for Republican options. All else equal, more negative views of illegal immigrants are associated with a 23.7% increase in the probability of voting for John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate. The effect for intended vote choice is almost identical—a 22.9% increase in the probability of voting for McCain. Impressively, in an election that occurred in the midst of one of the nation's sharpest recessions in history, that coincided with two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and that included the nation's first black presidential nominee, views on immigrants still mattered.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>These results are robust to different ways of measuring the dependent variable. If we focus on feelings toward the Democratic and Republican candidates rather than on the vote itself, we once again find that more negative views of illegal immigrants are associated

To further test the role of immigrant and Latino views on the vote, we assessed the impact of immigrant-related views within each party. By looking *within* a party, we get another look at how attitudes toward immigration matter beyond partisanship. Among those who claim ties to the Democratic Party, views of illegal immigrants are significantly related to vote choice. The vast majority of Democrats vote for Obama, but those who have more negative views of illegal immigrants are 6.5% less likely to vote for Obama than those with more positive views of illegal immigrants. This is a small sign that immigration is pushing white Democrats away from their party. By contrast, the results indicate that views toward immigrants matter little for Republicans. This is, however, what we would expect to find if immigration is pushing whites in one direction—toward the Republican Party. Also as one might expect, views toward immigrants and Latinos have the largest impact on nonpartisans. White Independents who hold more negative views of immigrants are 67.7% more likely to vote for McCain than white Independents who hold more positive views of immigrants (see the analysis in the online supporting information).

### Views of Latinos and Immigrants in Other Elections

To make a general statement about the impact of immigration in American politics, we have to look more

with stronger, more positive feelings for the Republican side and less positive views of the Democratic option.



TABLE 3 Views on Latinos and the Vote—Alternate Measures—ANES Cumulative File

	Presidential Vote (Multinomial Logit)		Support for the Republican Candidate			
	Dem. vs. Ind.	Rep. vs. Ind.	Intended Pres. Vote	Vote for Congress	Vote for Governor	Vote for Senate
Immigration						
Views of Hispanics	−.67 (.62)	−1.41 (.61)*	−1.03 (.45)*	−.72 (.47)	−3.80 (1.35)**	.23(.39)
Demographics						
Education	.36 (.08)**	.30 (.08)**	−.07 (.07)	−.07 (.07)	−.03 (.15)	−.01 (.06)
Income	.01 (.06)	.04 (.06)	.03 (.05)	.02 (.05)	−.08 (.13)	.02 (.04)
Unemployed	−.06 (.37)	−.44 (.40)	.12 (.34)	−.45 (.38)	−2.0 (1.4)	−.38 (.34)
Age	.02 (.00)**	.01 (.05)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.00)*
Female	.32 (.15)*	.62 (.15)**	.09 (.12)	.33 (.13)**	.09 (.28)	.04 (.11)
Married	−.46 (.16)**	−.11 (.16)	.39 (.13)**	.30 (.13)*	.32 (.30)	.16 (.11)
Union Member	.35 (.19)	−.11 (.19)	−.64 (.15)**	−.56 (.15)**	−.56 (.36)	−.40 (.13)**
Jewish	.95 (.58)	.32 (.62)	−.43 (.39)	−.83 (.41)*	−.51 (.90)	−.90 (.37)**
Catholic	−.15 (.23)	.20 (.24)	.37 (.20)	.27 (.22)	.76 (.45)	.07 (.18)
Protestant	−.06 (.21)	.25 (.22)	.26 (.18)	.20 (.20)	−.45 (.43)	−.15(.11)
Ideology/Party > ID						
Conservative	−.25 (.06)**	.20 (.07)**	.35 (.05)**	.44 (.06)**	.19 (.13)	.24 (.05)**
Republican	−.54 (.05)**	.31 (.05)**	.84 (.03)**	.83 (.04)**	.65 (.09)**	.55 (.03)**
Issue Positions						
War and Terrorism						
More for Military	.09 (.06)	.38 (.06)**	.28 (.05)**	.29 (.05)**	−.01 (.11)	.14 (.04)**
Economy/Retrospective						
Economy Improving	−.45 (.08)**	−.48 (.08)**	.10 (.06)	−.03 (.06)	.22 (.15)	−.01 (.05)
Approve President	.13 (.08)	−.40 (.07)**	−.56 (.06)**	−.51 (.06)**	.24 (.15)	.07 (.05)
Role of Government						
More Govt. Services	.25 (.06)	.03 (.05)	−.22 (.05)**	−.27 (.05)**	−.01 (.11)	−.11 (.04)**
Favor Guaranteed Job	.00 (.05)	−.11 (.05)*	−.15 (.04)**	−.13 (.04)**	−.17 (.09)	−.12 (.04)**
Social Issues						
Favor Women’s Rights	.00 (.06)	−.15 (.05)**	−.09 (.04)*	−.15 (.04)**	−.23 (.10)*	−.14 (.04)**
Racial Considerations						
Warmth toward Blacks	.37 (.63)	.45 (.62)	.34 (.47)	.20 (.49)	2.79 (1.40)*	−.14 (.42)
Warmth toward Whites	.92 (.52)	1.36 (.51)**	.39 (.39)	.52 (.42)	.09 (.91)	−.20 (.34)
Constant	−59 (24)	−27 (24)	49 (18)**	36 (19)	−4.1 (1.5)**	
N	3674	3674	3406	470	2672	
Adj. R-/Pseudo R-squared	.47	.59	.60	.42	.34	

