

Areas of Concerns in Anti-immigration Sentiment: Conceptualizing and Identifying the Threat

ABSTRACT

The growing concerns over illegal immigration and porous borders have likely intensified fears among average Americans. Previous research examining the relationship between threat and immigration has focused on various notions of threat, ranging from personal threat (direct threat to an individual) to group threat (threat to one's group's interests) to sociotropic threat (a generalized anxiety and sense of threat to society as a whole). In many instances threat has been empirically identified as a main source of anti-immigration sentiment; yet, such findings rarely push forward a research agenda that connects public opinion regarding immigration to politics. Building upon literature examining symbolic politics and racial resentment, we investigate the role of sociotropic judgments about immigrants' impacts on society in forming opinions about the current immigration level. Using Gallup Poll data collected in successive three year periods – 2001, 2004, and 2007 – we explore the trend in sociotropic concerns involving different aspects of society. We conclude by proposing new measures of immigrant threat based on our findings and suggest that our approach will help craft more theoretically useful measures of anti-immigrant attitudes.

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing debates about a new guest worker program, border security, and national identity provide the impetus for a lively public discourse regarding the effects of immigration in America. Calls for immigration reform filled the streets of Los Angeles, Chicago, and other U.S. cities with protesters in 2006 and continues to mobilize smaller demonstrations today. Immigration issues have held a prominent position in the primary election debates and will likely become more salient in the 2008 presidential debates. This presents a pressing need to study public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy in the coming months.

In comparison to the strong social taboos surrounding race relations,¹ the relative accessibility of Americans' underlying feelings about immigrants has made immigration attitudes an attractive area for research (e.g., Alexander and Simon 1993, Dovidio and Esses 2001, Fetzer 2000). Much of the sociological and historical research in this area focuses on the contextual elements which lead native-born Americans to form anti-immigrant sentiments (Jiménez 2007, Ngai 2004), while political scientists and psychologists have framed the issue using a language of threat, measured at the individual, group, and national levels. In this paper we employ an interdisciplinary approach that embraces both the assumption that perceived threats at the national level influence Americans' opinions regarding immigration policies and the understanding that this influence is mediated by social context. Our data are derived from three national studies that asked individuals to state whether immigrants have a negative effect on six different areas of society: the economy, crime, social and moral values, jobs, taxes, and the arts, food, and music. We use the "areas of concern" and their corresponding effects on

¹ For example, see Entman and Rojecki (2000).

beliefs about decreasing immigration to help further conceptualize and measure the potential underlying sources of threat from immigrants.

While acknowledging the limitations of our data, we contend that research focusing on immigration attitudes has been limited by a lack of clarity when measuring the specific and growing nature of the “threat.” A number of studies point to the importance of threat – mainly in-group versus out-group perceptions – but the measures employed rarely measure the nature of the threat. Rather, they merely imply that the threat, be it to the economic or our national identity, exists. For instance, if one believes “unemployment” is more likely to occur if immigrants come to America, then some consider this to indicate immigrant threat (Wilson 2000), yet agreement with this belief does not necessarily indicate that one is threatened by immigrants. These sorts of negative attitudes and opinions about immigrants and immigration have tended to yield conclusions that are not explicitly validated by the inherent measures. What the questions and measures found in past public opinion polls *can* do is help to shape better measures.

We use our preliminary measures to track the nature of concerns with immigrants over time (i.e., “growing concerns”) and examine the extent to which these concerns are useful for understanding beliefs about decreasing immigration levels in the U.S. Those areas showing upward trends in concern or having the strongest impact on anti-immigration sentiment should inform measurements of the sources of resentment toward immigration. In the subsequent sections we provide some background on the different notions of group-based threat, present our data and findings, and end with a discussion connecting the areas of concerns with more targeted survey questions to measure underlying attitudes toward immigration and immigrants.

BACKGROUND: EXISTING THEORIES OF THREAT

While surveys often struggle to adequately measure complex social contexts, they provide valuable data on individual sources of anxiety related to immigration. The notion that Americans are threatened by immigration and immigrants has received considerable attention (Fetzer 2000; Wilson 2001). Theories about “immigrant threat” can be divided into three categories: economic self-interest, group threat, and sociotropic politics. First, some have considered the possibility that Americans’ attitudes toward immigrants are shaped primarily by economic self-interests. Individuals holding lower socio-economic status are said to feel more personally threatened by immigrants due to feelings of increased competition for economic, social, and political resources. However, empirical findings generally show that measures of personal threat related to self-interests are overshadowed by concerns at a more macro level (Wilson 2001, Burns and Gimpel 2000, Hood and Morris 1998). The remaining two categories have received more support in recent studies of public opinion surrounding immigration and are reviewed in greater detail below.

