

Threat Perception and Attitudes Toward Documented and Undocumented Immigrants in the United States: Framing the Debate and Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

The article summarizes the literature on perceived threat from legal and illegal immigration in the USA showing an increasing gap between immigration policies and opinions of the native populations. The threat to cultural and national identity is discussed, and a labor competition model advanced. Economic frustration plays a role in the hardening of attitudes. The isolation of immigrants in ghettos bodes ill for the future of integration of immigrants into society. The reemergence of nationalistic movements have coincided with large-scale immigration and poses a perceived threat to the native population from cultural heterogeneity. Individual attitudinal differences derive from relative rightwing authoritarianism and the desire for social dominance. Conflict resolution is dependent on the frames used of the immigrant as a lawbreaker or victim of exploitation. Solutions from the political right emphasize control and economic benefits of cheap labor. Solutions from the left promote economic development in source countries, and the human rights of economic and political refugees.

Keywords: Immigration, threat, attitudes, ideology, framing.

Threat: The Context of Immigrant Attitudes

The history of immigration to the United States during the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by highly restrictive attitudes toward both legal and illegal immigration (DeLaet, 2000). In the 1940's a gradual process of loosening up of immigration quotas began to occur dominated by requirements of cold war policies. In the 1950's American opponents to immigration began to demand a decline in the levels of new arrivals. However, it is the liberalization of immigration in the past two decades that has caused a crisis of confidence in the U.S. government that many Americans now see as dysfunctional, and a collateral crisis in Europe. As millions of legal and additional millions of illegal immigrants have come across the borders of the U.S. public opinion polls show that Americans have become more restrictionist (Harwood, 1986; Lapinsky, Peltova, Shaw, & Yang, 1997). However, the government has not implemented restrictionist policies for several reasons including the need to welcome refugees from endless warfare, the strong lobbying of immigrant rights groups, and public ambivalence toward the plight of immigrants. Ambivalence toward immigrants is a consequence of the U.S. being an immigrant nation, and many respondents to surveys would have been immigrants themselves or directly related to immigrants in the recent past.

Although more recent data show slightly more favorable attitudes toward immigrants (Mizrahi, 2005) a plurality of respondents still believe that immigration levels should be reduced, and majorities believe in the strict limitation of immigrants. On the whole, Mizrahi contends, the trend over the past forty years is toward reduced public support for immigration.

The perceived threat from immigration is increasing in the United States The city of Riverside in New Jersey recently passed an ordinance (Kronholz, 2006) to bar undocumented immigrants from holding a job or renting an apartment. That move shows an increasing trend by local government authorities to take steps in responding to what many believe is a social crisis of deepening proportions. The failure of the U.S. Congress to halt illegal immigration has encouraged state legislators to introduce more than 550 bills principally seeking to control undocumented immigration. City councils are also reacting to what their constituents perceive as an increasing threat to the very fabric of society and American national identity. The low esteem that most Americans have for their national leaders is partly a consequence of a widening gap between the views of the average members of society and national leaders on the perceived threat of immigration in general and undocumented immigration in particular (Kronholz, 2006).

Polls are increasingly reporting a hardening of attitudes against immigrants, even those who arrive through legal channels (Espenshade & Hampstead, 1996). Almost half of U.S. respondents when asked what bothers them about immigration cite threats to custom's and values. The lack of will by the government to deal with the undocumented immigrant issue stems in part from lobbying by big business who use the immigrants as a source of cheap labor (Borjas, 1999). Immigration, whether legal or undocumented, is construed by many US citizens as a threat in the competition over jobs in a decreasing labor market. Vigilante groups have sprung up as exemplified by the yearlong Minuteman Civil Defense organization that has tried to apprehend the undocumented who cross illegally at the border with Mexico. The statistics about immigration are sobering as the foreign born population of the United States grew from 7.9 % in 1990 to 11.1 percent in 2000. The legal foreign-born population in the United States was 31.1 million residents in the year 2000, and in 2002 1,063,732 were admitted into the country with over 40 percent coming from Spanish speaking nations (US Department of Homeland Security, 2003).

Language is a central component of national identity and culture Groups serve important functions in providing identity, stability, and feelings of inclusion for members of society. Social Identity Theory is a motivational explanation for prejudice and discrimination. The self-concept derives partly from personal efforts and achievements, but also from the status of the groups to which we belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When any part of that collective identity is threatened, people will and do respond with anger and discrimination. Extreme nationalism and ethnocentrism are motivated by the desire to elevate and boost the in-group at the expense of hapless victims. People who take

strong pride in their group identity also are more likely to favor the in-group (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Ommundsen, 2001), and react to any real or implied criticism of the in-group as if that criticism is directed toward the self (McCoy & Major, 2003).

The social psychological literature, point to perceived out-group homogeneity effect as a factor in sustaining prejudice. In-group members are seen as more variable in customs and beliefs whereas members of out groups are perceived as similar (Wilder, 1984). For example people in the West will often see Islamic groups as all cut from the same cloth, even though in reality there are historical differences that go back to centuries of conflict within the broader Muslim community (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992; Park & Judd, 1990). Since we have more contact with in-group members we have a greater opportunity to see individual variations in behavior. For the evaluation of members of out-groups we rely on common stereotypes, which as the minimal group design experiments show are generally negative and easily triggered (e.g. Doise, Csepele, Dann, Gouge, Larsen, & Ostell, 1972).

Language can function as one of the most potent symbols of social identity and group belongingness (e.g. Giles & Johnson, 1981). The use of language is at the core of the debate about the perceived threat to American culture (Lapinski et al, 1997). The debate over the use of the English language entered the political arenas with Propositions 187 and 227 in California aimed at making it the official language of the state. The strong support that these political efforts received from voters' show that the threats to cultural identity is shaping voters opinions about immigration. By increasing numbers (48 percent in 1995) Americans believe that English is the only language that should be used in the educational system (Lapinski et al, 1997).