Note: \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.

broadly at a number of different presidential elections as well as across a range of different types of electoral contests. This is exactly what we do in Table 3. Specifically, we turn to the ANES cumulative file to assess the impact of immigration views on presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, and Senate contests. Since the ANES does not generally ask about views on illegal immigrants, we utilize a different measure for attitudes toward immigrants and

Latinos. The key independent variable here is the standard feeling thermometer toward Hispanics. Also, since policy questions vary from ANES year to year, we include a modified set of policy control variables (see the online supporting information). Our results suggest, once again, that how white Americans think about Latinos can be a central component of white Americans’ electoral calculations. Starting with the



first two columns, which display the results of a multinomial logistic regression with presidential vote choice (i.e., Democrat, Independent, Republican) as the dependent variable, we see that those who feel more warmly toward Hispanics are significantly less apt to choose Republican candidates for president. The third column, which displays the results for intended presidential vote choice (with a Republican vote as the dummy dependent variable), reconfirms the results. Again, more positive views of Latinos are significantly tied to Republican vote choice net party identification and a range of other controls. Moreover, the magnitude of the relationship is substantial. A two standard deviation negative shift in view of Hispanics is associated with a 9.8% increase in the probability of Republican vote choice in the multinomial model. For intended vote choice, the comparable figure is a 10.9% increase in Republican voting. And for recalled vote from the last election (analysis not shown), the figure is an 8.9% gain in Republican vote probability. Across a range of presidential elections—no matter how we measure vote choice—we see that attitudes toward Latinos are very much a part of vote choice.<sup>18</sup>

Importantly, the relationship is not isolated to presidential vote choice. As the rest of the columns demonstrate, white views of Latinos are significantly linked to gubernatorial vote choice and almost significantly tied to the congressional vote. Moreover, in gubernatorial contests, the magnitude of the relationship is large. All else equal, those who hold more negative views of Latinos are 35% more likely to favor Republican gubernatorial candidates. The one case where there is no apparent relationship is in senatorial contests.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Interestingly, feelings toward Asian Americans do not have the same effect. Across the vote and partisanship tables, feelings toward Asian Americans more often than not have no significant effects and in one case actually have positive effects on the Republican vote. Given that Asian Americans hold, on average, higher economic status than Latinos, given that stereotypes of Asian Americans are very different from stereotypes of Latinos (e.g., hardworking, intelligent, and foreign vs. poor, violent, and less intelligent), given that Asian Americans represent a much smaller share of the population than Latinos, and finally given that Asian Americans have only very recently sided in large numbers with the Democratic Party, it is unlikely that the Asian American population will spark the same political reaction as the Latino population (Bobo et al. 2000; Hajnal and Lee 2011).