Group Threat Theory

Scholars have attributed popular opposition to immigration to *group threat*. Traditionally, the “group power-threat” hypothesis has been conceptualized in terms of higher numbers of out-group members (e.g., immigrants) presumably posing a numerical challenge to current in-group members (e.g., U.S. citizens or residents) (Esses et al 1998, Hertz and Giles 1994, Key 1949, Wilson 2001). The threat is hypothesized to occur because of increased inter-racial and ethnic group tensions brought about by fears over the possible redistribution of

resources and power. Discussions about group threat in the immigration literature tend to focus on economics and job competition (Fetzer 2000). Wilson (2001) finds that perceived threats to employment opportunities and economic growth are among the strongest predictors of support for immigration policy among Americans. He also finds that perceived threats to national unity are significantly correlated with opposition to immigration.

Realistic conflict theory is an extension of general hypotheses about group threat. Realistic conflict focuses on the micro-level contexts in which competition for resources and intergroup conflict are heightened (Blumer 1958, Hood and Morris 1998). Blumer advances an understanding of racial prejudice as a collective, rather than individual process: "...The locus of race prejudice is not in the area of individual feelings but in the definition of the respective positions of the racial groups." It is a "defensive reaction to...challenging of the sense of group position" (1958, 172).

Similar to Blumer, we conceptualize group conflict and group position in terms of economic, social, and political resources, both material (actual goods and services) and psychological (perceived fairness, equality, opportunity). With regard to immigration this underlying conflict may cause increased tension between groups that are often in greater competition with immigrants. For example, Blacks may feel they are being disadvantaged by immigrants because they are taking lower wage jobs that blacks might normally need (but not desire) or may feel a competitive threat from other immigrants because of perceived unfairness. Similarly, native-born and naturalized Hispanics may feel they are being disadvantaged by immigrants because of the shrinking number of jobs available to their respective groups. Individuals with lower incomes may perceive they are in greater competition for lower wage jobs, while individuals with higher incomes may perceive they are in greater competition for

skilled jobs in the industries of science and technology. Regardless of the group the underlying basis of the threat is a belief that there is a zero-sum game inherent in immigration: the resources are limited, the demand for them is unlimited, and the number of consumers is rapidly increasing.

Sociotropic Threat

Another threat hypothesis which has gained support within the political science community deals with *sociotropic* politics. Whereas the group threat and realistic conflict theories center on the individual's group interests, Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) have argued that political behaviors are more heavily influenced by evaluations related to societal and national conditions. They argue that "purely sociotropic citizens vote according to the country's pocketbook, not their own" (132), and citizens tend to penalize the group they feel most responsible for negative societal impacts. In Kinder and Kiewiet's (1981) research the penalized group is the current presidential administration but immigrants present another source of "sociotropic threat:" they threaten society at large, rather one's self or group.

According to Davis and Silver (2004), sociotropic threat becomes more salient than perceptions of personal threat when investigating attitudes of intolerance or the denial of basic civil rights and liberties. Applied to immigrants, individuals who are influenced by sociotropic considerations tend to support issues, policies, people, and groups which appear to further society's well-being and oppose targets that seem to threaten it (Davis and Silver 2003, Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). Americans likely connect their anti-immigration stances to growing areas of concern related to immigrants. These sociotropic threats are dynamic and may be targeted by political elites and media producers seeking to frame the immigration debate in ways that influence individual levels of opinion. Yet, this is where the research on threat and immigration

typically ends. A finding emerges that shows an obvious link between threat and immigration, and social researchers gain very little advancement in studying the dynamic nature of the threat. To this point most of what we know about immigration and threat is related to the economy, yet there are many other aspects of society – culture, politics, morality, socialization – where immigration and immigrants matter. What is the nature of concern in these other areas, and more importantly, is the nature static or changing? We argue that the empirical findings around perceived threats and immigration provide a necessary pool of information from which survey researchers can create more targeted measures of threat. This endeavor will yield a stronger theoretical understanding of what Americans *think* rather than *hear or see* about immigrants.