Public opinion is growing increasingly negative toward immigration since it is seen as a threat to cultural identity, beliefs and values (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001). For many people the English language is a *sine qua non* for what it is to be an American, and therefore language frames the debate on related issues like bilingual education and immigration policy (Citrin, Haas, Muste, & Reingold, 1994). To preserve cultural identity most Americans are willing to use their tax money to teach immigrants English supporting this in a national survey by 74 percent for English language education for adults, and by 79 percent for children (Garcia & Bass, 2007).

Proposition 187 was directed primarily against Mexican immigrants and sought to deprive the undocumented of welfare benefits, education, and allowing for only emergency medical care. The proposition also sought to make deportation more efficient. Prejudice against Mexicans is fueled by the perception that illegal immigrants are a threat to the U.S economy (Lee, Ottati, & Hussain, 2001). Much of the current literature on race relations describes variables predicting racism toward Black people. However, in order to understand the opposition to the integration of immigrants, racist attitudes must be studied in all minority groups (Houvouras, 2001). The results of the Houvouras study showed that prejudice toward Blacks follow a different pattern than Anti-Latino bias. Opposition to bilingual education was linked to prejudice toward Latino people.

Cultural identity provides stability and a sense of security in a rapidly changing world. The massive influx of immigrants over the past several decades threaten to dissolve that identity, and for many people the sense of continuity with the past and the future. When immigrants insist on speaking a different language from the host nation, this is seen as disrespect for cultural and national identity. Yet cultural segregation is what migration has produced in many cases as exemplified by the ethnic ghettos established in various countries that are defined by language and religion. The wearing of religious garb further underscores the estrangement of the immigrant from the host people, and therefore also fuel anti-immigrant attitudes. There are places in the United States today where people can spend their entire lives without engaging the host language. The pendulum has swung so far in the United States that typically phone messages are bilingual with Spanish a second prompter. Service calls are often handled by overseas call centers where the speakers respond in heavily accented English incomprehensible to many. These forces together have made cultural conflict seem inevitable and immigration a continual burning issue for the majority of Americans.

The labor competition model also measures perceived threat Realistic group conflict theory considers prejudice and discrimination to be the outcome of competition over limited resources. All religious, cultural or political groups have the capacity to develop prejudice and engage in discrimination toward those who threaten vital interests. It is called realistic conflict theory because the conflict is over real economic differences of interest (Levine & Campbell, 1972). The theory predicts that prejudice and discrimination is strongest among those who stand to lose the most from the competitive interaction. In the United States the most prejudicial anti-Black attitudes were found in the white working class in the aftermath of the civil rights struggle (Simpson & Yinger, 1985). It was among that working class that jobs were most at risk once millions of Blacks were allowed to freely compete for limited jobs. Today many see a similar job threat from the large numbers of immigrants, both legal and illegal, that have entered the United States and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in Europe.

Immigrants are convenient targets when people are frustrated and the economy delivers social insecurity. As we know from the classic Hovland and Sears study (1940) frustrations may lead to aggression against totally innocent victims. Immigrants constitute minority groups in all societies and their victimization fit into the frustration and aggression paradigm. In a more recent analysis of lynching data Hepworth and West (1988) found that when the economy went sour in the Southern part of the U.S. more whites were also lynched along with Black people. When people are frustrated they look for convenient targets that are less likely to or unable to retaliate. In past history of the world victims of social frustration included members of racial groups, religious minorities, and political parties. Today generalized aggression focuses on the culturally foreign that is seen as a threat to people's jobs and future.

A recurring theme in the U.S. debate over immigration is the assertion that immigrants, legal or illegal, are taking jobs away from native-born workers. This has been a potent argument over the last decades as more and more jobs are shifted overseas as factories have closed in the United States. Service centers for major US companies are often staffed with workers from India or other Third World countries, and most American toys, cars, and appliances are now manufactured overseas. In the competition for jobs not all are equal, and the weight of social dislocation has fallen disproportionately on the less educated and skilled. It should not be a surprise therefore that people with more education, higher incomes, and higher social status see less threat from current policies (Espenshade & Hemstead, 1996; Lapinski, et al 1997; Simon, 1985). However, Americans who are low wage and low skill workers compete directly with immigrants in the decreasing job market in the United States (Borjas & Freeman, 1992; Oliver & Mendelberg, 2001). Those whose economic lives are threatened resent the use of public money for immigrants when they themselves are offered no such assistance.

Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong (1998) argued that fundamental competition over real economic resources determine negative attitudes toward immigrants. The authors developed a model termed an instrumental model of group conflict in which perceptions of scarcity, unequal distribution, and desire for unequal distribution all play a role. In other words attitudes toward immigrants are consequences of a perceived zero-sum game where greater access to resources by one group means less for the individual and his group. In turn the model requires a relevant out-group based on their salience and potential threat. Obviously those who share similar skills and access to resources are going to be seen as more threatening than others. The resulting anxiety leads to attempts to remove the competition, for example by limiting or eliminating immigration.

According to Esses and her colleagues (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; Esses, Jackson, Nolan, & Armstrong, 1999) perceived economic competition is not only a correlate to, but also a determinant of negative attitudes toward immigrants. In an experimental study of Canadian respondents those who read an article on job competition were more negative toward a fictitious immigrant group and toward immigration in general. In another study in Switzerland (Falomir-Pichastor, Manuel, Munoz-Rojas, Invernizzi, & Mugny, 2004) the experimenters manipulated threat by telling respondents of a relationship between immigration and unemployment of native-born Swiss. Those who perceived a high level of threat to jobs were more negative toward immigrants.

