

**Rural Residence as a Determinant of
Attitudes Toward US Immigration Policy ¹**

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Abstract

Between 1990 and 2000 the foreign-born population in the United States increased by 57 %, compared to a 13 % increase in the native-born population. This growth has fueled considerable media attention, and has fomented some anti-immigrant sentiments. Although a number of authors have charted changes in support for restrictionist immigration policies, few have examined their determinants. In this paper we focus on region of residence, and use data from a 2004 telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 1888 adults to test the hypothesis that rural Americans are more likely to support restrictive immigration policies than individuals in urban and suburban communities. In a series of regression analyses, this hypothesis is confirmed; rural residents hold the most restrictionist views. Additional analyses indicate that this effect of rural residence on policy attitudes is mediated by attitudes toward multiculturalism, the perceived traits of immigrants, and perceptions about the costs of immigration. Ultimately, the analyses indicate that the perceived cost of immigration is the single strongest predictor of support for restrictive immigration policies, and that it best accounts for rural residents' more restrictionist views.

Introduction and Literature Review

Nativist sentiments in the United States are not a new phenomenon. Americans have been wary of newcomers of non-English stock since the time of the Revolution. In modern times close to a majority of Americans has opposed increases in immigration in every opinion poll since 1945. (Reimers, 1998) However, recent shifts in immigration patterns have made anti-immigrant sentiments particularly salient. Between 1990 and 2000 the foreign-born population in the United States increased by 57 % (Suro et al., 2005), compared to a 13 % increase in the native-born population (Perry and Mackun, 2001). This growth has fueled considerable media attention, and it has been accompanied by an increase in immigrant-restrictive discourse. A negative shift began in the early 1990s, as immigrants were blamed for a variety of social and economic ills (Wells, 2004). Although these sentiments abated somewhat at the end of the decade, they spiked again after the 9/11 attacks of 2001.

A number of authors have charted changes in attitudes toward immigrants, but few have examined the determinants of these views. In this paper we focus on region of residence, and test the hypothesis that rural Americans are more supportive of restrictive immigration policies than individuals in urban and suburban communities, net of the influence of background

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characteristics, measures of social proximity to immigrants, ideology, and immigration-related attitudes and beliefs². Reasons to suspect that rural residents are more supportive of restrictive policies than their urban or suburban counterparts may include their greater isolation and lesser contact with immigrants and minorities, and the fact that rural residents tend to be older, poorer, less educated and more politically conservative—all variables that have been shown to be correlates of hostility toward immigrants and immigration. We begin by discussing social changes and their probable impact on rural Americans' attitudes toward immigrants.

Immigrants in Rural Areas

Immigrants are heavily concentrated in metropolitan areas in the US. Forty-four percent of immigrants live in central cities, and about half live in American suburbs (Congressional Budget Office, 2004); only five percent reside in non-metropolitan areas, compared with 20 % of the US-born. At the same time, immigrants are increasingly dispersed compared to previous decades, and many are moving to rural areas and to non-traditional destination states, such as North Carolina, Georgia and Colorado, and to rural towns across the Midwest (Gozdziak and Martin, 2005).

The largest group of immigrants in the US is of Latin American ancestry. Like other immigrants, Hispanics and their US-born children are concentrated in urban areas. However, between 1990 and 2000 the Hispanic population grew at a faster rate in rural than in urban areas, spreading throughout the Southeast, Midwest and Northwest. Although they made up only five percent of the population, Hispanics accounted for over 25 % of non-metro population growth in the country during that period (Kandel and Cromartie, 2004). Kandel and Parrado (2004) provide census data for fifteen states where the average increase in the Hispanic population was 257%, compared to 11% for non-Hispanics. North Carolina experienced the largest increase: 416%, as compared with a 16% increase in the total population in the same area. The corresponding averages for the US as a whole were 67% growth in the Hispanic non-metro population, and 10% for the total non-metro population.

In some rural areas with meat processing plants, towns that were once almost exclusively composed of White, US-born residents now have a majority of (predominantly Hispanic) foreign-born workers and their families. These demographic changes have led to resentment and expressions of xenophobia on the part of some White residents (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Fennelly and Leitner, 2002). Stull (1998) writes about the 'socially disruptive' effects of

² In this paper we use the term 'non-metropolitan' and 'rural' interchangeably, although their formal definitions differ. Rural communities, as defined by the Census Bureau, are places with fewer than 2,500 residents. A metropolitan area, as per the Office of Management and Budget, is one with a 'large population nucleus and adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus'; non-metropolitan counties are counties outside metropolitan areas. The designation 'rural' used in the NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy survey refers to non-metropolitan communities. According to the Economic Research Service, it is a "widely accepted convention to use non-metropolitan counties as a proxy for rural and small town America" (Kandel and Cromartie, 2004).

immigration in Garden City, Kansas, and other meat-packing towns in the Midwest, and what he perceives as a sense of ‘dislocation’ on the part of natives. In rural Minnesota Amato and Amato (1999) and Fennelly and Leitner (2002) describe Africans, Asians, and Latinos as the “new face” of rural areas that have lost a sense of community identity.

In 2004, a state-wide survey in Minnesota (Greenberg et al., 2004) reveals that almost half of exurban and rural residents agree that immigrants ‘impinged on the quality of life’ in the state.³ Similarly, Bean et al. (2000) describe opinion polls in Nebraska and Iowa, in which rural residents feel that their quality of life is being adversely affected by immigrants.

Resentment toward immigrants and immigration may also be triggered by the permanent settlement of Hispanic workers who were formerly seasonal employees. Although many parts of the US have a long history of Latino workers recruited for seasonal farmwork, food processing businesses operate year-round, with the result that Latino workers who settle in these towns and raise families can no longer be considered temporary residents (Cantu, 1995). This change may influence the attitude of White, rural residents.

Hostility toward immigrants may also be intensified by the perception that many immigrants are in the US illegally (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). Although 60 % of Hispanics are US-born (Bureau of the Census, 2003) and only 20 % are undocumented⁴, many Americans mistakenly perceive that a majority of Hispanics – and even non-Hispanic immigrants - are here without legal documentation⁵. This perception may be particularly prevalent in rural communities where food processing and agricultural businesses employ large numbers of undocumented workers.

There are other reasons why contemporary rural Americans might be expected to have more nativist views than their urban or suburban compatriots. The arrival of contemporary immigrants to rural communities has often coincided with the loss of small farms, expansion of feedlots and agribusinesses, consolidation of schools and the ‘Walmartization’ of rural communities. As such, the settlement of foreign workers and their families may be a convenient symbol of the loss of a bygone era, and a threat to prevailing conceptions of American identity. Furthermore, the low socioeconomic status of Hispanics who account for a majority of immigrants to rural communities may inform native residents’ perceptions of all immigrants. Relative to other non-metro residents, Hispanics in rapid growth rural counties live in larger and more crowded

³ Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that immigrants impinge on the quality of life in Minnesota: urban 35 %, exurban 48 % and rural 48 %.

⁴ This percentage was calculated using estimates of the size of the unauthorized population from Latin America in 2004 (Passel, 2005) and estimates of the size of the total Hispanic population and the US-born Hispanic population in 2004 (Bureau of the Census, 2005): an estimated 8.4 million (20 %) undocumented Latinos, of a total of 41.3 million Hispanics in the US as of April, 2004.