Measurement of Threat in Past Studies

Previous studies have included measures of sociotropic threat to understand public opinion surrounding immigration; however, they tend to use data which limits systematic comparisons across different types of sociotropic concerns. For example, Burns and Gimpel (2000) incorporate a measure of “pessimistic national economic outlook” (in addition to a measure of “pessimistic personal economic outlook”) to predict attitudes about the current immigration level but do not address outlooks about other aspects of society.² Likewise, Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) examine the causal influence of perceptions of the national economic conditions, along with feelings of socio-political alienation, “isolationist mentalities” related to foreign policy, and attitudes toward immigrants. These items are constructed from a number of different questions appearing in a 1993 survey (conducted by *The New York Times*, CBS News, and the Tokyo Broadcasting System), that vary in both format and sophistication. Only some of the questions use explicit language indicating that something is getting better or

² These measures are compiled from data in the 1992 and 1996 American National Election Studies.

worse due to immigration from other countries. Hood and Morris (1998) include only one measure of sociotropic threat derived from a question asking respondents to predict how the U.S. economy will fare in the coming year.³

To summarize, we attempt to build on the literature surrounding sociotropic threat by using a series of questions about the effects immigrants have on different aspects of society – including but not limited to the national economy. We ask, which particular contextual elements drive perceptions of immigrant threat, and to what extent do negative beliefs about immigrants translate into support for immigration policies and opinions about the flow of immigrants into the United States? Then we use the answers to these questions to propose new measures targeting the nature of public concerns.

Data

We utilize data from three national studies of race and ethnic relations in America. The data were collected by Gallup through random digit dial (RDD) telephone interviews during the summers (June-July) of 2001 (n=1,515), 2004 (n=2,250), and 2007 (n=2,388). The target populations of the studies were U.S. adults ages 18 and older including over-samples of Blacks and Hispanics that are weighted to reflect their proportions in the general population. The Gallup data are valuable because they offer a diverse set of respondents who were asked similar questions about immigrants over time. In the 2001 data, 52, 26, 19, and 3 percent of respondents identify with white (non-Hispanic), black, Hispanic (non-black), and “other” racial-ethnic backgrounds, respectively. In the 2004 data, the percentages are 72, 12, 10, and 5 for white

³ Their data are derived from the 1992 American National Election Study and recent Censuses.

(non-Hispanic), black, Hispanic (non-black), and “other” racial-ethnic groups, respectively. In 2007 data, the percentages are 81, 11, 4, and 5 percent, respectively.⁴

Measures

We conceptualize societal threat both in terms of the agents of the threat – immigrants – and that which the agents “make worse” in society. To “make worse” is synonymous with feelings of intensified aggravation and beliefs about what is being wronged or damaged in society. We assume that individuals would not want any part of society to worsen, and thus, the thought of something being harmed due to immigration should invoke concern. Sociotropic threat is highly correlated with intolerance, with more threatened individuals acting in less democratic or intolerant ways (e.g., willingness to “not allow” threatening groups to participate in society) (Davis 1995; Davis and Silver 2004; Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus 1982). Perceptions of threat enhance attention to information (i.e., survey questions about immigration) connected to the sources (i.e., immigrants’ influences) of threat (Marcus and MacKuen, 2001). Therefore, if individuals believe that immigrants have a negative impact on society, we would expect these beliefs to result in intolerant attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Wilson 2001).

We measure sociotropic threat using a series of items asking what impacts immigrants have on society. The wording is as follows: “*For each of the following areas, please say whether immigrants to the United States are making the situation in the country better or worse, or not having much effect. How about [AREA OF SOCIETY]?*” The list of areas includes “the crime situation,” “job opportunities for you and your family,” “food, music, and the arts,” “the

⁴ The reported percentages on racial-ethnic self-reports are weighted to reflect the proportion of racial-ethnic composition in America, as well as the local proportions for the oversamples.

economy in general,” “taxes,” and “social and moral values.”⁵ The response options were recoded into a dummy variable with a response of “worse” coded as 1, and “better” or “not having much effect” coded as zero.⁶

The items were also used to create two indices of sociotropic threat. One index measured general threat to the economy. We call this our *economic threat index*. This measure is calculated as the sum of “worse” responses for the jobs, economy in general, and taxes items. A second index indicates the overall sociotropic threat, which is the sum of the “worse responses” for all six items. We refer to this measure as the *total threat index*.

Our main outcome (dependent variable) of interest is whether individuals believe immigration levels should be kept the same, increased, or decreased. This question was asked in each of the three years of data collection using the exact same wording and question location in the survey relative to the sociotropic threat items. We focus on this question because it provides a minimum gauge of tolerance toward immigration, and likely immigrants.