The evidence shows that respondents with more education and higher socio-economic status hold more favorable attitudes toward increasing immigration (Simon & Alexander, 1993; Sorensen & Krahn, 1996). Those with more education also have more favorable attitudes toward immigrants (Day, 1990; Hoskins & Mishler, 1983). Since most ethnic minorities in the U.S. live in lower socioeconomic conditions when compared to the native majority it stands to reason that they experience more threat from immigrants who compete for the same jobs. This extension of the labor market competition theory was supported in several studies (Jarret, 1999; Smith & Edmonston, 1997). Garcia and Bass (2007) showed that while non-white U.S. citizens were more likely to support the use of other languages in education, they did not support the use of public funds to teach immigrants English. Again the perceived threat is that English training would give the immigrants a competitive advantage for scarce jobs. Favoring the use of other languages in education may be a sympathetic reflection of the minority person's own marginal status, but using public funds for English language education would provide direct aid to those who compete for the minority person's livelihood.

It may not be economic threat alone that determines attitudes toward immigration. Education appears as the major intervening variable. For example in one study 81 percent of those with only a grade school education favored putting a stop to immigration compared to only 44 percent of college graduates who felt that way (Simon, 1985). Mizrahi (2005) also found that education mattered (but not income level) in determining positive attitudes toward immigrants. Studies in European countries tend to support the importance of education as more positive attitudes are found among those with higher levels (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Marks, 2001; Pettigrew, 1998).

The job competition theory argues that the threat of competition over low skill jobs fuel anxiety and the perceived threat of many Americans. Is the threat real? One study (Sum, Harrington, & Khatiwada, 2006) reported that immigrants, legal and undocumented, were displacing young native workers. They reported that between the years 2000 and 2005 employment for native-born workers declined by 1.7 million while new young immigrant workers increased by 1.9 million. The perceived job competition threat has a realistic basis in the displacement of young American workers. Others (Friedberg & Hunt, 1999; Rajman & Tienda, 1999) suggest however, that immigrants do not significantly impact wages of native born American workers. Threat should be less salient as recent evidence (Rajman & Tienda, 1999) reports less unemployment among immigrants and a widening wage gap in favor of native born workers. A similar trend has been found for Canadian workers (Reitz, 2001).

Nevertheless it is not surprising that those who object to immigration come from social sectors low in skill level and who compete directly with the undocumented immigrant. Those respondents who perceive their skill level to be superior to immigrants favor a continuation of current immigration levels, but those who view immigration as a threat to their livelihoods oppose (Meyda, 2006).

Proximity and the contact hypothesis. We have known for a long time that physical nearness predicts liking and acceptance. The classic study on proximity was published by Festinger, Schacter, & Back in 1950. That study was carried out in a large apartment complex called Westgate West where the residents were asked, "Which three people in Westgate do you see most often?". The results showed that the closer people lived the more likely they were to be friends. The proximity effect has been demonstrated in several other studies (e.g. Baum & Davis, 1980; Latané, Liu, Nowak, Bonevento, & Zheng, 1995). The reason that friendships are more likely within short physical or functional distance is obvious. People who live close by are available for interaction, and it takes less effort to start and maintain such relationships. Long distance relationships take more effort and more planning in order to be functional.

Cognitive dissonance has also been employed to explain the proximity effect. It is psychologically distressing to associate with people we don't like, so to reduce dissonance we make extra efforts to like neighbors. In fact even the anticipation of interacting with someone increases liking (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976). Other studies have shown that simple familiarity

increases liking (Zajonc, 2001). Probably familiarity makes the interaction more predictable, and therefore less threatening.

Is the proximity effect useful in predicting opinions about immigrants? In one large scale survey (America's Immigration Quandary, 2007) the researchers found that people who lived in areas of high immigrant concentration generally have more favorable opinions, and saw the immigrants as less of a burden to society, and less of a threat to traditional American customs and values. The proximity effect is a strong argument against the establishment of racial and ethnic ghettos since segregation allow for the blooming of negative stereotypes that are central to threat perception. This study also found more negative opinions among those who struggled financially and the less educated. These findings fit well with the job competition theory and the perceived threat of immigrants taking away low skilled jobs.

The proximity affect is related to the contact hypothesis, which supports the idea that positive interactions between groups gradually erode prejudicial attitudes. Yet among white respondents a stubborn resistance continues toward policies that might rectify the accumulated consequences of racial discrimination (Durrheim & Dixon, 2004; Ihlanfeldt & Scafidi, 2004). In other words few whites oppose racial equality as a principle, but nevertheless remain opposed to preferential programs like affirmative action or compensatory programs for Blacks. Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux (2007) examined this gap between racial beliefs and opposition to compensatory practices in a South African sample of both white and Black participants. The results showed that the more the contact between two races the greater the white support for restitution for Blacks from the affects of apartheid. However, for Blacks a small but significant opposite affect occurred suggesting the complexity of interracial relations.

Threat perception is central to negative opinions about immigrants Public opinion about immigration in the United States is becoming increasingly negative. The majorities of those surveyed say that illegal immigration is a serious problem. Further, the majority in the U.S. favors a reduction in legal immigration levels, and demand severe penalties for those who use false identification to stay in the country. The U.S. government is perceived as largely dysfunctional in its response to undocumented immigration since cheap labor is good for the bottom line of big business. Poll majorities are demanding more government involvement in the deportation of those in the country without documentation (Negative People Growth Poll, 2003). Similar results were obtained in the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press Poll (2006). Immigration, legal and illegal, is increasingly worrying the American people. Growing numbers of respondents believe that immigrants are a burden to society. Immigrants are also seen as taking housing away from the native born, and are thought to strain the health care system.

