

(When) Race Matters: The Effect of Race and Place on Support for Immigration Restriction

L. Jason Anastasopoulos
jason_anastasopoulos@hks.harvard.edu

Democracy Fellow, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation,
Harvard Kennedy School of Government

July 10, 2014

Background

- **Arizona v. United States, 2012** - SCOTUS upholds controversial provision of Arizona's anti-immigration law **S.B. 1070** which allows police to check the immigration status of anyone stopped, detained or arrested if there is "reasonable suspicion" that they are in the country illegally.
- **S.B. 1070 is very popular around the nation.**
 - 61% of Americans *support* legislation similar to S.B. 1070 in their state. (Quinnipiac, June 2012)
 - Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Utah enacted laws shortly after the passage of S.B. 1070.

Background

- Why such high levels of support for these laws?
- **Proponents** claim that they are a value-neutral means to enforce federal immigration law.
- **Opponents** claim that support is motivated by animus towards brown immigrants.
- Laws passed in states with growing immigrant populations: can racial threat may explain increases in support?

Racial Threat

- **Racial threat theory** was originally developed to explain white opposition to pro-minority policies in the South (Key 1949).
- Key noticed that support for pro-minority policies among whites in the Deep South were negatively correlated with the proportion black.
- Explained this relationship by arguing that the higher minority presence posed a political threat to whites.

Racial Threat

- Explanations for racial threat:
 - **Realistic group conflict** - threat triggered by fears of economic or political competition (Bobo 1983; Levine and Campbell 1972; Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990; Citrin et al. 1997; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000).
 - **Symbolic prejudice** - threat triggered by abstract prejudicial biases (clash of values, culture etc.) rooted in early adulthood socialization (Kinder and Sears 1981; Huddy and Sears 1995).

Immigration and Racial Threat

- Applied to undocumented immigration, racial threat implies that white support for anti-immigration policies like S.B. 1070 will vary with perceptions of the presence of non-white immigrants.
- **Empirical challenges:**
 - Little variation in perceived racial and cultural differences among immigrants by Americans.
 - Relationship between perceptions of immigrant presence and support for anti-immigration laws confounded by ideology, geography etc.
- **Solution:** experimentally manipulate immigrant race and perceived presence.

Experimental Setup: Design

	Experimental treatments.	
	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian
Control	No Location/Light	No Location/Dark
Threat	R's City/Light	R's City/Dark

- Assessing the relevance of racial threat on support for anti-immigration laws requires testing how the *interaction* between immigrant race and presence.
- **Immigrant race** - Manipulated using skin-tone (Caucasian/Non-Caucasian) of an undocumented Mexican immigrant.
- **Immigrant presence** - Manipulated using location (No Location/In R's City) of an undocumented Mexican immigrant.
- **Outcome** - Support for anti-immigration law similar to S.B. 1070 in respondent's state.

Experimental Setup: Design

Instructions: Below is an excerpt from a national newspaper article profiling immigrants. Please **CAREFULLY READ THE TEXT BELOW** and answer the following questions. You will be asked how short validation questions about the article which **MUST BE ANSWERED CORRECTLY** for you to be compensated. Image is concealed due to copyright restrictions.

The Living American Dream: An Illegal Immigrant's Journey

As an illegal immigrant worker, Miguel's journey to the United States was a difficult one. Like many illegal immigrants, he came to the US from Mexico using the services of a "coyote," a specialist in human trafficking across the US-Mexican border.

"Me and other members of my family were packed in the back of a small truck for days, sometimes without food or water," he told me in his native Spanish. "When I finally arrived in the United States, I was so happy that I thought I could kiss the ground!"

Now the problems that he faces are of a different kind. In his day-to-day life, he struggles to put food on the table for his family. "At my life, I always work hard, but there never seems to be enough money," he tells me.



Figure : Control/Caucasian

Instructions: Below is an excerpt from a national newspaper article profiling immigrants. Please **CAREFULLY READ THE TEXT BELOW** and answer the following questions. You will be asked how short validation questions about the article which **MUST BE ANSWERED CORRECTLY** for you to be compensated. Image is concealed due to copyright restrictions.