Using multiple datasets over time limited the number of socio-demographic variables we could examine; however, we were able to consider race, sex, education, income, political ideology, work status, and respondent and respondent’s parents country of birth.⁷ These variables will serve as statistical controls and will help us identify the segments of society that may produce growing concerns over immigrants and immigration.

⁵ In 2001, the list of items included “overall quality of life,” “the quality of public schools,” and “politics and government.”

⁶ For additional items in the 2001 data, approximately 22, 39, and 25 percent of respondents indicated immigrants make worse the “overall quality of life,” “quality of public schools,” and “politics and government,” respectively.

⁷ Racial-ethnic group is dummy coded with blacks (1) contrasted with all other racial-ethnic groups (0); sex is dummy coded with male (1) or female (0) categories; education is an ordinal measure with less than high school (1), high school graduate (2), post-high school education but no 4-year degree (3), 4 year college graduate (4), and post-graduate education (5); ideology is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very conservative (1) to very liberal (5); household income was original coded as ordinal categories, but we standardized (z-scores) the coded values within year; work status is a dummy variable comparing full-time employed (1) or not (0); foreign born is a dummy variable indicating whether an individual was born in the U.S. (1) or not (0); and parent’s foreign born is dummy coded so that if one’s parents were not born in the U.S. (1) they were compared against those whose parents were born in the U.S. (0).

In the next sections we examine the trends in anti-immigration sentiment and the areas of society in which immigrants are inducing increasing concerns to Americans. We then examine which segments of the population are reporting these concerns and allow them to influence their political judgments about immigration.

Trends in Support for Immigration at the National Level, 2001-2007

What are the trends in support for immigration levels in America? A multinomial logistic regression (MLR) (not shown in tables) was used to predict whether individuals believed immigration should be increased or decreased as opposed to being kept at its present level (the reference category). The independent variable in the analysis was time (2 dummy variables representing 2004 (coded 1) and 2007 (coded 1)). The analysis reveals that there are significant changes only in the “decreased” responses over time. Since 2001, the percentage of Americans indicating immigration levels should be decreased has significantly increased ($\beta=.054, p\leq.01$) – by 13 and 10 percentage points in 2004 and 2007 respectively – while the amount indicating immigration should be increased ($\beta=.001, n.s.$) has not changed relative to those who feel it should be kept the same. Thus, the most significant change in Americans positions on the appropriate levels of immigration is seen in support for *decreasing* immigration. The bar chart in Figure 1 shows this trend. Since support for decreasing immigration appears to be on the rise, we focus our remaining attention on this anti-immigration stance.

[Figure 1 about here]

Next, we sought to investigate which particular social groups are most likely to express anti-immigration sentiment. We used mixed-level logistic regression (MLLR) to examine the interaction effects of time and demographics on beliefs that immigration levels should be decreased. The mixed-level model allowed us to control for both the year to year, and within year variation in anti-immigration sentiment. The MLLR reveals that blacks ($\beta = -.231, p \leq .01$), increasing levels of education ($\beta = -.162, p \leq .01$), liberalism ($\beta = -.128, p \leq .01$), foreign birth status ($\beta = -.531, p \leq .01$), and parent's foreign birth status ($\beta = -.457, p < .01$) are each less likely to express anti-immigration sentiment. Sex ($\beta = -.048, n.s.$), household income ($\beta = -.060, n.s.$), and work status ($\beta = .052, n.s.$) were each non-significant factors in predicting decreased support for immigration over time.

We also examined whether any demographics would account for the increasing trend in anti-immigration sentiment over time. This MLLR analysis involved examining the interaction effects of time (3-year period) and each demographic, controlling for the previously run main effects. A significant interaction signals that the effects of the demographic on anti-immigration sentiment have changed over time. The analysis reveals that the time x race ($\beta = .076, p \leq .01$), x education ($\beta = .019, p \leq .05$), and x ideology ($\beta = -.020, p \leq .05$) interactions each have significant effects on anti-immigration beliefs. A second level examination of the interaction effects shows that over time blacks, more educated individuals (particularly those with post-graduate education), and those who consider themselves very conservative or moderately liberal have all increased their anti-immigration sentiments over time.