<sup>19</sup>We endeavored to see whether there was any pattern over time or across space in the effects of immigration on partisanship and the vote. Looking across elections, years, and data sets, we could not discern a clear and consistent pattern. There is some suggestion that immigration mattered more often for statewide contests than it did for House elections. That might suggest that state-level dynamics are an important element of the immigration debate. And there is real variation in the impact of immigration on presidential contests. We found strong effects for all three presidential contests in the 21st

## Robustness Checks

To help ensure that the results to this point measure the underlying relationships between immigration-related views and white partisan choices, we performed a series of additional tests. First, we repeated as much of the analysis as possible with a number of different data sets. Using the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Surveys (NAES), we examined the link between immigrant-related views (e.g., should the federal government do more to restrict immigration and is immigration a serious problem) and party identification in 2000 and 2004, vote choice in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, and intended vote choice in presidential (2000 and 2004), Senate (2000), and House elections (2000). In every case except for Senate elections, after controlling for a range of factors that were purported to drive electoral behavior in that year, views on immigration remained robust, and in each case, more negative views of immigration led to substantially greater support for Republicans (see the online supporting information).

We then repeated the analysis with the 2010 and 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES).<sup>20</sup> Results from these large, Internet-based surveys demonstrate that there is an ongoing robust relationship between views on immigration and white partisanship, the presidential vote, the Senate vote, and the House vote in both years (see the online supporting information).<sup>21</sup>

Given claims that much of the instability in party identification comes from measurement error (Goren 2005; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990;), we looked to see whether immigration still predicted partisanship and vote choice after taking into account measurement error in party identification. Inserting latent measures of party identification did almost nothing to alter the results. Immigration still significantly predicted partisanship and vote choice net

century and more inconsistent effects in the 1990s and 1980s. This might hint at a growing role for immigration in American electoral politics. Finally, in terms of party identification, in the ANES cumulative file, we found a significant link between views of Hispanics and partisanship after 1990 and no significant link before 1990, again suggesting that the role of immigration on American politics may be increasing over time. But none of these differences are all that dramatic. We therefore offer no firm conclusions on patterns over time or across space (see the online supporting information for a more detailed description of this analysis).

<sup>20</sup>The CCES has three immigration-related questions. The analysis is robust to using a factor score of the three questions or simply inserting a question about increasing border patrols.

<sup>21</sup>Analysis of the 2010 CCES indicates that immigration also influences the vote for governor, state house, state senate, attorney general, and secretary of state, but the findings do not persist in 2012.

other factors (see the results in the online supporting information appendix).

The fact that views on Latinos and immigration mattered across different data sets, different elections, different measures of immigration-related views, different methods of measuring partisanship, and different sets of control variables greatly increases our confidence in the role that Latinos and immigration play in white politics.

**Immigration, Latinos, and the Aggregate Transformation of White Partisanship**

What our cross-sectional results have not yet demonstrated is the larger story of aggregate change over time. If the growth of the Latino or immigrant populations, the attachments of Latinos to the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Party’s support of immigrants’ rights and interests represent a threat to many white Americans that is pushing them to the right politically, then we should see a slow but steady shift in white party identification over time.

Figure 2 demonstrates that such a shift is occurring. According to the ANES, in 1980 white Democratic identifiers dominated white Republican identifiers (36% vs. 25%). But over the ensuing 30 years, that Democratic advantage has been totally reversed. By 2010, white Republicans greatly outnumbered white Democrats (36% vs. 29%)—a remarkably large and largely overlooked shift. A similar pattern exists for the vote.<sup>22</sup>

This kind of massive partisan shift is important, but does it have anything to do with immigration? Given a limited number of years and an almost endless array of events and issues that could be responsible for shifts in white partisanship over time, a comprehensive test of immigration’s role is close to impossible. However, we can offer a preliminary test that explores the causal link between attitudes on immigration and shifts in aggregate white partisanship. Specifically, we look to see whether aggregate views on immigration at one point in time predict changes in white macropartisanship in subsequent periods.

To do that, we combine data from the two different data sets that most regularly ask about attitudes on immigration (Gallup Poll) and partisanship (CBS News/New York Times Poll). To measure views on immigration, we use the question “Should immigration be kept at its

<sup>22</sup>In the 1980s, Democratic congressional candidates dominated the white vote, but by 2010, Republicans won 56% of the white vote.