One way to examine threat perception is to examine cover images from popular magazines over the past decades (Chavez, 2001). The research examined every magazine cover that dealt with immigration including such popular journals as Time, Newsweek and the Nation. He categorized each cover as belonging to either an immigration affirmative category, an alarmist category, or as being neutral. Results showed that during the 1970's affirmative covers slightly outnumbered the alarmist, however from the 1970's through the 1990's the alarmist covers became steadily more prominent, and eventually accounted for about 75 % of all covers on immigration.

Are immigrants a threat to U.S. health care system? It is commonly believed that illegal immigrants use the emergency services extensively since many have no health insurance. In a study conducted in an emergency department (Chan, Krishel, Bramwell, & Clark, 1996) the researchers found that 80 percent of those asking for care were undocumented immigrant patients, 64 percent had no insurance, 51 percent knew of no other location to get care, and 44 percent thought that the emergency department was the only location acceptable for medical care. Among many respondents there is a growing conviction that the undocumented place an undue burden on society, and they want to restrict access to these services. Since the United States already has some 47 million plus citizens

without health care insurance, undocumented immigrants' taking more of people's remaining medical access away is perceived as a significant threat.

The threat to cultural values and national identity The world has changed dramatically over the past two decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union and dismemberment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were partially caused by the unexpected reemergence of nationalistic movements (Madrano & Koenig, 2005). These movements have enjoyed a measure of political support and success while the world is becoming ever more heterogeneous. Cultural heterogeneity is not to the liking of all as many people see the phenomena as a threat to established values and identity. A major consequence of cultural heterogeneity is social unrest that we have observed in various countries as immigration pose a perceived increased threat to established values. Diverse policies have been adopted in different nations to confront the challenge of immigration, and many observers see cultural assimilation as the only useful answer over the long run. At the same time immigrants have, frequently by desire or lack of choice, congregated into areas that can only be described as ghettos. Such segregated immigrants continue to be perceived as foreign and as potential threats to the cohesion of the nation.

Many politicians who have used their offices to fan the flames of discontent consider the threats to cultural values to be real. In Japan political leaders often describe undocumented immigrants as criminals thereby supporting official Japan's prejudicial activities (Shipper, 2005). Japanese attitudes toward immigrants remain mixed with state actors often inciting xenophobic attitudes. Many people in the United States also believe that immigrants are changing society in ways they do not approve or like (NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Immigration Survey, 2004). The so-called Christian right has tried to create moral panic on a variety of issues among which undocumented immigration is seen as a force undermining America (Cline, 2007).

Intergroup threat is central to the attitudes and opinions toward immigrants, legal or undocumented, of many people in a variety of countries. Riek, Mania, & Gaertner (2006) completed a qualitative meta-analysis on studies on attitudes and immigration and found that perceived threat is the major relationship linked to negative out-group attitudes. Another survey (The Open Press Poll, 2007) found that a majority of Americans favor the expeditious deportation of illegal immigrants.

The conception of a given nation determines whether citizens perceive a threat from immigrants. Broadly there are two different conceptions of the nation state. The civic nation emphasizes the value of political institutions like liberal democracy, while placing less importance on the role of ancestry and history. On the other hand the ethnic nation conception is strongly influenced by ancestral myths and historical legacy. In one study (Heath & Tilley, 2005) the researchers assessed the role of these aspects of national identity and found that the strongest predictor of negative attitudes toward immigrants were found in those respondents who felt that both the ethnic and civic aspects were important to national identity in order to be "truly British". Those respondents who valued both components in Britain wanted to reduce the number of immigrants, remove illegal immigrants, were racially prejudiced, and did not strongly support anti-discrimination laws. On the other hand those who conceived of the nation in only civic terms were more favorable toward multiculturalism. Previous research had also shown that those who conceive of the nation in only civic terms tended to be younger, suggesting that the ethnic conception of the nation state may gradually become less important in Britain. Since the U.S. is largely a civic-based immigrant nation one may ask what factors still work against the public seeing a virtue in multiculturalism and "openness to the other" (Fowers & Davidov, 2006) and hence entertaining a less xenophobic attitude towards immigrants in the future.

The contradiction of many societies is the celebration of diversity combined with feelings that too much diversity may be harmful. Markus, Steele, & Steele (2000) found that white students tended to support assimilation whereas minority students supported multiple perspectives and diversity. It obviously serves some self-interest that white students would like minorities to support their values, whereas these minorities want tolerance and respect for their own perspectives on life. Nevertheless immigrant diversity in Switzerland is seen as a threat to the integrity of the cultural values of the native population, and such identity threat is the major factor in the negative attitudes toward the foreign born

by the native Swiss population (Falomir-Pichastor, Manuel, Munoz-Rojas, Invernizzi, & Mugny, 2004). In fact when respondents are asked to focus on differences between groups, the request framed the negative responses (Zarate, Garcia, Garza, & Hitlan, 2004). When Texas students were similarly primed for differences they were also more negative in their judgments of Mexican immigrants. Likewise in European studies, value threat is also found to be an important factor in immigrant attitudes (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Marks, 2001). Immigrant restriction is favored by those who see immigrants as encroaching on cultural values and way of life.

Religiosity and attitudes toward immigrants. Many religious leaders have spoken out strongly in favor of immigrant rights. Have these thoughts from the pulpit had any effect on those who worship? Research shows that large segments of various religions have serious concerns about immigrants and immigration policies (Smith, 2006). This disparity between religious leaders and their followers remain even after controlling for socio-economic differences including income, gender, and race. Non-Hispanic Catholics, mainstream protestants, and evangelicals resemble majority public opinions that immigrants threaten American customs and values. Evangelicals especially have concerns as 63 percent see immigrants as constituting threats to cultural values. Fifty-two percent of the public believe that immigrants are an economic burden to the country, a view shared by majorities of the three major religious groups including more than 60 percent of the evangelicals. Overall the research shows that seculars have the most positive view of immigrants although that view is also gradually changing in the viewing of immigrants as an economic burden.