⁵ The phenomenon of ‘illegal immigration’ is created by US immigration policies. Although millions of workers are recruited overtly or covertly by large companies to work in food processing, agriculture, manufacturing, construction and the hospitality industry, less than 1% of the employment-based visas issued by the Immigration Service are for low-wage workers. Once in the US, under current law, such workers are ineligible for legalization of status.

households, have lower levels of education, are more linguistically isolated (Kandel and Parrado, 2003; Fennelly, 2005) and more segregated (Kandel and Cromartie, 2004).⁶

In spite of widespread media attention to opinions about immigrants and immigration, there have been only a handful of academic analyses of the determinants of support for restricted immigration, and fewer still that include an assessment of differences among rural, suburban and urban residents. One exception is an analysis of public opinion data from a CBS/*New York Times*/Tokyo Broadcasting System 1993 poll of 1363 American adults. In a multivariate analysis including background variables and measures of political party affiliation by Espenshade and Hempstead (1996), rural residents are significantly more likely than urban or suburban adults to favor a decrease in immigration levels. Burns and Gimpel (2000) analyze support for decreasing US immigration levels among respondents to the American National Election Study in 1992 and 1996, with similar results. Scheve and Slaughter (2001) analyze data from the same surveys in 1992, 1994 and 1996. Although they do not include rural residence in their regression analyses, they do include a variable measuring whether respondents lived in “high immigration MSAs”—a rough proxy for rural residence, since immigrants tend to be concentrated in urban and suburban areas. In their multivariate analyses, area of residence is not a significant predictor of opinions about immigration levels.

Correlates of Rural Residence and Attitudes toward Immigration Policy

In this paper, we hypothesize that statistical correlations between rural residence and attitudes toward immigration policy may be accounted for by *other variables, or categories of variables, that are simultaneously associated with rural residence and with prejudice toward out-groups*. These include background characteristics (such as age, income and education), contact with immigrants, political predispositions, beliefs, and attitudes toward multiculturalism. We review the relevant research on each of these categories, preliminary to including them in regression models of the determinants of support for the restriction of immigration.

Background characteristics. A number of demographic and background factors may account for rural residents’ greater support for restricted immigration. Age is one such factor. One might speculate that, because rural residents are older than suburban and urban residents, they are more likely to support restrictive immigration policies, but previous studies are inconclusive. Chandler and Tsai (2001) analyze responses from a national sample of Americans from the 1994 General Social Survey. They conclude that older individuals are more likely to advocate for a decrease in the number of immigrants permitted to enter the US. On the other hand, some researchers using the same survey data find no significant age effect in regression analyses of support for restrictive immigration policies (Citrin et al., 1997; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). These discrepancies may be due to age cohort differences. In Espenshade and Hempstead’s 1996 analysis of data from a 1993 CBS News survey, respondents in particular age groups (18-24 and 45-54) are significantly more supportive of immigration than adults in other age groups.

Gender may also be relevant. Most reviews of the literature on prejudice suggest that men are more hostile to minorities and outsiders than women are (Sidanius et al., 2001). This is particularly the case in studies of attitudes toward African Americans. However, the effect of

gender is less pronounced in research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. Net of the effects of other background variables, gender has no significant effect on support for reducing the number of immigrants in studies (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Citrin et al., 1997; Hood et al., 1997; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

Socio-economic disadvantage may account for some of the support for reduced immigration among rural residents since they have lower incomes than individuals in urban and suburban America (Economic Research Service, 2004). Economic hardship can foster negative attitudes toward immigration, fueled by a concern that immigrants pose a threat to one's personal well-being or that of one's family. In one national survey, 75 % of those whose incomes are \$75,000 or greater said that immigration is good for the country today; the corresponding figure is 46 % for individuals in households with incomes below \$30,000 (Jones, 2003).

A number of other studies confirm that attitudes toward immigration vary by income level (Jones, 2003; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Hood et al., 1997) and by years of education (Citrin et al., 1997; Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Wilson, 2001), high school graduation status (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996), and by whether respondents have college degrees (Fetzer, 2000; Alvarez and Butterfield, 2000). If income is a proxy for labor market skills, then immigrants may be particularly threatening to low skilled working class adults (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). This interpretation is supported by studies in which income does not have an independent effect on immigration-policy attitudes, net of individuals' perceptions of the economy. In the study by Citrin et al. (1997), for example, income has no independent effect on immigration-related policy attitudes, but individuals who have an optimistic outlook on the national economy are more supportive of immigration.

Education is another background characteristic that may be relevant to rural residents' greater support for restrictive immigration. In this vein, numerous studies demonstrate that better educated individuals espouse less prejudiced views (Kahn, 1951; Lipset, 1960; McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Sinclair et al., 1998; Zaller, 1992). Part of this effect may be explained by the fact that education is yet another component of socio-economic status on which rural residents are disadvantaged, compared to urban and suburban residents. However, its effects can also be attributed to the impact of education on citizens' exposure to political communications and mainstream elite values that promote tolerance and eschew prejudice (Zaller, 1992).

Citrin et al. (1997) espouse a different explanation, suggesting that a college degree insures a certain level of economic success and confidence in one's future prospects that reduces perceived threats from immigrants. Nevertheless, researchers investigating sources of attitudes toward Blacks demonstrate that prejudice is not the exclusive domain of adults with low levels of education. Analyzing the racial attitudes of two waves of a panel study of attitudes of freshmen at UCLA, Federico and Sidanius (2002) find that racial policy attitudes, such as objections to affirmative action, are most strongly linked to racism and other expressions of group dominance among highly educated respondents. They explain this by suggesting that "while educated Whites may be less likely to possess explicitly racist attitudes, they may also find it easier to connect the dominance-related motives they do possess with other attitudes."

Finally, race/ethnicity may also influence rural residents' attitudes toward immigration. First, membership in a historically-disadvantaged minority group may induce empathy for other minorities and foreign-born individuals (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Fetzer, 2000). The influence of income and one's view of the national economy may also explain inconsistent associations between minority group membership and attitudes toward immigration policy in studies that control for region of residence. Since immigrants living in rural areas in the US are among the most disadvantaged groups in the country (Slack and Jensen, 2002), they too may perceive new immigrants as an economic threat. Latinos particularly may be likely to empathize with recent immigrants since many US-born Latinos have close relatives who are foreign-born. Moreover, being a Latino or an Asian increases the likelihood that an individual has had contact with Latino or Asian immigrants (see the next section for more on the role of contact). As such, we hypothesize that members of racial/ethnic minority groups, particularly Latinos and Asians, will be less supportive of restrictive immigration policies than Whites.

Region of residence and contact with immigrants. Smith and Edmonston (1997) call residential integration the linchpin of interethnic relations. The greater heterogeneity of metropolitan areas is often suggested as a reason for greater tolerance of diversity, with the presumption that opportunities for contact with outgroups in schools and neighborhoods facilitate the development of social bonds that reduce prejudice. Over fifty years ago Allport (1954) hypothesized that increased contact with outgroups lessens inter-group hostility under certain conditions—when the groups are of roughly equal status, working cooperatively in pursuit of common goals, and when the contact receives external support from authority figures and the greater society. Recently Pettigrew (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of research on the effects of contact on prejudice, and found that 93 % of the studies show that contact with outgroups leads to a reduction in prejudice, with an overall correlation of .21 between the two variables. He hypothesizes that contact reduces anxiety on the part of both races by dispelling stereotypes and increasing 'friendship potential' (Pettigrew, 1998b).

Some researchers suggest that living in high immigration states or urban areas with large numbers of immigrants is a measure of contact, in that it may breed familiarity, and leads to more favorable attitudes toward the foreign-born (Citrin et al., 1997; Hood et al., 1997). On the other hand, residence in areas with large numbers of immigrants is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward immigration and immigration policy in Scheve and Slaughter's (2001) multivariate analysis of the 1992, 1994 and 1996 ANES, or in regression models of the predictors of opposition to legal immigration on the part of White Americans who were interviewed in the 1994 NORC General Social Survey (Wilson, 2001). However, in the latter study, the variable 'percent of minority residents' is a statistically significant predictor of opposition to *illegal* immigration. Furthermore, living in areas of high concentration does not necessarily translate into cross-cultural contact, particularly in communities with high levels of racial segregation.

There may be a threshold of concentrations of immigrants, or a 'tipping point' beyond which positive attitudes are reversed. This appears to be the case in areas close to the Mexican border, in Texas and southern California. In an analysis of the 1992 ANES, Hood and Morris find that Anglo residents of California—the state with the largest number and greatest concentration of immigrants—are *more likely* to support decreasing immigration to the US than other Americans.