**TABLE 4 The Impact of Aggregate Immigration Views on White Macropartisanship**

Lagged Macropartisanship (High = Rep.)	.39 (.15)*
Lagged Immigration Views (High = Pro-Immig.)	–.22 (.09)*
Constant	1.81 (.45)**
N	21
Adj. R-squared	.43

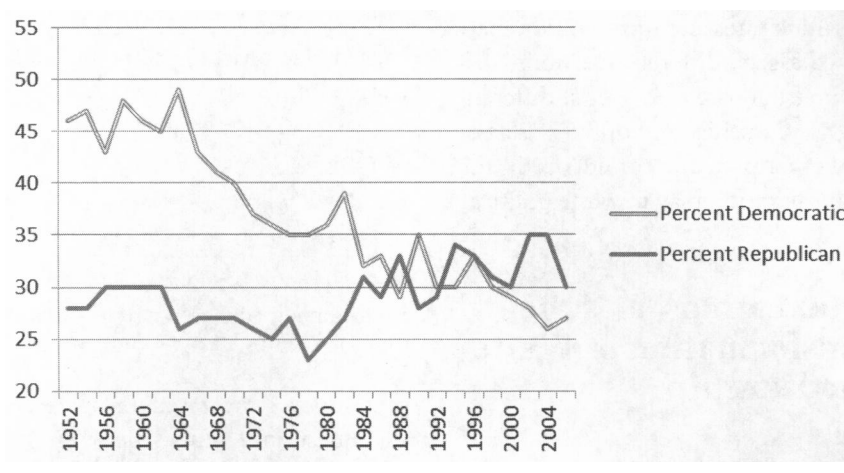
*Note:* \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.  
*Source:* Immigration views from Gallup Series, macropartisanship from CBS News/New York Times series.

present level, increased, or decreased?” Gallup has asked this question 21 times between 1993 and 2011. To get aggregate opinion, we subtract the portion that favors an increase from the portion that favors a decrease. Thus, higher values represent more support for immigration. We utilize the CBS News/New York Times standard 5-point party identification scale, with higher values equating to Republican identity, to measure white macropartisanship. In line with MacKuen et al. (1989) and others who study macropartisanship, we average the party identification score for all respondents in a given survey and then average across surveys in a given quarter of a given year.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the unit of analysis is the quarter.

As illustrated in Table 4, aggregate attitudes on immigration significantly predict future shifts in white macropartisanship. After controlling for past macropartisanship, we find that greater opposition to increased immigration nationwide is significantly linked to increases in Republican Party identity. The size of the effect is far from massive, but it is meaningful. A shift from the minimum level of support for immigration to the maximum level is associated with a little over a one-tenth of a point shift on the 5-point macropartisanship scale. Immigration is certainly not the only factor driving changes in white party identification, but it appears to be an important contributing factor.

Over-time analysis serves a second purpose in that it can help us establish the direction of the causal relationship between immigration attitudes and partisanship. When we reverse the test, we find that macropartisanship does not significantly predict changes in attitudes on immigration. Thus, we can conclude that views on immigration granger cause macropartisanship (see the online supporting information).

<sup>23</sup>There are 169 CBSNews/New York Times polls included. Average sample size per quarter is 3,729. Due to space limitations, we describe other details of the Gallup and CBS News/New York Times time series in the online supporting information.

**FIGURE 2 White Partisanship over Time**

It is also worth noting that we see the same pattern if we focus separately on the proportion of whites who identify as Republicans and the proportion who identify as Independents. More negative attitudes on immigration significantly predict increased Republican identity and increased Independence. All of these relationships persist if we control for presidential approval and unemployment—the two factors viewed as most important in shaping macropartisanship (MacKuen et al. 1989).<sup>24</sup> Finally, since we were concerned about the limited number of data points, we reran the analysis after incorporating data from every question in the Roper Center Archives that asks about the preferred level of immigration. Combining all of the different survey houses doubles the number of quarters for which we have immigration attitudes (42 quarters), but it also introduces considerable error, as each survey house uses different question wording and different samples. The results for this larger data set roughly mirror the results we see here (see the online appendix supporting information).