For most church members religion serve primarily conformity functions, the church is a venue of social support and comforting rituals. For the more active church goers genuine piety may supplant these conformist strivings and affect attitudes. In fact the Smith (2006) study shows that church members who are more committed are also less negative toward immigrants. In fact frequency of church attendance turns out to be a significant predictor of favorable views toward immigrants. We therefore can observe the ironic result that the most religious committed tend to be more similar in attitudes to the secular minded as compared to less committed religious people.

Individual differences in perceived threat: The role of rightwing authoritarianism

As early as the 1950's researchers established the relationship between fascistic mentality and prejudice. The authoritarian personality was described in terms of exaggerated submission to authority and conformity to conventional standards. At the same time authoritarians displayed significant hostility toward social deviants of any type, and punitiveness toward members of minority groups (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). In more recent years we see researchers renewing an interest in rightwing authoritarianism since it seems be strongly related to prejudice toward racial and ethnic groups. Authoritarians feel hostility toward a bewildering array of social victims including those suffering from AIDS (Larsen, 1989), the drug user, and the homeless (Altemeyer, 1988; Peterson, Doty, & Winter, 1993). Authoritarians also favor mandatory sterilization for some groups (Larsen, 1976). It is a common belief today that these attitudes have developed as a consequence of social learning, and to reverse the hostility it is important to supply esteemed models of tolerance (Peterson & Lane, 2001).

Some of the early research on victimization also showed a role for displaced aggression. People who are angry at social frustrations often do not target the source of their anger but rather find substitute targets. These alternative targets include people who are not only vulnerable but have less ability to retaliate. Can the values of authoritarians modify their attitudes toward immigrants? One study (Oyamot, Borgida, & Fisher, 2006) found that rightwing authoritarianism was negatively related to positive evaluations of immigrants and correlated with indifferent egalitarian beliefs. The study also showed that when the social norms rejecting immigrants are less clear, endorsement of egalitarian beliefs by authoritarians influence their attitudes and they become more positive toward immigrants. The encouragement of negative attitude toward immigrants is fueled by existing negative stereotypes. The findings of Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola (1997) showed that negative stereotypes about illegal

immigrants, racist attitudes toward Mexican-Americans, and a deficit in humanitarian values were all significant correlates of attitudes toward illegal immigrants.

Social dominance theory. Other relevant theories emerging from social psychology include theories based on intergroup competition. For example realistic group conflict theory mentioned above asserts that competition for resources and power is a major cause of prejudice (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). However, others showed that it is not the actual competition that matters, but rather relative deprivation, how we perceive of our outcomes relative to others (Sears & McConahy, 1973). Prejudicial attitudes develop in dominant groups from the perception of threat to their privileged status (Bobo, 2000). Societies have historically developed hierarchies whether based on inheritance or merit. An ideology that sustains prejudice is based on the view that societies with stable hierarchies produce evolutionary success. Social dominance orientation has strong effects on racial and ethnic prejudice in members of the dominant group in society (Duckitt, 2003). In order to maintain the existing social hierarchy the dominant groups promote ideologies that justify existing inequality. For example, many people attribute the lower educational levels and socioeconomic status of immigrants to inherent racial deficits (Klugel, 1990).

Beliefs in a dominance hierarchy can be assessed as an individual disposition. Sidanius & Pratto (1999) defined the social dominance orientation as the value that people place on nonegalitarian and hierarchically structured relationships. By using their scale they were able to identify those who support social hierarchies. In research conducted in both the United States and Canada, Esses and her colleagues (Esses, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2002) found a strong negative relationship between social dominance orientation and attitudes toward immigration. Essentially those who hold strong social dominance beliefs also believe in zero-sum outcomes in competition with immigrants. In short the gains of immigrants are seen as a loss to the native population. That view seems a contradiction with the dominant “rugged individualism” ideology of U.S. society that holds that outcomes are the consequences of one’s own efforts (Kleugel & Smith, 1986).

Authoritarianism and social dominance. In another U.S. study (Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielman, 2005) the researchers sought to link authoritarianism and social dominance. The authors suggested that rightwing authoritarianism had its origin in the conservation versus openness to the changing of values, whereas social dominance was related to needs for self-enhancement. The results also showed that for rightwing authoritarians the perceived threat of Islam is motivated by needs for control and security. Since rightwing authoritarianism and social dominance related equally to self-enhancement the two variables appear only partly different. Whether motivated by insecurity or self-enhancement, rightwing authoritarianism and social dominance both require scapegoats and victims. Other research (Danso, Sedlovskaya & Suanda, 2007) has shown that challenging people’s beliefs about immigration produce even more negative attitudes toward immigrants, especially among respondents high in social dominance. Trying to include immigrants in the in-group does not modify preexisting bias. What seems to work more is focusing attention on “others”. Prejudice among high social dominance respondents is reduced through a de-emphasis on group identity.

Recent research (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) has examined the dual role of right wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. The meta-analysis of 71 studies examined the relationship of the two variables to prejudice, and found that right wing authoritarianism was related to a low openness to experience and conscientiousness, whereas social dominance orientation was primarily a function of low agreeableness. Thus although mediated to some degree by other factors right wing authoritarianism and social dominance continue as salient factors in prejudice theory in general, and in attitudes toward immigrants in particular.