The Living American Dream: An Illegal Immigrant's Journey

As an illegal immigrant worker, Miguel's journey to the United States was a difficult one. Like many illegal immigrants, he came to the US from Mexico using the services of a "coyote," a specialist in human trafficking across the US-Mexican border.

"Me and other members of my family were packed in the back of a small truck for days, sometimes without food or water," he told me in his native Spanish. "When I finally arrived in the United States, I was so happy that I thought I could kiss the ground!"

Now the problems that he faces are of a different kind. In his day-to-day life, he struggles to put food on the table for his family. "At my life, I always work hard, but there never seems to be enough money," he tells me.



Figure : Control/Non-Caucasian

Instructions: Below is an excerpt from a newspaper article profiling immigrants living in Berkeley, CA. Please **CAREFULLY READ THE TEXT BELOW** and answer the following questions. You will be asked how short validation questions about the article which **MUST BE ANSWERED CORRECTLY** for you to be compensated. Image is concealed due to copyright restrictions.

The Living American Dream: An Illegal Immigrant's Journey

Berkeley, CA. As an illegal immigrant worker, Miguel's journey to Berkeley was a difficult one. Like many illegal immigrants, he came to the US from Mexico using the services of a "coyote," a specialist in human trafficking across the US-Mexican border.

"Me and other members of my family were packed in the back of a small truck for days, sometimes without food or water," he told me in his native Spanish. "When I finally arrived in the United States, I was so happy that I thought I could kiss the ground!"

Now the problems that he faces are of a different kind. In his day-to-day life, he struggles to put food on the table for his family. "At my life, I always work hard, but there never seems to be enough money," he tells me.




Figure : Threat/Caucasian

Instructions: Below is an excerpt from a newspaper article profiling immigrants living in Berkeley, CA. Please **CAREFULLY READ THE TEXT BELOW** and answer the following questions. You will be asked how short validation questions about the article which **MUST BE ANSWERED CORRECTLY** for you to be compensated. Image is concealed due to copyright restrictions.

The Living American Dream: An Illegal Immigrant's Journey

Berkeley, CA. As an illegal immigrant worker, Miguel's journey to Berkeley was a difficult one. Like many illegal immigrants, he came to the US from Mexico using the services of a "coyote," a specialist in human trafficking across the US-Mexican border.

"Me and other members of my family were packed in the back of a small truck for days, sometimes without food or water," he told me in his native Spanish. "When I finally arrived in the United States, I was so happy that I thought I could kiss the ground!"

Now the problems that he faces are of a different kind. In his day-to-day life, he struggles to put food on the table for his family. "At my life, I always work hard, but there never seems to be enough money," he tells me.




Figure : Threat/Non-Caucasian

Experimental Setup: Predictions

- If racial threat is relevant to attitudes toward the anti-immigration law, *race should affect support for the law when white respondents believe that the immigrant lives near them (Threat Treatments).*
- Support for the law among whites should be highest for those receiving the *Threat/Non-Caucasian* treatment.

Results: Overview

- Responses collected between May and September of 2013.
- Survey posted on **Amazon Mechanical Turk** as a “A 3-5 minute survey of your opinion on immigration.”
- **880** responses collected, **652** remained after filtering responses by validation questions.

Results: Respondent Demographics

Variable	Percent/Mean	95% CI
White	76.4%	73.2%, 79.7%
College	86.8%	84.2%, 89.4%
Unemployed	1.5%	0.5%, 2.5%
Age	34.4	33.4, 35.4
Republican	13.2%	10.6%, 15.9%
Democrat	44.5%	40.7%, 48.4%
Independent	34.4%	30.7%, 38.0%

- Respondents are mostly **white**, **college educated**, and identify as **Democrats** or **Independents**.
- **Regional diversity** - at least 20 respondents from population heavy states in the Northeast, Mid-West, Southern and Western U.S. Regions.

Results: Testing Racial Threat

% of White, Native-Born American Citizens Favoring
the Anti-Immigration Law By Treatment

	Caucasian	Non-Caucasian	Difference
Control	49.5%	51.1%	+1.8%
Threat	42.4%	61.6%	+19.2%**

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
for Two-Sided T-Test, $H_0 : Diff. = 0$

Results: Testing Racial Threat

$$\text{logit}(E[\text{Law}|Race]) = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Race} + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

	Control		Threat	
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Race	0.07 (0.31)	-0.06 (0.37)	0.78** (0.36)	1.29*** (0.44)
% Illegal	*	-0.04 (0.14)	*	0.21 (0.15)
Age	*	0.01 (0.02)	*	0.02 (0.02)
Ideology	*	0.67*** (0.13)	*	0.80*** (0.14)
Education	*	-0.42 (0.27)	*	0.11 (0.31)
Unemployed	*	*	*	0.86 (1.62)
N	167	167	132	130
Covariates	No	Yes	No	Yes

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Standard errors are in parentheses.

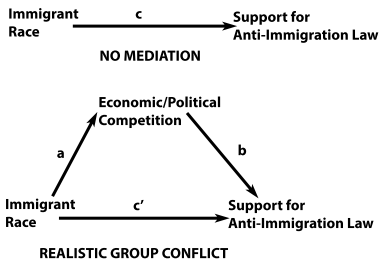
Results: Conclusions

- Strong evidence that **racial threat motivates support for anti-immigrant laws**.
- **Support** for the anti-immigration law among white American citizens is **highest** when the immigrant is **non-Caucasian** and **local** (61.6%).
- Within the **Control** treatment, **race does not affect support** for the anti-immigration law.
- Within the **Threat** treatment, **race has a significant effect on support** for the anti-immigration law.
 - 19% **increase** in support for the law when shown the non-Caucasian immigrant.
 - Odds of supporting the law are **2.2 to 3.6 times higher** when shown the non-Caucasian immigrant.

Realistic Conflict or Symbolic Prejudice?

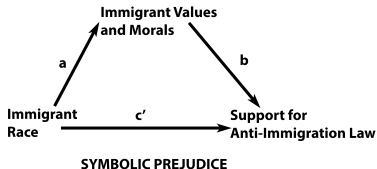
- What kinds of concerns motivate threat in the results found above?
- According to **realistic group conflict**, threat is caused by fears of economic or political competition.
- **Symbolic prejudice** on the other hand, suggests that more abstract concerns regarding the values that out-groups bring causes a threatened response.
- I distinguish between these two explanations using a series of questions and a mediation analyses (Kenny 2014).

Realistic Group Conflict



- Concerns about economic and political competition mediate the relationship between immigrant race and support for the anti-immigration law.
- No RGC related questions (support for social services and increasing taxes to help the immigrant) mediated the relationship between race and support for the anti-immigration law.

Symbolic Prejudice



- Abstract concerns regarding the values of the immigrant and their ability to assimilate will mediate the relationship between race and support for the anti-immigration law.
- “Illegal immigrants like Miguel would be good American citizens” was asked to tap into SP concerns.

Symbolic Prejudice: Mediation Analysis

- Concerns about whether the immigrant will be a good citizen mediates the relationship between race and support for the anti-immigration law.

$$\text{logit}(E[\text{Law}|\text{Race}]) = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Race} + \beta_2 \text{GoodCitizen} + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

Variables	Support for Anti-Immigration Law	
	(1)	(2)
Race	0.65 (0.40)	1.06** (0.47)
Good Citizen	-1.98*** (0.40)	-1.78*** (0.47)
N	132	130
Covariates	No	Yes

Conclusions

- Undocumented immigrant race affects anti-immigration policy attitudes, but only in certain geographical contexts.
- Racial threat can explain support for anti-immigration laws targeting undocumented immigrants.
- Concerns related to symbolic prejudice can better explain threat than realistic group conflict in the context of undocumented immigration.