Similarly, Alvarez and Butterfield (2000) report that California voters from southern areas close to the Mexican border are more likely than other state residents to support Proposition 187, the anti-immigrant legislation of 1994. In Texas, Stein et al. (2000) report that the higher the percent of Latinos in the county, the *less favorable* the attitudes toward Hispanics. On the other hand, in the 2000 General Social Survey, Dixon and Rosenbaum (2004) report that the percent of Black residents in the respondent's county is positively associated with negative racial stereotypes, but percent Hispanic is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward that ethnic group. They conclude that the presence of Blacks is more threatening to White adults than the presence of Hispanics. Given these conflicting results, we have no clear prediction about the effects of the local or regional immigration level on policy attitudes. Nevertheless, we include measures of the state immigration level in our analyses in order to account for whatever effects may exist.

Even in geographic areas with large numbers of immigrants, segregated residential communities, work places and schools may prevent contact between groups. Indeed, residential separation appears to have increased in non-urban counties that have experienced in new flows of Latino immigration since the 1990s (Cromartie and Kandel, 2004). Furthermore, what opportunities exist for contact between foreign-born and US-born individuals may not include the conditions of cooperation and equal status that Allport noted as preconditions for reducing prejudice (1954). This may be particularly true in rural communities with manufacturing and food processing plants that attract workers with low levels of English proficiency. The resulting communication barriers may impede or prevent the formation of close relationships and positive attitudes. Furthermore, since non-English-speaking employees are less likely to be promoted than employees who are proficient in the language, differences in social status may further reduce the likelihood of close collegial relationships.

Studies employing direct measures of contact, such as questions regarding frequency of interactions with Hispanics or other immigrants, show that individuals with low contact are more likely to support restrictive immigration. Examples include the Texas study cited earlier (Stein et al., 2000), as well as Dixon and Rosenbaum's analysis of the 2000 GSS. Similarly, place of birth of individuals and their parents can be viewed as a proxy for contact with immigrants. We theorize that being an immigrant or the child of immigrants predisposes individuals to favorable attitudes toward the foreign-born (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Citrin et al., 1997; Fetzer, 2000) and less support for restrictive immigration policies.

Political predispositions and beliefs. An association between political ideology and individuals' views toward immigrants and immigration policy is well documented (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Citrin et al., 1997; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Hood et al., 1997; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Stein et al., 2000; Wilson, 2001). In particular, individuals who espouse conservative ideologies are more likely to believe that there are too many immigrants in the US (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). In an analysis of telephone interviews with a random sample of US adults, Jones (2003) finds that older and ideologically conservative Americans support more restrictive immigration policies than younger and more moderate adults. In their study, 57 % of conservatives think that immigration levels should be decreased, compared with 44 % of moderates, and 35 % of liberals. They suggest that the greater likelihood of restrictionist views among Republicans, compared to Democrats, is due to the over-representation of Republicans espousing conservative ideologies, rather than to a political party

effect *per se*. In other words, it is political *ideology*, and not *party affiliation* that is theorized to affect views on immigration policy. Other authors suggest that conservative views on the economy are likely to be the source of these ideological concerns over immigration (Citrin et al., 1997; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). Therefore, we hypothesize that ideological conservatism is positively related to support for restrictive immigration policies, but that Republican partisanship does not have a significant impact, once ideology is taken into account.

Beyond basic predispositions like ideology and partisanship, patriotism - or the nature of one's attachment to the national community - may also have an impact on attitudes toward immigration. In general, psychological research suggests that greater attachment to an in-group is associated with less favorable disposition toward outsiders (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Some researchers argue that this should be the case with regard to national attachment as well, with those who are more strongly attached to the national in-group showing greater support for restrictive immigration policies (Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989; de Figueiredo and Elkins, 2003). While there has been some debate about whether national attachment is related to xenophobia when it takes the form of simple positive affect toward the nation – rather than a *nationalistic* belief in the superiority of the national ingroup – research suggests that all forms of national attachment tend to be associated with increased hostility toward immigration among members of dominant or majority groups, such as Whites in the US. (see Sidanius et al., 2001). As such, we theorize that respondents with a strong attachment to the national ingroup are more supportive of restrictive immigration policies.

Regardless of actual income levels, the *perception* that the economy as a whole is bad may also determine the extent to which immigrants are viewed as a threat. In times of economic downturns there are increases in the numbers of adults who favor restrictionist immigration policies (Wells, 2004), and perceptions that immigrants are a drain on the nation have been associated with negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. In their research, Citrin et al. (1997) analyze data from the 1992 and 1994 National Election Study surveys and find that personal economic circumstances has little effect on public opinions regarding immigration policy, but that anxiety over taxes is an important predictor. In Burns and Gimpel's (2000) analyses of 1992 and 1996 data from the same surveys, an individual's assessment of his or her own personal economic status is weakly and negatively associated with support for decreased immigration levels. However, the effect for pessimistic assessments of the national economic picture is stronger. Thus in the present study, we hypothesize that support for restrictive immigration policies will be stronger among those who perceive national economic conditions to be poor.

Attitudes toward multiculturalism and immigrants. Besides the general factors reviewed above, attitudes and perceptions specific to the domain of immigration may play a role in explaining rural Americans' greater support for restricted immigration. First, beliefs about the ideal of multiculturalism itself may have an impact on attitudes toward immigration. Simply put, those who favor a more "monocultural" definition of American identity and cultural values – in which one set of values is seen as more truly "American" than others – may be more hostile to immigration. In contrast, those who see the nation as properly having many different sets of cultural values may be more accepting of immigration. In general, this expectation is confirmed by previous studies (e.g., Citrin et al., 2001), and we expect that it will hold in the data we

examine here. In particular, we expect that a less favorable orientation toward multiculturalism may account for part of the effect of rurality on support for restricted immigration.

At a more specific level, researchers also find that affect toward immigrant groups and perceptions of those groups' characteristics or traits are strong predictors of support or opposition to particular immigration policies (Citrin et al., 1997; See and Wilson, 1989). In the present study we hypothesize that rural Americans' greater support for restrictive immigration policies may be partially accounted for by negative perceptions of immigrants themselves.

Finally, individuals' beliefs about the social costs of immigration play an important role in their attitudes toward immigration policy. A long line of research suggests that policies perceived to benefit particular groups – such as liberal immigration policies – are more likely to be opposed when the benefit is thought to come at the expense of the in-group's interests (Bobo, 1988; Runciman, 1966; Sherif, 1956). This general expectation is confirmed in a number of studies of attitudes toward immigration. Most of the studies suggest that individuals who believe that immigrants are more costly to the host society – by “taking away jobs,” using public services, or failing to pay taxes – tend to support restrictive immigration policies (e.g., Citrin et al., 1990, 1997). The effects of this “cost” variable tend to be strong, compared to other potential predictors of immigration attitudes (see Citrin et al., 1997). Accordingly, we hypothesize that the perceived costs of immigrants may account for a large portion of rural Americans' greater support for restrictive policies.

Methods

In this paper we use national survey data to compare rural, urban and suburban native-born residents' attitudes toward immigration policy, and to examine the roles of various background characteristics, measures of social proximity to immigrants, political beliefs and perceptions, and immigration-related attitudes and beliefs as determinants of support for restrictive immigration policies in each of these groups. In particular, we are interested in examining (1) whether rural residents are more supportive of restrictive immigration policies than urban or suburban area residents; and (2) whether any of the aforementioned clusters of explanatory variables account for differences in attitudes of rural and non-rural residents. The survey analysis is supplemented with quotes from several focus groups that illustrate attitudes identified in the main analysis.

The survey data come from a national survey of 1888 adults who were interviewed in 2004 as part of the “Immigration in America” project sponsored by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University (Blendon et al., 2004).⁷ The weighted sample represents likely US voters in households with telephones.⁸

⁸ “Weighting and estimation were performed independently within six oversampled strata (Middle Easterners/North Africans; Russians/Eastern Europeans; East Asians; Central/South Americans; Mexicans; Other). The first phase involved weighting by stratum to balance the number of interviews by stratum to national population estimates from US Census data. Once this sample of disproportionality of strata was corrected, the file was divided into the respective country-of-origin groups. Then, each country-of-origin group was weighted by 2004 Claritas data for age within sex, education, region and race/ethnicity” (Blendon et al., 2004). All of the analyses used the sampling weights.