Perceived threats produce discrimination. The prejudice and stereotypes that influence many in our society have at least a moderate relationship to actual behavior. The affect of perceived out-group homogeneity works to allow immigrants to be seen with less variability and as sharing common stereotypical traits (Fiske, 1998). Although blatant prejudice is on the decline, more subtle forms of bias remain as unconscious motivators (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). In Europe unemployment rates

for immigrants are significantly higher compared to the native born, and immigrants experience discrimination in a variety of other arenas including housing and banking services (Pettigrew, 1998). In the United States immigrants typically experience downward mobility having to take lower skilled jobs than those for which they have trained (Foner, 2000). Perhaps the most disturbing effect of recent immigrant discrimination is found in the dramatic drop of the earnings of Muslims and workers from Arab countries in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (Kaushal, Kaestner, & Reimers, 2004). It can be concluded that the unjustified threats perceived by many in Western Europe and the United States have significant negative consequences in the lives of immigrants and their families.

Ideology, Framing the Debate, and Proposed Solutions

The discussion of immigration in all its forms can not be separated from underlying assumptions and self interests. The very meaning of immigration activities take on novel meanings dependent on how the issue is framed. Are the undocumented immigrants criminals seeking to take advantage of society, or are they innocent victims trying to help themselves and their families. Such frames also define many of the proposed solutions. Cheap labor is always a concern by ideologies of the right, and humanistic concerns characterize proposals from the left of the political spectrum. The undocumented issue is now of such dimension in developed countries that international cooperation is required for any durable solution.

Framing the debate and conflict resolution. Scientific research on solutions to the immigrant debate is minimal. For example a review of social psychological research shows that immigration is an understudied field, and that much greater efforts are expended on studying hate mongers than examining migrant victims of bigotry (A preliminary stock taking on immigration research in Canada, 2008). The ideological breach between rightwing and leftwing political solutions is defined by alternative views of the migrant as a lawbreaker or a victim of exploitation.

Solutions from the right: Control of immigrants and helping business. Rightwing solutions focus on control of the migrant the lack of which is perceived as a crisis for the American nation and political system. Most U.S. contributors to the immigration debate see the situation in the United States as unique rather than a part of a global transformation in socio-economic systems that have made life intolerable for millions throughout the world. Bambenek (2006) asserts that immigrants who have entered the country illegally should not be rewarded for breaking the law. The cost of undocumented immigration is often cited as a reason for needed reform. On the other hand from the immigrants perspective, Bambenek asserts, it is easy to see why they come in large numbers to the US and Europe since all people want to be where there is prosperity, and US and European companies are willing to hire. By a large measure the immigration problem in the US is caused by the government broadcasting that it has no intention of enforcing the law, and the major source country Mexico is encouraging their citizens to immigrate. Bambenek sees the solution in more effective control through an increase in legal immigration, a guest worker program, and a wall at the border.

The focus on the control of immigrants has produced proposals for improved computerized systems to be used by employers to determine the validity of documents, and penalize those who still hire workers deemed illegal (Ending illegal immigration, 2007). Following the money exchanges, and mandating that all international transfers occur from documented individuals, can also execute more control over immigrants. Rubenstein (2004) argues “creatively” that the solution is to be found in taxing remittances sent to families, which would have yielded 3.2 billion US dollars for the national treasury in 2002. In other words tax the “illegals” and they will go away.

Kane & Johnson (2006) finds the source problem in globalization that makes both terrorism and migration easier. The current policy of benign neglect is no longer tenable and reforms are needed in border security, identify verification, and amnesty. Immigration laws must not be one-sided, as the two major issues of security and immigrant needs must be addressed. The significant problems however are issues around security, not the effect of illegal immigration on the economy. Carafono, Walsh,

Murhausen, Keith, & Gentili (2006) call for a comprehensive strategy including proposals that would make English the official language, limiting number of families living in single homes, having only two cars parked overnight in front of homes, police powers to impound cars if drivers don't have license or insurance, mandatory employees verification of identity, and in general more law enforcement. From the libertarian perspective the solution is to remove all quotas for immigration and offer immediate amnesty to all people described as "illegals". From this capitalist perspective the labor market would eventually sort out the issues, and effective workers who contribute would remain in the country.

The focus on control is also exemplified in President Bush's address to the nation (President Bush addresses the nation on immigration reform, 2006). In his speech Bush called for more secure borders, including high technology fences in urban areas, new patrol roads along the border, new temporary worker programs, holding employers accountable for verification, and finally emphasizing the need to face reality and grant the millions who are in the country some form of amnesty.

Recognizing the complexity of immigration issues: Compromises in the face of reality. What to do with the estimated 12 million undocumented people already in the US have produced efforts at ideological compromise. Rauch (2004) suggested that liberal opinion is right in arguing that bringing the undocumented out of the shadow economy would make them less likely to be exploited, and easier to track for law enforcement. On the other hand conservatives are right by arguing that normalization of the undocumented may simply encourage more unauthorized migration. Rauch sees the solution in raising the legal immigration to levels that respond to real needs in the economy that he estimates at 1.8 million additional workers each year. These workers would come on temporary visas, but could obtain permanent residency if they pose no risk, and demonstrated a reliable work record.

Other proponents have argued that all the issues that cause people to complain about undocumented immigration also can be attributed to legal immigrants (Ponnuru, 2006). For example half of the legal immigrant population have not gone past high school, and cost the government billions of education dollars each year. If the undocumented drive wages down so do the legal immigrants. The issues of poverty or health care insurance pose similar problems for both legal and undocumented immigrants. Finally on issues of national security Ponnuru points out that the US government can't keep track of legal immigrants that are already in the country.

Solutions from the left: Economic development in source countries and human rights. Some communicators on the left (e.g. Spritzler, 2005) advocate making it legal for anyone to cross the border. Undocumented immigration is created by a plutocracy to strengthen their power over ordinary people. For example the international trade agreements have not produced better economies, but have rather displaced millions of farmers in Mexico who come north in order to survive. The solution to these economic failures proposed by establishment think tanks is to expand the borders by merging the Mexican, US, and Canadian nations into one entity with an outer secure perimeter (Jones, 2006). It would seem that such an expanded union would just allow for a larger playing field to enact failed neo-conservative economic policies.