Trends in Americans' Concerns about Immigrants, 2001-2007

Table 1 provides the response to our threat items across the three surveys. The data from the 2001 and 2004 surveys suggest that Americans had at worst ambivalent opinions about immigrants and their effects on society. The area attracting the most concern in both years was the crime situation, with perceptions of threat hovering around 50 percent (51.8% and 48.4% in 2001 and 2004, respectively). Upon incorporating the 2007 data, a trend toward perceiving greater costs due to immigration emerges. In fact, of the six categories included in our analysis (crime; job opportunities; food, music and the arts; taxes; and social and moral values), four represent areas of increasing concern for Americans since 2001.

[Table 1 about here]

In 2007, well over half of Americans (61%) felt that immigrations were making the crime situation worse – an increase of nearly 9 percent since 2001. Even larger increases can be observed among the percentages representing perceived negative impacts on taxes (+11%) and the economy (+15%) in general. Both trends are statistically significant. Yet, the biggest increase exists in the percentage of Americans reporting that immigrants harm social and moral values. In 2001 and 2004, only 24 and 29 percent respectively held this view, but by 2007, the percentage increased to a sizeable 40 percent (+16% from 2001). The trends in the areas of job opportunities and food, music, and the arts are more stable.

When we combine all six areas of society into our index of total sociotropic threat, the mean scores further indicate a trend toward increasing levels of concern regarding the consequences of immigration. The total threat scores increase by .3 between each year,

beginning with a score of 1.9 and ending with a score of 2.5. This is a significant increase. When the three economic items (jobs, economic, and taxes) are combined to form an index – ranging from 0 to 3 – the results indicate a more modest but significant increase. In 2001, the mean score for the economic threat index stood at 1.1 and by 2007 the score was at 1.4. Our results suggest there are significant, yet changing concerns related to the costs of immigration. Concerns related to crime, taxes, the economy, and most importantly, social and moral values appear to be on the rise in America.

The Impact of Growing Concerns about Society on Opinions Toward Immigration

Are areas of increasing concern related to public opinion about the current immigration level? The obvious answer is yes, but are some areas seen as effecting anti-immigration opinion more than others? Much of the literature on anti-immigration has focused on job threat and economic issues, yet our data suggest that crime, and social and moral values are among the growing concerns associated with immigrants.

To examine which concerns are having the greatest impact on support for decreasing immigration levels we calculated Phi (ϕ) statistics, which are used as measures of association between dichotomous variables. The statistics were calculated both within and across years, and indicate the “effect” of each of the areas of concern about immigrants and an expressed belief that immigration levels should be decreased.

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 provides a graphic depiction of the changing relationships (effect sizes) between the different concerns Americans have about immigrants and beliefs that immigration levels should decrease. Each line represents a single area of concern. The vertical axis represents the magnitude of the relationship between the particular area of concern and beliefs that immigration levels should decrease, and the horizontal axis represents time. The values in parentheses next to each of the concerns represent the overall (i.e., pooled data) effects of each concern on beliefs about immigration levels. For instance, concerns about crime and its relationship with support for restricting future immigration flows has consistently increased, while concerns about job opportunities have consistently decreased. The area with the largest impact on favoring reduced immigration is the economy; however, the importance has not consistently increased. Conversely, the area with the lowest impact on favoring reduced immigration is a concern with food, music, and the arts. While the effect of this concern is significant, its trend extends downward and the magnitude of its effect is practically zero in 2007. The area of concern with the largest change from 2004 to 2007 is social and moral values. These effects were among the lowest in 2004, and now rank near the top of Americans' concerns regarding immigration. Lastly, we find very little change in the effects of concerns about taxes on favoring decreased immigration levels.

When the pooled data – all three years combined – are analyzed, the results show the economy ($\phi = .342$) is the strongest predictor of favoring decreased levels of immigration, followed by crime ($\phi = .271$), taxes ($\phi = .270$), social and moral values ($\phi = .261$), job opportunities ($\phi = .241$), and food, music, and the arts ($\phi = .124$). These bivariate relationships are supported by multivariate analyses examining the effects of these concerns on beliefs that

immigration levels should be decreased controlling for race, sex, education, income, political ideology, work status, and the country of origin for both the respondent and his or her parents.

DISCUSSION

These growing concerns over immigration may signal a shift in the framing of immigration debates. In the context of our globalized economy, perhaps it no longer resonates with Americans that immigrants are simply taking jobs. Now, the concerns appear to have an interesting combination of economic, social and moral, and criminal components; each of which is either among the top concerns or on the rise. How do we explain these concerns and put together a picture of the contemporary debate about immigration? We believe that the patterns found in these data may be related to growing feelings of resentment and argue that a more nuanced understanding of Americans' resistance to immigration depends on the availability of data isolating the perceived costs to different areas of society. Our ultimate objective is to go beyond proving that Americans are becoming increasingly restrictionist in their attitudes about immigration to try to understand the qualitative nature of those attitudes.

According to sociological theories of emotions, resentment is a “moral” emotion in the sense that individuals feel resentful when they perceive that others have gained power or material well-being by breaking or breaching norms and cultural expectations. Thus, contemporary resentment towards immigration arises out of concerns about immigrants causing pressures on the economy – which may include some combination of jobs, taxes, and federal spending – concerns about crime possibly related to both national (i.e., terrorism) and local (i.e., gang violence, ethnic neighborhood crime, and ostensibly criminal activities related to poverty)

security, and social and moral issues (i.e., any issues that violate the perceived norms of the existing society). All of these effects presumably pose a threat to the larger society, and as our data indicate, individuals are willing to apply punitive judgments to general questions about immigration based on these concerns. The more individuals are concerned with the three issues especially, the more likely they are to desire decreased immigration levels.

Immigrant resentment has not received much attention in the social attitudes literature, primarily because many have accepted that anti-immigration sentiment was simply a dislike for an out-group resulting from xenophobia or racial prejudice. For instance, George Sanchez concludes from his analysis of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots that “For many Americans in our era, the poor, especially the black poor, have served [the] role of scapegoat; increasingly, however, that role is being transferred to or combined with the blaming of the immigrant” (1997, 16). What is necessary to confirm such a theory is a set of good measures based on empirical data. In this paper we have attempted to provide an overview of the trends in concerns over immigrants, beliefs about acceptable levels immigration, and the relationship between the two. That the economy, crime, and social moral values are among the top concerns is not necessarily surprising, but that they continue to have an increasing impact on immigration beliefs signals to us their importance for anti-immigration measures. Previous work involving sociotropic threat has yielded important information regarding Americans’ concerns about the national economy. We suggest that survey questions seeking to tap anti-immigration sentiment should include more specific content and be worded in ways that connect the influx of immigrants to different areas of society. A list of proposed items is included in Table 2. We argue that data from the proposed items would allow for more systematic investigation of the various sociotropic concerns that

have shown in our analysis to exert significant influence on Americans' perceptions of immigrants' effects on society.

[Table 2 about here]

The items are designed to call attention to what we believe are the origins of contemporary sociotropic threat towards immigrants: the economy, crime, and social and moral values. They are formed around notions of threat, concern, and fears about what impact immigrants may have on society. Respondents would be asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (using 4 or 5-point Likert type items) with each statement. The items are purposefully framed as negative assertions so that respondents would have to deny their support to appear more socially desirable; however, the items also attempt to allow for non-prejudicial justification. Each of the three sets of items would be used to form three underlying scales of threat, which could also be combined to form a higher order measure of socio-tropic threat. We would then expect the items to have stronger theoretical power for explaining anti-immigration sentiment, lower support for policies related to immigration, and other political judgments related to immigrants and immigration. Further, we expect the items to have stronger associations with broader beliefs about competitive threat, relative deprivation, group-based social dominance, and ideology. Additional questions may be conceptualized around other stereotypical notions of immigration such as gang activity, rising public service costs (e.g., health care) due to a lack of enforcement of immigration laws, "day laborers," English as a second language, or residential and neighborhood proximity concerns. As we see it, the goal is to connect the nature (e.g., economy) of the concern with the source (e.g., immigrants) of concern.

The sensitivity of international migration to general economic conditions and changing labor markets in the U.S. makes it unlikely that any single measure of policy reform will provide a resolution to the great “immigration dilemma.” Americans will likely continue to struggle to reconcile competing message in the mass media that cast immigrants as both the newest faces in the proverbial melting pot and threats to our national security (Chavez 2001). We stand to learn more about the contexts in which immigration attitudes are formed by probing the particular sources from which Americans derive their information about immigrants. Traditional methods for questionnaire development such as cognitive interviews might prove invaluable for crafting closed-ended questions that tease through the complex and intersecting influences which shape Americans’ immigration attitudes, but existing data may be equally important not only for crafting items, but doing so in a way that improves theoretical development.

Table 1. Perceived Negative Impacts of Immigrants on Different Areas of Society

For each of the following areas, please say whether immigrants to the United States are making the situation in the country better or worse, or not having much effect. How about...

Areas of Society	2001	2004	2007	F-value
The crime situation	51.8%	48.4%	60.6%	33.3**
Job opportunities for you and your family	31.1%	38.4%	35.5%	4.3*
Food, music, and the arts	7.6%	11.3%	10.3%	4.9*
The economy in general	34.3%	43.1%	49.6%	75.6**
Taxes	47.0%	46.6%	58.0%	47.5**
Social and Moral Values	24.3%	29.1%	40.2%	101.2**
Economic Threat Mean (Std Dev.)	1.1 (1.1)	1.3 (1.2)	1.4 (1.1)	56.5**
Overall Threat Mean (Std Dev.)	1.9 (1.7)	2.2 (1.9)	2.5 (1.9)	82.0**

Note. 2001 N=1,275; 2004 N=1,950; 2007 N=2,033. The scale for the threat indices is the number of areas in which immigration is said to make things "worse." All F-tests for linearity are based on 1 and 5,255 degrees of freedom; *p≤.05, **p≤.01.

Figure 1. Areas of Concern Regarding Immigration Over Time

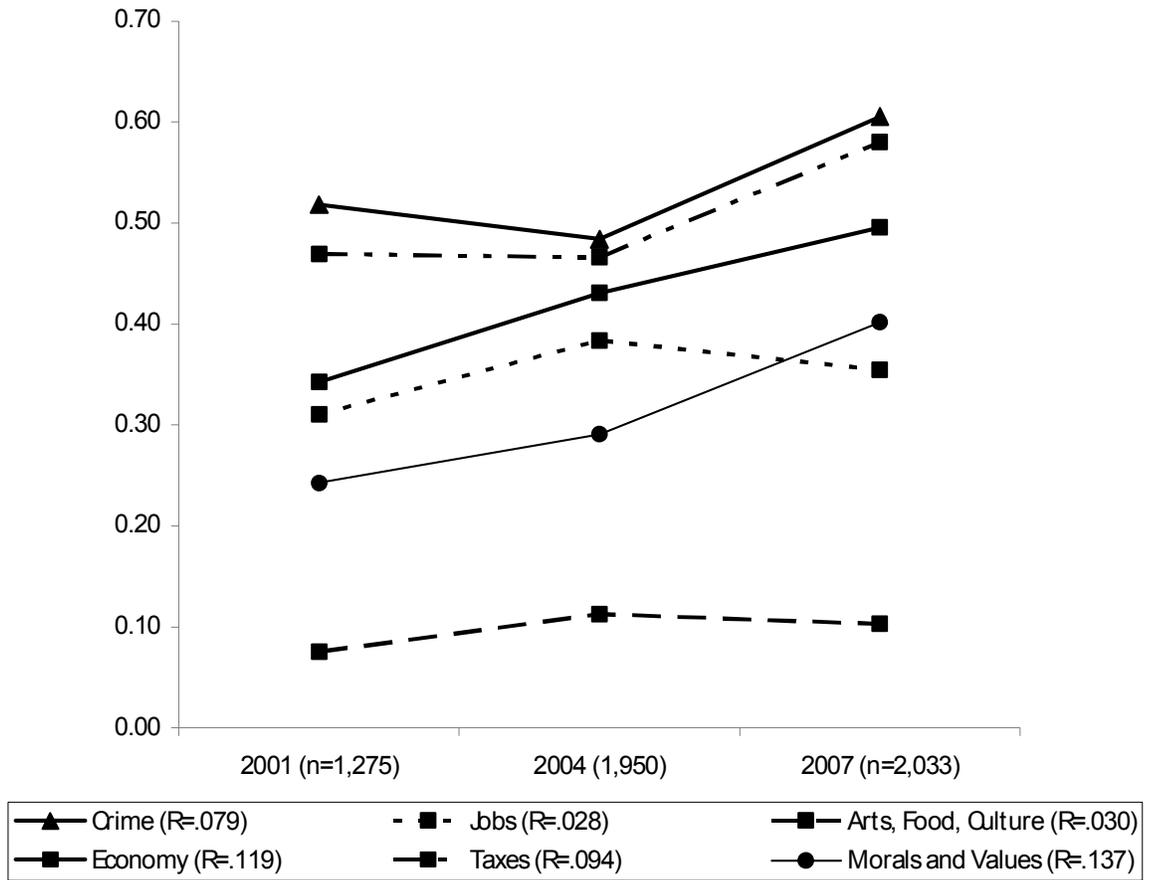


Figure 2. Relationship Between Areas of Concern and Desires to Decrease Immigration Level Over Time

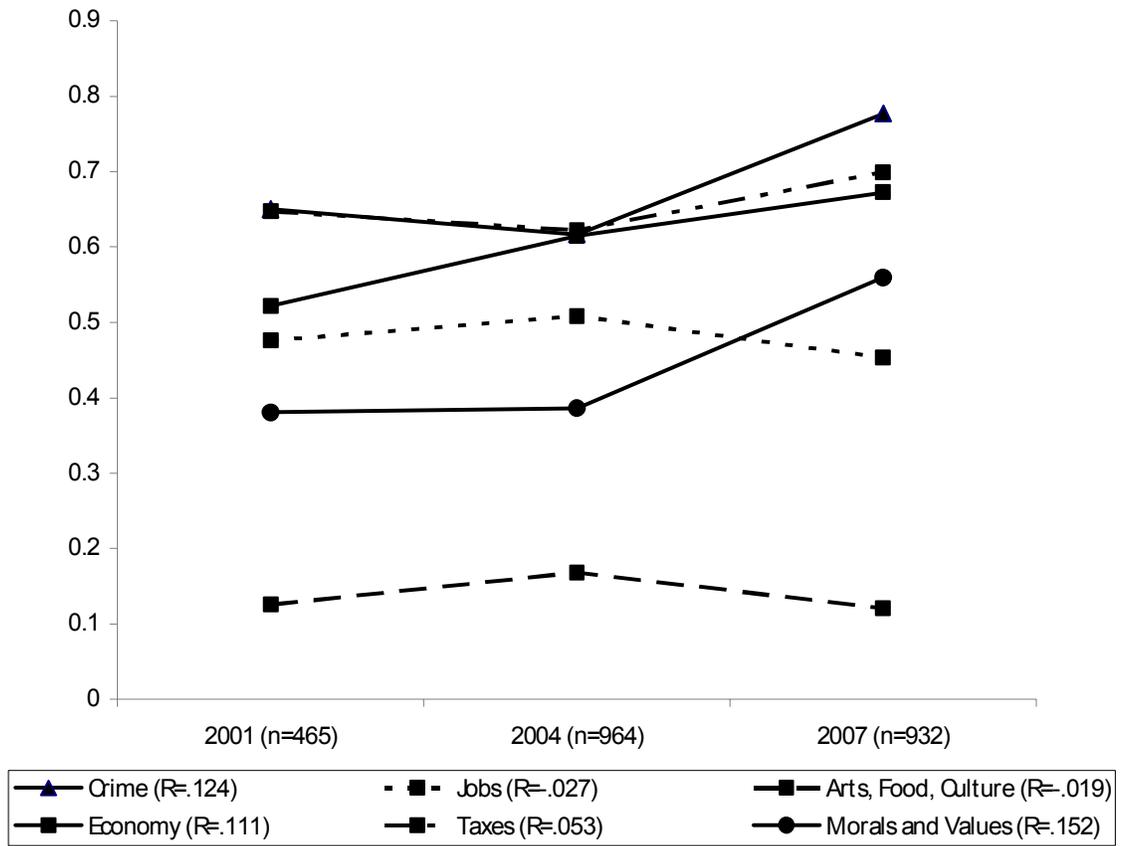


Table 2. Proposed Items for Future Surveys of Americans' Attitudes Toward Immigration

Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements.

Economic Concerns

1. I resent all of the special attention or favors that immigrants receive. Other Americans like me have problems, too.
2. America was founded by people from many walks of life, but there's really no more room for any immigrants in our economy.
3. It is unfair that immigrants can take advantage of our economic system by specializing in ([no description]/lower wage/upper wage) skilled positions.
4. As the number of immigrants in this country increases, ordinary Americans get left behind.

Crime Concerns

1. Immigrants are not worth helping because they do not help themselves.
2. Many immigrants have illegal motives for wanting to enter the United States.
3. I am concerned that immigrants will bring criminal groups and networks into this country.
4. I believe that in most instances where citizens are against immigration it is because we want to protect America.

Social and Moral Concerns

1. Many immigrants who come to America bring their bad social and moral habits with them.
 2. Immigrants should not get any special privileges from America when they arrive in the country.
 3. It is unfair that immigrants can come to America, but Americans would not want to go to their home country.
 4. If too many immigrants come to the U.S., we will become less united as Americans.
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