⁹ Support for restrictive immigration: alpha = .70

The primary dependent variable is support for restricted immigration. We constructed this variable as the average of respondents' scores on the following four questions in the survey about immigration policy:

- Do you think there are too many immigrants in the US today, too few, or about the right number?
- On balance, do you think immigration of people from other countries to the US is good, bad, or hasn't made much difference?
- Should legal immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?
- How do you rate the federal government on immigration? Is it too tough, not tough enough, or about right?

Higher scores indicate greater support for restricted immigration. The items are sufficiently correlated to justify including them in a scale to measure support for restricted immigration.⁹

Of the independent variables, we are most interested in residential status, operationalized as two dichotomous dummy variables corresponding to residence in either a suburban (0 = no, 1 = yes) or rural (0 = no, 1 = yes) area. For this pair of dummy variables, urban-dwellers are the excluded category.

In order to see whether the hypothesized effect of rurality is mediated by other variables, we created measures of the explanatory independent variables described above, and categorized them into four groups: basic demographics, social proximity to immigrants, political beliefs and perceptions, and immigration-related attitudes and beliefs.

The demographics included in our analysis are age, gender, income, personal finances, education, and race. Respondent's age is measured in years as a continuous variable. Gender is a dichotomous dummy variable (0 = female, 1 = male). Respondent's income is based on self-reported annual income in thousands of dollars; in the original question, respondents were asked to select the income bracket in which they fit. The personal finances variable is based on response to a question asking respondents to evaluate their current financial situation. Higher scores indicate more positive evaluations. Education is coded as a pair of dichotomous dummy variables corresponding to respondents' highest levels of education attainment: some college (0 = no, 1 = yes) and a completed college degree (0 = no, 1 = yes). For this pair of dummy variables, respondents with a high school education or less are the excluded category. Finally, race is coded using a set of four dichotomous dummy variables, corresponding to membership in the following four categories (0 = no, 1 = yes): Black, Asian, Latino, and other non-White groups. For these four dummy variables, Whites constitute the excluded category.

The second group of explanatory variables measures respondents' social proximity to immigrants. First, we control for whether respondents live in a state with a medium or high level of immigration using two dummy variables (0 = no, 1 = yes). For these two dummy variables, respondents in low-immigration states are the excluded category. Two additional dummy variables are used to indicate whether the respondent and his/her family members are foreign-born themselves. One dummy indicates whether the respondent is foreign-born (0 = no, 1 = yes),

and the other indicates whether one or more of the respondents' parents is foreign-born (0 = no, 1 = yes). Finally, we also include a scale measuring contact with immigrants, in which higher scores on the scale signify greater contact. This scale is constructed as the average of scores on six items asking respondents about interactions with immigrants in their daily lives. The items are highly correlated, warranting their inclusion in a single scale.¹⁰

Variables measuring political beliefs and perceptions make up our third set of explanatory variables. The partisanship index measures whether or respondents consider themselves to be a Democrat or Republican on a seven-point scale, recoded to run from 0 to 1; scores range from strong Democrat (0) to strong Republican (1). Ideology is based on respondents' self-classification as liberal (0), moderate (.5), or conservative (1). Thus, for both partisanship and ideology, higher scores indicate a greater tilt to the right. National attachment, on the other hand, is assessed using one item asking how proud respondents are to be American. Responses were given on a four-point scale, recoded to run from 0 to 1; higher scores indicate greater national attachment. Finally, we also control for respondents' perceptions of the national economy. Answers were originally given on a four point scale ranging from "excellent" to "poor." These responses are recoded to run from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating the perception that the economy is in good shape.

Our last category of explanatory variables includes attitudes and beliefs specifically related to immigration. First, respondents' attitudes toward multiculturalism are measured using a dichotomous variable, coded 1 if respondents believe that the US should be a country with a basic culture and values that immigrants acquire, and coded 0 if they believe that the US should be a country of many cultures and values, changing as new people come. Secondly, immigrant trait attributions is an additive scale based on responses to four items asking respondents to compare immigrants and "most Americans" on the basis of patriotism, work ethic, and religiosity. Respondents were given one additional point on this scale for each of the four domains in which they compared immigrants unfavorably to natives. Lastly, we include a scale measuring the perceived costs of immigration based on an average of responses to three items, measuring whether respondents believe that immigrants take jobs away from Americans, pay their fair share of taxes, and strengthen or burden the country overall.¹¹ Higher scores indicate anti-immigrant sentiments for both the immigrant trait attributions and costs of immigration variables. Definitions of the variables and scales used in our analyses are detailed further in the appendix.

Study Limitations

A limitation of cross-sectional studies like the one reported here is that researchers make untested assumptions regarding causal direction. For example, we hypothesize that contact with immigrants influences attitudes toward immigration policy. It is plausible, however, that individuals who are less prejudiced seek contact with immigrants (McLaren, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998a). Although it is not possible to set up experimental designs where individuals are assigned to high or low contact groups, Pettigrew (1998) does a meta-analysis of studies of the effects of

¹⁰ Contact with immigrants: alpha = .62

¹¹ Perceived costs of immigration: alpha = .73

contact and concludes that, while less prejudiced individuals form friendships with members of outgroups, having friends from these groups has an independent effect on prejudicial attitudes (McLaren, 2003).

The same questions pertain to the relationship between perceived traits of immigrants or perceived costs of immigration and support for particular immigration policies. The logic of our regression model assumes that certain immigration-related values and perceptions – namely, support for multiculturalism, perceptions of immigrants' traits, and perceptions about the costs of immigration – are causally antecedent to attitudinal support for restrictive immigration policies. However, the data themselves are correlational, and we cannot rule out the possibility that the causal arrow may point in the opposite direction. For example, through normal processes of political socialization (e.g. Zaller 1992), some individuals may develop a restrictive attitude toward immigration policy first, and then adopt negative perceptions of immigrants' traits in order to "rationalize" their policy attitudes. While this scenario cannot be definitively ruled out, earlier work in both social psychology and political science argues against it. First, research on attitude formation in social psychology suggests that general value orientations (like multiculturalism) and beliefs about a specific attitude object (such as its traits or relevance for one's interests) are formed prior to evaluations of the object itself (immigration policy, in this case).¹² Second, a great deal of research on racial attitudes in political science suggests that judgments about social values, group interests, and the perceived traits and/or the moral worth of groups precede attitudes toward race-related policies (Bobo, 1999; Sears, 1988; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993).

Another limitation of cross-sectional attitudinal data is the likelihood that some respondents — particularly those who are most educated—may be reluctant to agree with overtly prejudiced statements that appear to be at variance with social norms of fairness and equality. This same perception of group norms may lead to undetectable variability within the same individuals—i.e. *true* ambivalence arising from internal struggles between learned stereotypes and desire to conform to socially sanctioned norms. We suspect that both of these biases may be operating among educated suburban residents. On the other hand, in the present study there is sufficient variance to clearly distinguish among the three groups, in spite of possible concealment of attitudes or ambivalence about immigrants.

Results

In Table 1 we compare the responses of urban, suburban and rural respondents to a series of questions on immigrants. Like respondents in the Gallup polls cited earlier, just over half of the respondents in the Immigration in America study agree that “there are too many immigrants in the US today.” An even larger percentage (61%) feels that the federal government is not tough enough on immigration.

¹² See Ajzen, 1988.

**Table 1: Comparison of Urban, Suburban and Rural Attitudes toward Immigration:
NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy Survey, 2004 (n= 1888) ¹³**

Item	Percent Agreeing			
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
There are too many immigrants in the US today**	50.6	54.3	62.1	51.0
On balance immigration of people from other countries to the US is bad for the country ***	34.2	42.6	55.2	39.2
Immigrants take away jobs from Americans who want them***	41.3	51.1	56.6	46.3
Immigrants are <i>not</i> unfairly discriminated against***	50.2	53.8	70.4	53.2
Immigrants do not pay their fair share of taxes***	59.7	66.1	71.0	32.7
Immigrants love America less than most other Americans**	31.4	39.3	37.9	32.8
Immigrants are less hard working than most other Americans***	6.3	6.1	10.8	7.0
Immigrants are less religious than most other Americans**	9.2	10.1	13.4	9.3
Immigrants are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care***	45.1	46.3	65.8	46.4
Very concerned about illegal immigration***	30.4	31.9	32.7	31.0
Legal immigration should be decreased**	38.9	46.7	47.1	40.6
The federal government is not tough enough on immigration***	58.3	64.9	72.5	60.6
Oppose President Bush's Guest Worker proposal ^{ns}	53.5	52.7	59.6	52.1

*chi square significant at p<.05

**chi square significant at p<.01

***chi square significant at p<.001

ns not statistically significant

¹³ Cases weighted.

In these comparisons, there are marked differences among rural, suburban and urban adults. For twelve of the thirteen measures, rural residents hold more negative attitudes toward immigrants than their urban or suburban counterparts—and on a number of items, the differences are quite dramatic. A clear majority of rural residents (and significantly more than their urban or suburban counterparts) believe that there are too many immigrants in the US, that immigration is bad for the country, that immigrants take jobs away from Americans, do not pay their fair share of taxes, and that they are a burden on the country because they take jobs, housing and healthcare from other Americans. Rural residents are also much less likely than their urban or suburban counterparts to feel that immigrants have been the victims of unfair discrimination and are more likely to believe that the federal government is not tough enough on immigration. There is less disagreement among individuals from different regions of residence on immigrants' patriotism, work ethic and religiosity, or on levels of concern about illegal or legal immigration. Still, on these measures as well, rural respondents hold more negative views than either of the other two groups. The one exception is that suburban respondents are very slightly more likely than rural respondents (39 and 38% respectively) to agree that “immigrants love America less than most other Americans”, and there is no statistically significant difference across the three groups on reactions to President Bush's proposal to allow some illegal immigrants to stay legally in the country for several years.

We hypothesize that rural residents hold more restrictive attitudes toward immigration than urban or suburban adults, and that regional differences in attitudes are accounted for – to varying extents – by respondents' background characteristics, political partisanship, ideology and national attachment. In Table 2, we use ordinary least squares regression (with robust standard errors)¹⁴ to model support for a restrictive immigration policy, as a function of four clusters of variables:

- residential status – i.e., urban, suburban, or rural;
- demographic variables and measures of social proximity to immigrants;
- political beliefs and perceptions; and
- attitudes and beliefs specifically related to immigration

When variables in the immigration-related cluster emerged as the strongest determinants of attitudes toward immigration policy – reducing the effects of rural residence to non-significance – we conducted a mediation analysis in order to determine which of them account for the relationship between rurality and support for restrictive immigration policies.

Determinants of Support for Restrictive Immigration Policies

We begin by examining the effect of residential status alone on support for restrictive immigration policies. This analysis is shown in Model 1 of Table 2. As the regression estimates (*b*) indicate, both suburban and rural residents are more supportive of a restrictive approach to immigration than urban dwellers, and support for restrictive immigration policies is strongest among those living in rural areas.

¹⁴ The sample weights were applied in all regression models; both unweighted and weighted sample sizes are given.

Table 2: OLS Regression of Support for Restrictive Immigration Policies on Selected Variables

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE b</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>SE b</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>SE b</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE b</u>
Residential Status								
Suburban	.06**	(.02)	.05*	(.02)	.06**	(.02)	.04*	(.02)
Rural	.11***	(.02)	.05**	(.02)	.04*	(.02)	.02	(.02)
Basic Demographics								
Age	--	--	.00**	(.00)	.00**	(.00)	.00*	(.00)
Gender	--	--	.02	(.02)	.01	(.02)	.00	(.01)
Income	--	--	.01*	(.00)	.01+	(.00)	.00	(.00)
Personal finances (poor)	--	--	-.12***	(.03)	-.09*	(.04)	-.03	(.03)
Education: Some college	--	--	-.05**	(.02)	-.02	(.02)	-.01	(.02)
College degree	--	--	-.14***	(.02)	-.13***	(.02)	-.06***	(.02)
Race: Black	--	--	-.01	(.03)	.03	(.03)	.02	(.02)
Asian	--	--	-.00	(.06)	.06	(.08)	.02	(.05)
Latino	--	--	-.13***	(.04)	-.09*	(.04)	-.04	(.03)
Other non-White	--	--	-.02	(.04)	.02	(.05)	-.02	(.04)
Immigration Social Proximity								
State Immigration								
Level: Medium	--	--	.00	(.02)	-.01	(.02)	.00	(.02)
High	--	--	.01	(.02)	-.01	(.02)	-.00	(.02)
R foreign-born	--	--	-.16***	(.03)	-.09+	(.05)	-.01	(.04)
R's parents foreign-born	--	--	-.02	(.03)	.00	(.03)	.00	(.02)
R's contact w/immigrants	--	--	-.16***	(.03)	-.15***	(.03)	-.05*	(.03)
Political Beliefs & Perceptions								
Partisanship	--	--	--	--	.02	(.03)	.01	(.02)
Ideology	--	--	--	--	.11***	(.03)	.05**	(.02)
National attachment	--	--	--	--	.12***	(.04)	.04	(.03)
National econ. conditions	--	--	--	--	-.14***	(.04)	-.06*	(.03)
Immigration Attitudes and Beliefs								
Multiculturalism	--	--	--	--	--	--	.07***	(.02)
Immigrant trait attributions	--	--	--	--	--	--	.11***	(.03)
Costs of immigration	--	--	--	--	--	--	.36***	(.02)
(Constant)	.63***	(.01)	.62***	(.05)	.55***	(.07)	.36***	(.05)
<u>F</u> (degrees of freedom)	16.33		20.86		13.40		47.64	
	(2, 1878)***		(17, 1621)***		(21, 1200)***		(24, 1150)***	
R ²	.028		.211		.217		0.543	
<u>N</u>	1881		1639		1222		1175	
Weighted <u>N</u>	1885		1729		1502		1456	

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with HC3 robust standard errors.

+p<.10. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

The remaining three model steps demonstrate the extent to which the effect of residential status - particularly rural residence - can be accounted for by other variables associated with attitudes toward immigration policy. In Model 2 we add the demographic measures and social proximity variables. In general, the addition of region of residence and contact variables in Model 2 add significant predictive power to the regression equation, and increase the R^2 from .028 to .211. While the addition of these variables weakens the effects of the two residential-status dummies - particularly the dummy variable for rural residence - they remain statistically significant.

The other estimates in the model are generally consistent with the literature on the relationship of background characteristics to prejudice against outgroups, in that older adults and non-college graduates support more restrictive immigration policies than their counterparts in the reference category. One anomaly is that higher income weakly predicts support for a restrictive approach to immigration, net of individuals' views of their own finances. However, a pessimistic view of one's personal finances is strongly and positively associated with support for restrictive immigration policies. Finally, only one of the dummy variables for race has a significant effect: as expected, Latino respondents show less support for restrictive immigration policies than the White comparison group.

Among the social-proximity variables, there are also some noteworthy effects. Support for restrictive immigration policies is significantly weaker among foreign-born respondents and among respondents who reported regular contact with immigrants in their day-to-day lives. However, cruder measures of contact, namely state immigration levels and parental place of birth, are not significant in the presence of controls for the more specific questions about respondents' interactions with immigrants.

In Model 3, four measures of respondents' political beliefs and perceptions are added to the equation. Their inclusion has little effect on the magnitude or the significance of the two residential-status variables, and does not produce much of an increment in the proportion of variance accounted for by the equation ($R^2 = .217$). However, several of the newly-added variables have significant effects on the dependent variable. As expected, partisanship does not have a significant effect on support for restrictive immigration policies, net of the other political variables. However, a conservative ideological orientation is significantly associated with support for a restricted immigration. In other words, conservatives of either party are more likely than liberals to favor restrictive policies, as are individuals with higher levels of national attachment and greater pessimism about the national economy. Finally, a number of variables added in Model 3 continue to have significant effects, even after the addition of political controls; these include age, income, pessimism about one's personal finances, the possession of a college degree, Latino ethnicity, and respondents' self-reported level of contact with immigrants.

Model 4 adds three variables specifically related to immigration: attitudes toward multiculturalism, trait attributions about immigrants, and the perceived costs of immigration. These variables account for a large portion of the variance in support for restrictive immigration policies, raising the R^2 dramatically from .217 in to .543. Not surprisingly, the belief that America should be a country with one basic culture is strongly correlated with support for reduced immigration, as is the belief that immigrants possess more negative characteristics than

natives. Moreover, the perception that immigrants are costly to the host society proves to be the most powerful of all the predictors included in this final model. These perceptions appear to account for the initial differences between rural and urban residents, since rural residence ceases to be a significant predictor of support for restrictive immigration policies in Model 4. Stated another way, the estimates in Model 4 suggest that rural residents are significantly more likely than urban dwellers to support decreased immigration because of differing views regarding multiculturalism, immigrant traits and perceived costs of immigration. Suburban residence, on the other hand, is still significant, albeit at a lower p value than in Models 1 or 3.

In the final model, the inclusion of immigration-related attitudes and perceptions weakens the previously-noteworthy effects of several other independent variables, including pessimism about one's personal finances, Latino ethnicity, respondents' self-reported level of contact with immigrants, political conservatism, and national attachment. In general, the results of the regression analysis suggest that rural residents' greater support for restrictive immigration policies is perhaps best accounted for by their wariness about multiculturalism, perceptions regarding the characteristics of immigrants and their costs to the host society.

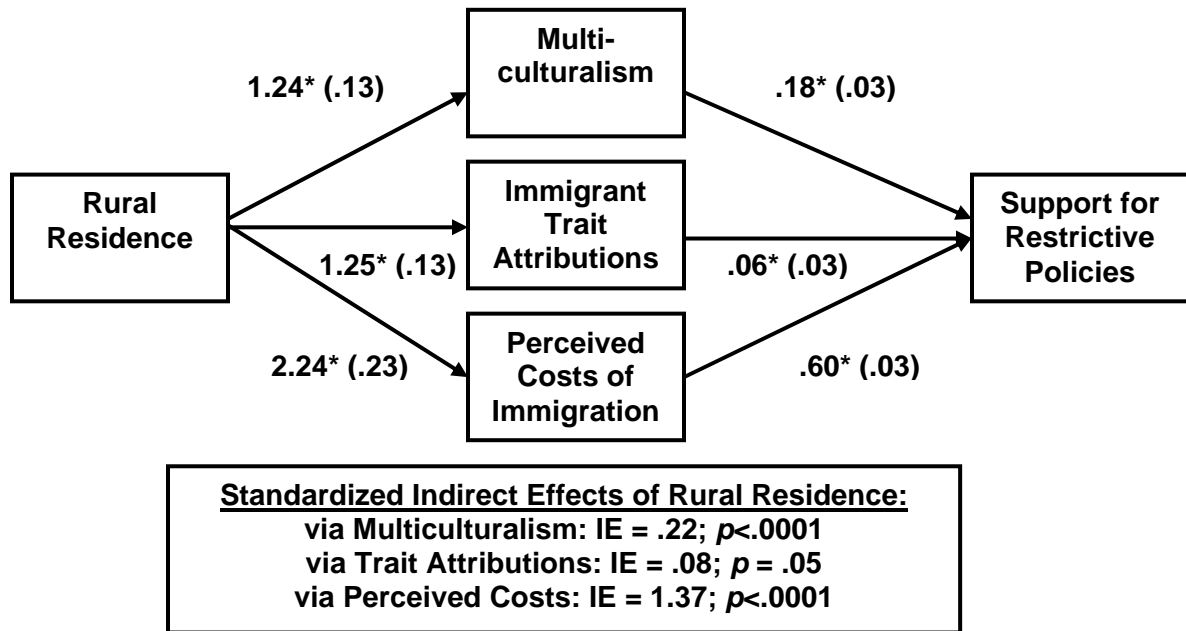
Mediation Analysis: Which Immigration Variables Account for Effect of Rurality?

Because of the importance of the variables in the immigration cluster added in Model 4, and the fact that they reduce the effect of rural residence to non-significance, we perform a mediation analysis to determine which of these attitudes and perceptions account for rural residents' greater support for reduced immigration. Since the dummy variables for residence and the dummy variable for multiculturalism are categorical, we use the LISREL program to estimate a weighted least-squares path model, with a matrix of polychoric correlations as input (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). This procedure makes it possible to correct for the non-normal distribution of the categorical variables. The corrected estimates from this model are then used to compute the indirect effects of rurality via each of the three immigration-related attitudes and perceptions.

In the actual path model, the dummy variables for suburban and rural residence are specified as exogenous predictors of the three immigration variables – multiculturalism, trait attributions, and perceived costs. In turn, these three variables are specified as endogenous-variable predictors of support for restrictive immigration policies. This model, along with unstandardized weighted least-squares estimates, is shown in Figure 1; the dummy variable for suburban residence and its effects are not shown, for ease of presentation. The relatively large sample size leads to a non-fitting chi-square for the full model (i.e., $\chi^2 = 17.88$ with 5 degrees of freedom, $p < .01$), but indices that are not inflated by sample size indicate an excellent fit (i.e., CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .038). The estimates on the left side of this model provide an index of how well rural residence predicts each of the three immigration-related mediators, net of the suburban-urban comparison coded by the other dummy variable for residence. As these path coefficients indicate, rural residence has a larger impact on the perceived costs of immigration ($\gamma = 2.24$, $p < .05$) than on multiculturalism ($\gamma = 1.24$, $p < .05$) or trait attributions ($\gamma = 1.25$, $p < .05$). Thus, in terms of our key immigration-related variables, the most important correlate of rural residence appears to be a belief that immigration is costly. In turn, the estimates on the right side of the model represent the net effect of each mediator on support for restrictive immigration policies. This analysis is akin to the one shown in Model 4 from Table 2, and it indicates a similar pattern of results: while

each mediator has a significant direct effect on support for restrictive policies, perceived costs has a stronger impact ($\beta = .60, p < .05$) than either multiculturalism ($\beta = .18, p < .05$) or trait attributions ($\beta = .06, p < .05$).

Figure 1: Mediators of the Relationship Between Rurality and Support for Restrictive Immigration Policies: NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy Survey, 2004



Note. Entries are unstandardized LISREL path coefficients and standard errors, based on weighted least-squares estimation. The suburban-residence dummy variable is also included as a predictor of multiculturalism, trait attributions, and perceived costs, but is not shown here.

* $p < .05$.

However, we are most interested in the extent to which multiculturalism, trait attributions, and the perceived costs of immigration mediated the effect of rural residence on support for restrictive immigration policies. Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) technique for estimating indirect effects, we compute the effect of rurality via each immigration-related variable. While all three of these effects are significant at conventional levels, the statistics demonstrate that rural residence has its strongest indirect effect via perceived costs, with an unstandardized indirect effect of 1.34 (standardized effect = 1.37, $z = 8.76, p < .0001$). In contrast, rural residence has much weaker effects via multiculturalism (unstandardized effect = .22; standardized effect = .23, $z = 5.08, p < .0001$) and immigrant trait attributions (unstandardized effect = .08; standardized effect = .08, $z = 1.96, p = .05$). In summary, of the immigration-related attitudes and perceptions examined in Model 4 above, the costs-of-immigration variable appears to do the best job explaining rural residents' greater support for restrictive immigration policies.

Discussion

Conzen et al. (1992) writes that, “historically immigrants who settled in ‘empty spaces’ and isolated rural areas, appear to have had significantly different experiences from those who settled in large industrial towns and cities because they were less subject to assimilative pressures, nativistic prejudice, and conflict with other ethnic groups.” Our research suggests that this may not be the case in contemporary times. The rural respondents in this national survey perceive immigrants more negatively than urban or suburban respondents, and are more concerned about the impact of immigration on American jobs and the economy. As a result, they are more likely to favor restrictions in immigration policies – although, in the final regression model, it is suburban, and not rural residence that remains statistically significant.

The multivariate analyses indicate that differences in age, income, education, and contact with immigrants do not fully explain rural support for restrictive immigration policies. Instead, in the final analysis, the explanation appears to lie in a set of immigration-specific attitudes and perceptions: support for a monocultural view of American culture, negative perceptions of immigrants themselves, and in particular, and a strong perception that immigration is costly to the host society.¹⁵

Although our focus is on rural residents, the results for suburban adults are the most puzzling. Suburbanites’ support of restrictive immigration, even after controls for background variables, ideology and ideas about multiculturalism and immigrant traits, may be due to the kind of racialized views that led many White suburbanites to flee central cities (Delgado, 1999). By 1990, 86 % of Whites lived in communities with less than 1 % people of color. Voss (2001) has argued that residential patterns of this sort have contributed to the emergence of a “White middle class” subculture that is generally suspicious of non-White groups. When members of these groups live close enough to appear culturally threatening, but not close enough to allow actual cultural contact and exchange, hostility toward immigrants and liberal immigration policies becomes endemic.

The role of the media should not be discounted in explaining the attitudes of suburbanites. The anti-immigrant rhetoric common on many political talk radio (PTR) shows may result in hardened attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. In San Diego, a talk radio host sparked a movement for better government control of the US-Mexican border by asking drivers to shine their headlights across the border to draw attention to the issue (Bick 1988, cited in

¹⁵ The results of our final model were robust to alternative specifications as well. For example, in order to model non-linear effects of age – for example, effects where opposition increases as adults reach prime working age and then decrease thereafter, as perceived job competition drops – we re-ran our final, full model with the square of age included as an additional predictor. This term did not have a significant coefficient ($p > .10$), and its inclusion did not change any of the key results: all three immigration-related predictors continued to have a significant effect on support for restrictive immigration policies (all $ps < .001$). Moreover, in order to see whether the local (rather than state-level) prevalence of immigrants had any noteworthy effects, we re-ran the full model with an additional variable indicating whether respondents thought that there were “almost none,” “only a few,” “some,” or “many” immigrants living in their city or town. The variable was recoded to run from 0-1, with higher scores indicating the perceived presence of more immigrants. The effect of this variable did not even approach significance (i.e., $p > .90$), and its inclusion did not change the effects of the three immigration-related predictors.

Barker 1998). Although residential differences in audiences are not available, the profile of typical political talk radio listeners as older, White, affluent and conservative Republicans (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 1996; and Lee and Cappella, 2001) mirrors that of suburban residents.

In addition to media personalities, institutional leaders appear to influence attitudes toward affirmative action (Taylor, 2000). In segregated, monocultural suburbs, residents may be particularly susceptible to ‘elite cues’ that promote anti-immigrant and anti-Black stereotypes (Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000). The reinforcement of negative stereotypes of minorities in suburban communities can lead to particularly entrenched attitudes toward immigrants, but educated suburban adults may refrain from directly articulating these prejudices to avoid sounding bigoted (Burns and Gimpel, 2000); instead, xenophobia is expressed indirectly in the form of strong and persistent support for restrictionist policies. This is what a variety of scholars call “modern racism”—simultaneous support for laws against blatant racism, and endorsement of the belief that minorities and immigrants lack proper values, and make unjust demands for social redress (e.g., Eberhardt and Fiske, 1996). Unfortunately, these scholars suggest that the prospects for changing entrenched attitudes are very poor.

In our final analysis, the perception that immigrants are a burden on the US appears to be the most important single predictor of support for restrictive immigration policies. It is also the variable which most strongly accounts for the relationship between rural residence and a restrictionist policy orientation. The significance of this “cost” variable underscores Esses’ suggestion that attitudes toward immigrants are largely shaped by the belief that they compete with natives for resources, and that the stress of this competition “motivates strategies to remove the source of competition” (Esses et al., 2001; Lyall, 2001). Immigration is thus construed as a zero-sum competition, in which natives lose for every gain on the part of immigrants.

The sentiments behind the zero sum equation described above are dramatically illustrated in focus group comments from separate studies in Minnesota. Fennelly and Leitner (2002) conducted focus groups with White working-class individuals in a rural town with a large meat packing plant. The quote in the next paragraph is from a White worker who was employed at the plant until the mid-1990s, when it shut down, the union was disbanded, and the company reopened with a workforce that was almost exclusively made up of immigrants on the processing lines.

Daniel: They shouldn't be treated better than we are. We're the ones that are payin' for what they're gittin. If they're gonna run around act like they're better than we are, we ain't gonna, we ain't gonna appreciate that at all.

This quote illustrates the kind of labor market competition that has long been identified as a source of negative attitudes toward minorities (Hood and Morris, 1997), and one in which the denigration of outgroups by low income Whites serves as a means of maintaining a sense of group power and identity (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1988; Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000).

In Fennelly and Leitner’s study, the most strident anti-immigrant sentiments are voiced as a reaction to the perception that immigrants get special tax and social welfare breaks.¹⁶ In the

¹⁶ This is an ironic finding, given the stripping away of benefits for both legal and undocumented immigrants since the welfare and immigration reforms of 1996.

present study, 58 % of respondents overall agree with the statement that “immigrants do not pay their fair share of taxes,” and 46 % agree that “immigrants are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care”.

Surveys and focus groups conducted by Greenberg and Greenberg (2004) with suburban residents in Minnesota provide further illustration of this tendency. For example, a middle aged White woman in a suburban community expresses outrage over what she perceives as unfair advantages for immigrants:

The groups are getting very large and it seems when they come over here they are getting all the tax breaks. They get all this help. They get this, they get that..., and those of us who have fought for this country, who have paid our taxes, who raise our children and who live in this country and in this state are the ones that are paying for all those people to get all those breaks and our children and our lifestyles are not increasing, they are staying stagnant. Some are still staying at poverty level because these people who are coming into Minnesota from other countries are getting what us as Minnesotans or American citizens ought to be having.

Another participant in a group of White middle-aged men from the same county voices similar concerns:

They got health care. I mean my father-in-law, he's worked here his whole life, and he's gotta pay for . . . He broke his back, he had to pay for his own medical. And there's these people that just move over here and (inaudible). They come in and they've got these Somalis and they say they're depressed, well then they get five more years of Welfare.

The notion that immigrants might receive social benefits incenses many in an era of rising health costs and stigmatization of welfare recipients. Immigrants are a convenient target for anger over social spending, since, as Esses (1998) notes, “outgroups that are salient and distinct from one’s own group are more likely to stand out as potential competitors.”

In the Greenberg and Greenberg study cited above, underlying ideological views are particularly apparent in comments from focus group participants in an exurban community. A middle-aged, married woman shows the ways in which strong anti-immigrant statements and support of complete and unidirectional ‘assimilation’ may be prefaced by protestations of egalitarianism:

I agree with diversity too, but I think no matter where you are coming from, you should speak the language here, you should make adjustments to what is here. I think it is great, you know, keep the things from your own nationality, I think that is great, but if you live here, you should learn how to speak English and not have everything adjusted to fit you. You need to adjust.

The introduction of this statement with the comment “I agree with diversity too” is noteworthy. It suggests another form of “modern racism” – in particular, what Dovidio et al. (1996) call ‘aversive racism,’ in which discomfort with outgroups and their characteristics coexists with an explicit endorsement of egalitarianism.

The perception that immigration imposes undue social costs may also be accompanied by strong feelings of national attachment and cultural superiority, as suggested by the following quote from a participant in a male focus group from the same county:

If you're coming over here to hang your country's flag in your front yard, and if you're coming over here trying to make me change, or I've got stand up or apologize for who I am because you don't speak my language or I don't understand your religion, and we've got to have all these laws and rules and regulations for you so that you can live here, I think that's crap. I think this is America. If you want to live here, you abide by the rules and regulations that we have.

The speaker's comments reflect an anger that native-born citizens might have to adapt to change because of immigration. This suggestion, that it is actually majority group members who are disadvantaged, reflects anger over the perceived gains of immigrants and minorities.

Nevertheless, neither rural nor suburban areas are monolithic. Wells (2004) argues that, as federal immigration policies have become more restrictive, local responses have been highly varied, and in some instances have affirmed and protected immigrant rights. She studied examples of 'immigrant inclusive' policies at local levels, such as the Sanctuary Movement and Limited Cooperation Ordinances rejecting collaborations between law enforcement and the Immigration Service; her conclusion is that "immigrant-inclusive outcomes are most likely in localities where immigrants comprise a valued part of the local economy, where they are well-connected to native-born residents and community institutions, and where the political culture is liberal and inclusive. Economic downturns appear to foster immigrant exclusion, but inclusive political cultures can counteract this influence (Wells, 2004). There are also some signs that prejudice toward immigrants is shifting, just as attitudes toward Europeans changed over the past century.

Bushway (2001) describes how the arrival of newer and more culturally distant immigrants, such as Somalis and Bosnians, has made Latinos seem like 'old timers' in some Minnesota towns. She quotes a focus group participant who said that:

Since the Bosnians have come the Hispanics became more accepted. The Bosnians are now the underclass. The Hispanics are more familiar and active. Another respondent said "having the Somalis here, we hear a lot less complaints about the Latinos."

Conclusions and Recommendations for Public Policy

The concept of a rural world view is difficult to define, yet Winson and Leach (2002) call it "the most reliable defining feature of rural peoples and communities." They argue that rurality is a social construct, rather than a geographic variable. In small towns where many residents grew up knowing their neighbors, definitions of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' may be particularly rigid. Naples (2000) describes a rural hierarchy in which marginalized groups "can never acquire the designation of legitimate community members." In an era of increased immigration to rural areas formerly untouched by large-scale migration, the regional differences in attitudes toward immigration policy highlighted by our analyses suggest the potential for future conflict. While intergroup attitudes are necessarily complex, our research suggests a few avenues for improving

cross-cultural relations. Since perceived costs drive attitudes toward immigration policy, educators and policymakers would do well to develop informational campaigns designed to demonstrate the fiscal benefits of immigration, and the ways in which immigrants contribute to the economy. While there is some debate about the relative economic consequences of different types of immigration, few specialists have argued that immigration has the dire costs cited by many of our respondents – or that it is without corresponding benefits (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). For example, Simon (1987) cites a poll of 27 leading economists, in which 81 % of economists consider the overall effect of contemporary immigration on the US's economic growth to be “very favorable.” None of the economists view migration to be “slightly unfavorable” or “very unfavorable.” In fact, migration may have certain particularly salutary consequences for small towns, such as a reversal of declining school enrollments and a rejuvenation of local businesses.

As noted earlier, elites also play an important role in shaping public opinion. Taylor (2002) cites Allport's recognition of the importance of leadership in influencing public attitudes toward race, and his observation that administrators in schools, industry and government have the power to promote positive change ‘by executive order’. Following this logic, if trusted leaders were to emphasize the *economic contributions of immigrants*, it might alter American attitudes.

In spite of the enormity of challenge, the historical precedent gives some reason for optimism regarding the malleability of racial attitudes. Zaller (1992), for example, suggests that it was the ‘racially liberalizing effects of elite discourse’ that accounted for the astonishing increase in positive White attitudes toward Blacks in the decades after the end of World War II. In 1944 45 % of Whites surveyed about opportunities for Blacks said that “Negroes should have as good a chance as Whites”; by 1972 the comparable figure was 97 % (1992). It is our hope that the country will see a similar transformation in attitudes toward immigrants.

Appendix: Definitions of Dependent and Independent Variable Values

Dependent Variable

Support for Restricted Immigration: mean score on a scale of low (0=pro-immigrant response) to medium (.5=middle response) to high (1=anti-immigrant response) to questions regarding immigration policy:

Do you think there are too many immigrants in the US today, too few, or about the right number?
On balance, do you think immigration of people from other countries to the US is good, bad, or hasn't made much difference?

Should legal immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

How do you rate the federal government on immigration? Is it too tough, not tough enough, or about right?

Independent Variables Coded Values

Background characteristics

Age	age in years
Male gender	1=male; 0=female
Income	self-reported annual income in thousands of dollars
1=less than \$20,000;	
2=\$20,000 but less than \$30,000;	
3=\$30,000 but less than \$40,000, or less than \$40,000 (unspecified);	
4=\$40,000 but less than \$50,000, or more than \$40,000 (unspecified);	
5=\$50,000 but less than \$60,000;	
6=\$60,000 but less than \$75,000;	
7=\$75,000 but less than \$100,000;	
8=\$100,000 or more	

Some college	1=yes; 0=no (excluded group is no college)
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College degree	1=yes; 0=no (excluded group is no college)
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Personal finances Scale based on responses to: How would you rate your own financial situation today? – Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

1=excellent; .67=good; .33=only fair; 0=poor

Region of residence and contact with immigrants

Suburban	1=live in suburb; 0=does not live in suburb (excluded group is urban)
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Rural	1=live in rural area; 0=does not live in rural area (excluded group is urban)
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Medium-immigration state 1=live in medium-immigration state; 0=does not live in medium-immigration state (excluded group is low-immigration state)

High-immigration state 1=live in high-immigration state; 0=does not live in high-immigration state (excluded group is low-immigration state)

Born in US	1=yes; 0=no
Either/both parents foreign-born	1=yes; 0=no
Black	1=Black; 0=non-Black (excluded group is White)
Asian	1=Asian; 0=non-Asian (excluded group is White)
Latino	1=Latino; 0=non-Latino (excluded group is White)
Other non-White	1=Other; 0=non-Other (excluded group is White)

Contact with immigrants Mean score of a scale based on responses to the following questions (high score=most contact):

1=yes; 0=no for questions below

Do you have a close friend or a colleague with whom you socialize outside work who is a recent immigrant, or not?

Do you work closely with any recent immigrants at your job, or not?

Have you ever gone to a doctor or a dentist who is an immigrant, or not?

Do you go to a gas station run by immigrants, or not?

Do you shop at a grocery store or market run by immigrants, or not?

Do you eat at a restaurant run by immigrants, or not?

Political and ideological views

Partisanship Do you consider yourself a strong Democrat/Republican or not a very strong Democrat/Republican?

1=strong; 0=not very strong

Ideology Scale based on responses to: Would you say your views in most political matters are liberal, moderate, conservative, something else, or haven't you given this much thought?

1=conservative; .5=moderate/something else/not much thought; 0=liberal

National attachment Scale based on responses to: How proud are you to be an American - Extremely proud, very proud, only a little proud, or not proud at all?

1=extremely proud; .67=very proud; .33=only a little proud; 0=not proud at all

National economy Scale based on responses to: How would you rate the economic conditions in this country today? –Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

1=excellent; .67=good; .33=only fair; 0=poor

Attitudes toward immigrants and multiculturalism

Multiculturalism What kind of country do you think the US SHOULD be...?

A country with a basic American culture and values that immigrants take on when they come here, or a country made up of many cultures and values that change as new people come here.

1=basic American culture and values; 0=many cultures and values

Immigrant trait attribution Additive scale based on responses to the following questions (high score=anti-immigrant responses):

Do you think most recent immigrants pay their fair share of taxes, or not?

1=no; 0=yes

Do you think most recent immigrants love America more or less than most other Americans, or is there no difference?

1=love America less; .5=no difference; 0=love America more

Do you think most recent immigrants are more or less hard-working than most other Americans, or is there no difference?

1=less hard-working; .5=no difference; 0=more hard-working

Do you think most recent immigrants are more or less religious than most other Americans, or is there no difference?

1=less religious; .5=no difference; 0=more religious

Costs of immigration Mean score of a scale based on responses to the following questions (high score=anti-immigrant responses):

Do you think recent immigrants take away jobs from Americans who want them, or not?

1=yes; 0=no

Do you think most recent immigrants pay their fair share of taxes, or not?

1=no; 0=yes

Which comes closer to your own views? Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents, or immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care?

1=burden; 0=strengthen

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