Advocates for migrants from the left, point out that the negative effects of undocumented immigration have been vastly overblown. Sifuentes (2004) note that the Rand cooperation study on undocumented immigration produced far lower estimates of health costs than those provided by anti-immigrant groups. Facts are distorted by ideology, and are manipulated in the public discourse. It is difficult if not impossible to control undocumented immigration because it is driven by manifest economic needs for survival and basic decency in living standards. One solution is to stimulate the economies of source countries thereby reducing the need to immigrate.

Proponents from the left, point to economic incentives of industrialists and the government in the exploitation of undocumented workers. Profits from exploitation have produced a boom in sweatshops in the US, a modern form of slavery that produce riches for the employer, and ruthlessly takes advantage of the vulnerability of the immigrant.

The minimal economic assistance provided currently to stimulate economies in source countries is inadequate, and corruption prevent any meaningful improvement in the living standards of native populations. Addo (2006) notes that Europe is losing its war on undocumented immigration as 500000 unauthorized immigrants still enter Europe each year despite detention, repatriation, and developmental aid. People continue to leave Africa in large numbers because their lives are still desperate. One statistic that demonstrate the inadequacy of developmental aid is the disparity between the economic aid offered by Europe (18 billion Euros over 7 years), and the economic need demonstrated by remittances to families estimated at 17 billion a year. For some source countries in Africa remittances is the most important type of income. Aid has to be at substantial higher levels to keep corruption, exploitation, and dictatorship away from source countries.

In the case of the US the undocumented come in response to the failures of the economic trade pacts that enriched the few at the expense of the general populations in Mexico, Central and South America. American agricultural business, with the help of government subsidies, has flooded Mexico with cheap corn forcing 2 million peasants of the land. Any real solution would require a revolution in both Mexico and the US to reverse the desperation that encourages migration northward (Spritzler, 2005).

Framing the debate is ideological. The labels used in the US to describe migrants have ideological meaning and include terms like illegal immigrants, illegal alien, and the undocumented immigrant. Labels are recognized as influencing the public debate and the policies made with respect to migration (Vitello, 2006). Labels produce a categorization process and contribute to the frames (general perspectives) used in discussing immigration. Different frames contain alternative meanings and produce varying psychological distance from the targeted population. Frames reflect the communicator's attitudes toward the issue, and are used also to persuade others to take certain policy positions (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997; McKenzie & Nelson, 2003). When a label is repeated over and over again it becomes reified in the mind of the communicator as well as recipient. Any solution is therefore entrenched within the frame and the ideology it supports. Augostinos and Quinn (2003) found that attitudes are less supportive when the label attached is "illegal immigrant" as compared to "asylum seekers". Ommundsen, Larsen, & Van der Veer (2007) also found differences in attitudes depending on whether the labels attributed to immigrants were "illegal immigrants", "illegal aliens", or "undocumented immigrant".

Since immigrant labels are based on ideology it is not surprising that attitudes also vary according to the region of the country where the respondents live (Mizrahi, 2005). Regions of the U.S differ in support for ideology and political parties. Respondents living in the Eastern and Western regions of the U.S. are generally more positive in their immigrant attitudes compared to respondents from the Midwest or south. Perhaps more relevant immigrant attitudes vary according to the so-called red versus blue states in U.S. presidential elections. States that are labeled "red" are those with Republican Party majorities and are also significantly less positive toward immigrants as compared to states with Democratic Party majorities.

Lakoff & Ferguson (2006) suggested that framing is at the center of the immigration debate. Frames define issues in particular ways and constrain possible solutions. Common frames include illegal immigrant, "illegals", undocumented workers, undocumented immigrant, guest workers, and is further delimited by the use of terms like amnesty and border security. The debate on immigration propose urgently needed reforms suggesting that the issue is immediate, and problems such as lack of border control, the falsifying of documents, defying labor laws, and taking the jobs of native workers are pressing issues facing American society. The discerning reader will note that this discussion focuses totally on the immigrant as if the problem is caused by his volition independent of the desired migrant utility to employers.

However, there are other frames. Perhaps economic refugees are caused by a foreign policy that keeps in power the incompetent and the repressive leaders of the developing world. Consequences of US foreign policy include the results of various trade pacts like NAFTA already discussed as a source

of misery for native farmers in Mexico. We could also examine the degree to which the various trade pacts have provided solutions as was promised by their promoters including the institutions of NAFTA, CAFTA, WTO, IMF, and the World Bank. Have we in fact seen rising living standards around the globe as promised, or have the consequences been the impoverishment of the many and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few? It must be noted the Bush's "comprehensive solutions" does not address any of these issues. People in Latin America have started to take matters into their own hands as neo-liberalism has lost political power throughout the continent. New institutions are starting to replace those that failed including the new Banco de Sur promoted by Venezuela and other Latin countries.

If we adopted a humanitarian frame we would have to acknowledge the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people each year as result of failed policies including groups as diverse as auto workers in Michigan and former inhabitants of the now depopulated towns in Mexico. A solution that corresponds to the magnitude of the problem would require the intervention of the UN or other transnational organizations. A humanitarian frame would support the basic human rights of people regardless of their legal status. Related is the exploitation frame that acknowledges that a major motivation in bringing the undocumented into the country is to pay substandard wages and allow for their exploitation. It is possible that the relative stability of American society is directly related to the exploitation of the undocumented at home and those paid substandard wages abroad since it has allowed the American consumer to buy cheap while they too were losing jobs that paid well. Consumers turn a blind eye to how the products are manufactured as they favor cheap living in an increasingly insecure economic world, and the exploiters don't care how they make their profits.