Obviously, much is going on in American politics over this time, and there is little doubt that many factors are contributing to the shift. But one can make a plausible case that the ongoing transformation of the United States by immigrants and Latinos helps to explain the partisan transformation of white America. And if that conjecture is true, one of the most significant developments in the last half century of American politics can be linked to the demographic and political changes that immigration has wrought in America.

<sup>24</sup> Alternative Prais and vector auto-regressive models lead to similar results. Table 5 has a one-quarter lag. Longer lags were insignificant.

## Discussion

The patterns illustrated in this article suggest that the nation's increasingly large and diverse immigrant population is having a real impact on the politics of white America. What is striking about these results is not that views about Latinos or immigrants matter. What is striking is how broad the effects are. In a political era in which many claim that the significance of race has faded, we find that Latino- or immigrant-related views are linked to a fundamental shift in the political orientation of many members of the white population. Party identification—the most influential variable in American politics—is at least in part a function of the way individual white Americans see Latinos and immigrants. So too is the vote in national contests for president and Congress. In short, who we are politically at our core is shaped substantially by deeply felt concerns about immigration and racial change. All of this suggests that immigration is different from and more influential than many other issues. Immigration matters so much not only because it is salient, symbolic, and until recently a crosscutting issue, but perhaps even more critically because it is changing the group imagery associated with the two major parties. As immigration increasingly affects the country, what it means to be a Democrat and what it means to be a Republican is changing.

What is also clear from this pattern of results is that the Latino population has become a more central factor in American race relations. In American history, when race mattered, it was more often than not driven by a black-white dynamic. That may no longer be true today. The increasing visibility of immigration and its widespread



impact on the nation's economic, social, cultural, and political spheres appear to have brought forth a real change in the racial dynamics of our politics. Blacks still matter, but when we talk about the role of race in American politics, we have to talk about the fears and concerns that a growing Latino population provokes.

Much remains to be explained, however. We have shown that immigration is a central factor in the politics of white America. But we have not clearly demonstrated why. More work needs to be undertaken to try to uncover exactly how and why changes in the demographics of this country translate to changes in electoral behavior. Are cultural factors driving white views, or are economic factors more central in this process (Citrin et al. 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Kinder and Kam 2012; Pettigrew, Wagner, and Christ 2007; Quillian 1995; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Schildkraut 2011)? Second, how are these cultural or economic concerns triggered in the political arena? Is it the rhetoric of Democratic and Republican leaders, the tone of media coverage, or the actions and the political progress of Latinos and other immigrants (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Hopkins 2010)? Finally, where and by whom are the political effects of immigration most deeply felt? Some Americans live in areas where there is little evidence of immigration and racial diversity, and others live in neighborhoods, cities, and states that have been dramatically reshaped. That uneven transformation means that the salience of America's immigrant transformation and any perceived threat posed by a growing immigrant population will likely vary across different geographic contexts. Immigration is also likely to matter for certain types of individuals. Immigration is likely to be especially threatening for those Americans who are less well educated and thus more likely to experience far greater direct competition with low-skilled immigrants for jobs and public services. One could also theorize about the role of racial intolerance in shaping white responses to immigration. White Americans who are more racially intolerant may be especially sensitive to the kinds of changes that immigration is bringing to America (Citrin et al. 1997; Kinder and Kam 2012). One could also imagine other mediating factors such as age, industry, or religion. And on the other end of the spectrum, there are many Americans who welcome immigration and the changes it produces. The larger question then becomes, for whom does immigration matter more?<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Preliminary tests revealed few clear and consistent interaction effects between attitudes on immigration and any of these different individual characteristics. There were, however, some signs that Latino context played an important role. Whites in states with a higher concentration of Latinos tended to be more likely to identify as Republican and vote Republican. This should perhaps not come

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as a surprise given that studies have already found that whites tend to feel increasingly threatened as the size of the Latino population grows (Ayers, Hofstetter, and Kolody 2008; Newman 2013). Nevertheless, much more work needs to be done before any conclusions should be made about variation in the effects of immigration on American politics.



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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

**Assessing Temporal Causality: Immigration's Impact on Subsequent Changes in Party Identification (1993)**  
**Assessing Temporal Causality: Immigration's Impact on Subsequent Changes in Party Identification (2004)**  
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