The very words used in framing the debate have policy consequences. If we frame the debate with a focus on illegality, then enforcement of laws becomes the only option. The frame then defines economic refugees as criminals deserving of punishment and removal. When the term alien is added to illegal we are describing some very foreign entity similar to aliens invading from Mars. The psychological distance created by the label blocks out any sympathy for why they arrive in Europe and the US. We could ask why is there no frame for those who exploit their labor? Allied to this ideology is the security frame that is now also confounded with the "war on terror". This frame sees solutions in increasing border security including the use of the National Guard and rightwing militants. Since big business and many consumers need the immigrants there is also much talk of amnesty, which assumes that the fault lies with the immigrant, that he has reasons to be sorry and ask for pardon.

However, it is apparent that responding to its power base the US government has shown benign indifference since immigration in whatever form is vital in a profit driven society. Frames such as undocumented workers also suggest that immigrants are here for only work purposes when most are trying to establish a new life. Likewise the label temporary workers imply that migrants come to the US only for brief periods and their human rights are delimited by their status. All these frames obviously serve the interest of those who profit from exploitation. So far we see little evidence of any substandard wage framing, and even less any discussion from the perspective of the Walmart cheap lifestyle frame based on the substandard wages of the undocumented or overseas exploitation, but benefiting many consumers. Obviously the solutions to issues that surround migration is largely determined by these ideological frames, the real interest of employers, and the many in the US population who have lost good jobs, and therefore favor living as cheaply as possible. A radical solution would require a look at the international system, and restructuring economically and politically in source countries, and at home.

Summary Perceived threat is central to any understanding of attitudes in the U.S. toward immigrants whether legal or undocumented. Research supports the contention that attitudes toward immigrants are hardening in the United States as the native population perceive threats to personal security and cultural identity. There is an increasing gap between the indifference of politicians and the alarm that many people express at the consequences of uncontrolled immigration.

Language is central to a person's national and cultural identity. Social identity theory emphasizes the importance of boosting the status of the in-group and threats to cultural identity are perceived as a personal insult. Social identity theory is a motivational explanation for both prejudice and discrimination. Refusing to use the language of the native population is perceived as threatening to cultural values where the immigrant opts for isolation from the dominant culture. Contributing to the threat is the perceived homogeneity of the out-group culture that is seen as more similar in negative traits than justified by the variability of its members. Language use remains at the core of the threat perceived by the native population as an increasing threat to identity. The support for restrictive policy measures demonstrates the increasing concern of the U.S. population.

The labor competition model focuses on both perceived and real threats to economic security produced by immigration. From realistic group conflict theory we learn that prejudice and discrimination is the outcome of competition between groups over limited resources. In modern society no resource is of greater importance than access to good jobs. It is not surprising that the highest amount of prejudice toward immigrants is found among those who stand to lose the most from competition. Economic insecurities create frustrations that as predicted by the frustration-aggression hypothesis may result in aggression toward totally innocent targets. As people perceive deprivation in their economic lives they often look for safe as well as convenient targets to vent frustrations. Some research shows that immigrants present a real frustration to those who are less competitive in job acquisition, those with less education and fewer competitive skills.

Research from social psychology supports the importance between proximity and the contact hypothesis. Being in close physical or functional contact increases liking since people in these relationships are available for interaction, and it takes less effort to develop and maintain such interactions. Cognitive dissonance has also been used as an explanatory construct in explaining attitudes toward immigrants, as it is psychologically distressing to interact with people we don't like. Even anticipating interacting with someone increases liking, and familiarity may be an independent factor that increases predictability and therefore liking. Research on attitudes toward immigrants support the importance of proximity, as people who live where there are large concentrations of immigrants tend to have more positive attitudes.

Threat perception is at the core of negative attitudes since increasing numbers of the native population see immigrants as a burden to society. This threat may have some basis in fact, as there is some evidence that immigrants are displacing young native workers. Threat may also derive from perceived devaluation of native culture and national identity. The reemergence of nationalistic movements over the past decades was unexpected. This occurred at the same time that migration became a major issue in the U.S., in turn encouraging cultural heterogeneity. Not all members of society experience threat from heterogeneity, but many do. It depends somewhat on the conceptions of the national community. Those respondents who have articulated both civic and ethnic conceptions of the state feel the greatest threat from immigration. Younger people seem more adaptable to the changes that have occurred toward multiculturalism in the recent past,

The fact that not all perceive threat from immigration suggests the importance of assessing individual differences in attitudes. The literature on rightwing authoritarianism shows that those who score high on such measures display significant hostility towards a bewildering array of victims. Social dominance theory is a related construct. Prejudice may emerge from threat to the privileged status of the in-group members. Authoritarianism is thought to have developed from the opposition to change, whereas social dominance is motivated by desire to self-enhance. Both are, however, related to negative attitudes toward immigrants.

The study of attitudes toward the undocumented immigrants is minimal. The frames used in the debate are ideologically based and broadly defined as perspectives of the immigrant as a lawbreaker or as a victim of exploitation. Conflict solutions therefore rely on these varying frames of reference. Solutions from the right seek the control of immigrants, while recognizing their value as cheap labor. Compromises look for increased legal immigration to meet the needs of the economy, and some

proponents note defensively that the complaints made about illegal immigration can also be made of legal immigrants. Solutions from the left emphasize the need of significant economic aid to source countries, and the elementary human rights of economic as well as political refugees. The frames used in this debate matters as shown in several studies as they produce alternative meanings and policies, and constrain possible solutions. A radical solution would require economic as well as political restructuring in both source and host countries.

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Footnote

This paper was presented at the Third International Black Sea Symposium on Immigration, Sozopol, Bulgaria, October, 2007. The article is part of the research project “Motivation and attitudes toward immigration of Bulgarian students”, supported by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria.