

**Immigration and the Political Transformation of White America:
How Local Immigrant Context Shapes White Policy Views and Partisanship**

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Abstract

What role does immigration play in structuring the political leanings of individual Americans? In this article, we show that local immigrant context has broad effects on the political views of white Americans. Using large and geographically diverse samples from the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Studies, we find that all else equal whites in census tracts with larger Latino populations are more anti-immigration, more conservative on a range of policy issues linked to immigration, and more apt to identify as conservative and Republican. This rightward shift suggests that immigration is re-shaping the core of American politics.

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Immigration is having a profound effect on America. Every year, a million newcomers arrive at our shores and borders. The proportion of foreign born has already climbed to 12 percent – close to the highest level in our nation’s history. Racially, we have been transformed. With about 80 percent of new immigrants coming from Asia and the Americas, non-Hispanic White Americans have declined from 89 percent of the population in 1960 to 66 percent today. And the future is likely to bring even more change. The Census projects that by sometime in the middle of this century, white America’s majority status will be in jeopardy.

The impact of immigration is evident not just in these demographic numbers. Immigration has stirred a wide array of fears related to economic losses and a cultural demise (Huntington 2005, Borjas 2001). In the political arena, immigration has infused debates over welfare, crime, and partisan politics. Proposition 187 in California and the welfare reform act of 1996 is only two of the most prominent examples. The debate is, of course, not all one-sided. Many highlight the economic benefits and the social contributions of the immigrant population (Bean and Stevens 2005, Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Others point to the near complete assimilation of immigrants and their children into the American way of life (Alba and Nee 2005, Ramakrishnan 2005). Regardless of which side of the debate one is on, there seems little doubt that immigration is influencing the politics of this nation.

In this article, we investigate the extent of this influence on the political orientations of individual white Americans. One of the most inescapable features of immigration today is its uneven nature. Some Americans live in areas where there is almost no perceptible evidence of immigration and others live in neighborhoods, cities, and states that have been dramatically transformed. We take advantage of this geographic variation to assess the impact of larger

Latino and Asian American populations on individual attitudes about a range of political issues related to immigration.

We are, by no means, the first to examine racial or immigrant context. We are, however, among the first to examine the broader political implications of immigrant context. The vast array of scholarship on immigrant and racial context has been narrowly focused on how context affects attitudes about, behavior towards, and policy on the minority group itself (but see Hero 1998, Alesina et al 1999). That research has at times shown that larger immigrant populations are associated with more negative attitudes about the immigrant population, violence against immigrants, and heightened opposition to expanded immigration (eg Hood and Morris 1998, Stein et al 2000, Green et al 1998).¹

We believe, however, that the effects of immigration could be much broader. There are two reasons for this belief. First, given that immigration has permeated debates about a wide range of policy questions, there is reason to suspect that it could have more far-reaching implications for policy views. The fact that the Democratic and Republican parties have, at least at times, taken sharply divergent tacks on immigration also suggest that there may be a strong partisan component to the effects of immigration. Second, such broad ranging contextual effects are far from unprecedented in American political history (see Gimpel 1999). A wide array of white political actions has, in the past, been linked to the size of the local black community. The heightened defection of whites from the Democratic Party in states and districts with larger black populations is the most prominent example (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989, Giles and Hertz 1994). But black context has also been linked to candidate choice (Black and Black 1973), policy views

¹ As we will detail below, many studies of immigrant context do not find this kind of negative relationship. Those who focus on the implications of personal contact rather than racial context, tend to find more positive effects. Others have found that proximity to Latinos and Asian Americans either has an insignificant effect or a positive effect on white view. Still others have found that the negative impact of racial context is contingent on the socioeconomic status of either the immigrants or the local population.

(Giles and Evans 1986, Fosset and Kiecolt 1989, Taylor 1998), turnout (Key 1949), and violence (Corzine et al 1983, Stenner 1995, Olzak 1990). Given that Latinos have replaced blacks as the largest ethnic/racial minority population, it is at least plausible that the key racial context has shifted and that Latinos and other immigrant groups have become much more central in the political thinking of white America.

We also hope to advance upon existing studies by dealing with selection bias problems in a novel and compelling way, by distinguishing between the effects of Latinos and Asian Americans – two groups that have very different socioeconomic standing and quite distinct stereotypes in American society, by relying on newer data that can capture the growing significance of immigration in America, and by employing a unique data set that offers greater geographic variation and thus a potentially more telling look at how wide-ranging the effects of immigration have reached.

Our analysis indicates that immigrant context does have broad ranging effects on white views. In particular, whites who live in close proximity to larger Latino populations tend to favor reducing immigration, to be more conservative on a host of policy questions that are linked to immigration, and to identify as conservative and Republican. This pattern signals a new backlash that in many ways mirrors the Democratic defection of white Southerners in response to the civil rights movement. It also suggests that a new white-Latino dividing line may be replacing it and is certainly complicating the traditional black-white dividing line that has long dominated America's racial politics. Proximity to Asian Americans, by contrast, tends to have a liberalizing influence on individual whites. As in the past, larger local black populations are still associated with more conservative views on some policy questions but the effects are not as

pervasive. The overall pattern indicates that despite some progress race is still important in America.

How Context Might Work

Theoretically, how might white Americans react to living in contexts with large minority or immigrant populations? The literature offers three competing theories about the impact of context: 1) a racial threat perspective, 2) a racial contact theory, and 3) an individualistic account. Probably the most prominent view is that proximity tends to increase the threat posed by out-groups. As developed by Key (1949), and Blalock (1967), this racial group threat perspective maintains that proximity enhances real (or perceived) competition over jobs, homes, political offices and other scarce resources. Individuals in contexts with larger minority populations should, therefore, express greater racial animosity and be especially supportive of a host of policies aimed at maintaining the in-group's political and economic privilege.

A second view contends that racial animosity is more often the result of inaccurate perceptions about the minority out-group than it is about real competition over resources. From this racial contact view, personal interaction with minority out-groups exposes majority group members to new, more accurate information about minority group members that should disconfirm negative stereotypes and allow for the development of more favorable views (Allport 1954, Jackman and Crane 1986). Understanding and approval should, thus, increase with the size of the local minority population (Welch et al 2001, Kinder and Mendelberg 1995).

It is important to note, that in the analysis that follows, we do not directly test the contact hypotheses. Our measures of racial proximity - the proportion of the local zip code population that is Latino, Asian American, or black – are probably correlated with contact but only weakly.

Zip codes are not small neighborhoods and it is entirely possible for whites living in extremely diverse zip codes to engage in few personal interactions with members of minority groups.

Perhaps even more importantly, proximity tells us little about the nature of any contact that does occur. If the effects of contact depend, as Allport (1954) suggests, on the quality of that contact and if positive learning requires contact between majority and minority members of equal status in an interactive and collaborative setting, then our results do not speak to that possibility.² We can determine if proximity matters but we cannot know if certain specific types of contact can mitigate the effects of proximity.

Finally, a third possibility is that context has no independent effect on majority-minority relations. Either because racial views are predicated on a rigid type of prejudice that is impervious to change or because other individual characteristics like education or economic status are the primary factors shaping racial views, geographic context is largely irrelevant for understanding inter-group conflict and cooperation. If true, racial views should be unrelated to geographic context once we control for individual characteristics.

Past Patterns, Current Studies

Existing research provides an array of evidence relating to the impact of context on white Americans. A wide range of studies has demonstrated a strong relationship between black context and white political behavior during different periods in American politics. Historically, we have seen several periods of white backlash against an increasingly demanding African American population (Klinker and Smith 1999). During Reconstruction the expansion of black

² The problem with many studies of self-reported contact is that it is usually unclear whether contact breeds understanding or whether individuals with more favorable views of minorities tend to spend more time with minorities. For more nuanced studies that offer a more exacting test of the contact hypothesis see McClain et al 2006, Pettigrew (1997), Dixon and Rosenbaum (2004), or Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi (2002).

political representation was countered with massive resistance with white Southerners instituting a program of unprecedented violence, poll taxes, new residency and registration requirements, and at-large elections (Kousser 1999, Foner 1984; Holt 1979). Over a century later, the Civil Rights Movement was met with a similarly broad array of tactics and measures (Parker 1990).

Other research more focused on geographic context has tended to find a similarly strong and negative reaction to the black population. Proximity to blacks has been repeatedly linked to greater racial antagonism in a variety of forms including more negative views of blacks themselves (Dixon 2006, Taylor 1998, Quillian 1996 but see Oliver and Wong 2003, Welch et al 2001, and Kinder and Mendelberg 1995) violence against blacks including riots and lynching (Corzine et al 1983, Stenner, Olzak 1990), support for racist candidates (Black and Black 1973 but see Voss 1996), and greater opposition to policies designed to aid blacks (Giles and Evans 1986, Fosset and Kiecolt 1989, Taylor 1998, Key 1949).³ Notably, the confirmed effects of black context have been even broader. Larger black populations have also been linked to more conservative views on a range of implicitly racial policies (Hero and Preuhs 2006, Fellowes and Rowe 2004, Soss et al 2001), to diminished public goods (Hero 1998, Alesina et al 1999) and perhaps most importantly to large scale defection from the Democratic Party (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989, Giles and Hertz 1994).⁴ While several more recent studies have found that the effects of black context are contingent on socioeconomic status (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000, Branton and Jones 2005), there seems little doubt that black racial context has often been a dominant force shaping white political choices and actions.

A number of studies that have shifted the focus to immigrant context have also found that more immigrants can represent a threat and drive a white backlash (Maharidge 1996). In

³ These findings say little about the potential of certain forms of inter-racial contact. Studies that measure actual contact tend to find that inter-racial contact can reduce racial enmity (Pettigrew 1997, Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004).

⁴ But see Campbell (1977) and Beck (1977).

particular, larger local immigrant populations have been associated with more hostile views toward the immigrant population, violence against immigrants, and heightened opposition to expanded immigration (Ayers et al 2008, Campbell et al 2006, Hood and Morris 1998, Stein et al 2000, Green et al 1998). Similarly, a range of comparative research has found that larger immigrant populations at the national level are associated with more negative views of immigrants and more support for restrictionist immigration policy (Quillian 1995, Lahav 2004, McLaren 2003, Dustman and Preston 2001).

Although the bulk of the research points to an immigrant backlash, there are at least a few studies that reach very different conclusions about immigrant context. Some researchers have found that immigrant context has few significant implications (Dixon 2006, Taylor 1998, Burns and Gimpel 2000). And still others have revealed a positive relationship between immigrant context and white views (Hood and Morris 1998, 2000, Fox 2004). Finally, at least three more recent studies have suggested that the impact of ethnic or immigrant context is contingent on either the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood or the skill level of the immigrants (Scheve and Slaughter 2001, Oliver and Mendelberg 2000, Branton and Jones 2005).

Concerns about Existing Research

One read of these mixed findings is that immigrant context has a real but limited and contingent impact on white political behavior. There are, however, reasons to hesitate before concluding that immigrant context is not a central feature in the minds of white Americans. Perhaps, the most important reason to re-consider these findings is that the world is changing. Latinos have recently replaced African Americans as the largest minority group. Asian Americans are now the fastest growing racial and ethnic group. By contrast, the number of

African Americans living in this country is close to stagnant. One result of these demographic changes is that immigration, in general, and Latinos and Asian Americans, in particular, may be becoming more central in the political calculus of white Americans. Fears of lost jobs and diminished wages, concerns that immigrants are using inordinate resources for welfare, health, and education, and anxiety over a lack of assimilation and cultural change appear, at least in certain sectors, to be spawning a backlash. Fully 52 percent of Americans now believe that immigrants pose a burden (PEW 2006). A majority would like to build a wall that blocks the entire Mexican border to immigration (CNN 2008). And fully, 81 percent believe that illegal immigration is one the important problems facing the country (L.A. Times 2007). It is, thus, probably not surprising to learn that racial hate crimes are also on the rise or that states enacted over 1500 bills dealing with immigration in 2007 (MPI 2008).

If immigration has become more important in the minds and political calculations of white Americans, than two real concerns about the existing research are readily apparent. First, and most obviously, existing studies may be outdated. Any research that focuses on the attitudes and actions of Americans in past decades may no longer be accurate. Given the fact that Latinos have only recently surpassed blacks as the largest minority group and given the increasing impact on of Latinos and Asian Americans on the economics, culture, and politics of this nation, it is entirely possible that immigrant context has only very recently begun to deeply shape white views. By focusing on relatively recent attitudes – from the 2004 and 2000 National Annenberg Election Survey – we hope to offer a more telling look at how wide-ranging the effects of immigration have become.

The growing reach of immigration also suggests that existing studies may be too narrow. Every study that has focused on the contextual impact of immigrants has limited its purview to

minority specific outcomes. They study how context affects attitudes toward immigrants (Scheve and Slaughter 2001, Fox 2006), how context affects violence toward minorities (Green et al 1998, Green et al 1998b), or how context affects racial policy and immigration policy (Hood and Morris 1998, 2000, Ayers et al 2008, Stein et al 2000, Tolbert and Hero 2001, Burns and Gimpel 2000, Branton and Jones 2005). But it is now apparent that immigration has been introduced into a wide range of political debates. Immigration is regularly infused into discussions about health care and welfare reform and it more than occasionally underlies debates about security, criminal justice, and trade. Broader themes like jobs and taxes also at least occasionally focus on the role of immigrants (Tichenor 2002, Newton 2008). And America's two major political parties differ, sometimes dramatically, on how we should treat our immigrants and how to reform our existing immigration policies.

Given the increasingly central role played by immigration, it is crucial that we expand the scope of our research. We need to consider the effects of immigrant context not just on how we think about minorities themselves but on how we think about the broader array of policies that are at different times at least implicitly linked to immigration. We also need to consider the effects of immigration on how we think of ourselves ideologically and perhaps most fundamentally on how we think about the two political parties that present two very different platforms on immigration. It is only after examining these core features of our political selves, that we will be unable to uncover just how broad the effects of immigration have become.

Our study is advantaged over many existing studies of immigration or racial context in two other key respects. Most studies of contextual effects have been plagued by concerns about selection. We know, for example, that whites with more negative views of racial and ethnic minorities have in the past migrated in large numbers away from neighborhoods and cities where

black population growth was dramatic (Frey 1979, Massey and Hajnal 1995). If location decisions are driven partly by attitudinal factors, then simple, uncorrected estimates of the connection between context and attitudes will be biased. Existing studies often try to control for various aspects of this selection but in the end few have been able to solve this fundamental problem. In our analysis, we employ an instrumental variables procedure that helps us to get around the selection problem. As we will explain below, we use exogenous state level demographics to instrument for neighborhood level demographics that are the likely to be affected by endogenous selection effects.

Another concern is that some existing studies of immigrant context lump all immigrants together. We argue that Latinos and Asian Americans should be examined separately because the two groups are likely to be viewed very differently by white Americans. Asian Americans and Latinos tend to have noticeably different socioeconomic standing and the two groups tend to be subject to very different stereotyping. In terms of economic status, there is a fairly clear racial hierarchy. Asian Americans and whites are, on average, well off while Latinos and African Americans are, on average, significantly worse off. The median household income of Asian Americans, for example, was almost \$60,000 in 2005, roughly \$10,000 more than the figure for whites. At the opposite end of the spectrum, median black and Latino households only earned about \$30,000. Also, stereotypes of Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans differ dramatically. As Bobo (2000) and others have documented, large segments of the white population rate blacks and Latinos as inferior to whites on measures of intelligence, criminality, and welfare propensity. By contrast, nearly half of all whites view Asian Americans as especially hardworking and successful. Exactly what these two patterns imply in terms of a threat to the white community is not clear but it seems unlikely that whites will react to the two

immigrant-based groups in the same way. And it is certainly possible that Latinos will represent more of a threat than the Asian American population. If concerns about welfare, criminality and redistribution dominate white views, then reactions to the Latino population could very well mirror backlashes against the black population. By contrast, Asian Americans, as a kind of model minority could represent less of a threat and more of a potential partner.⁵

Data

To assess the effects of context on white views we turn to the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Surveys (NAES). The NAES is an ideal tool because it has a large sample (over 50,000 respondents per survey) and extensive geographic variation (respondents from over 14,000 different zip codes). In addition, the surveys contain a wide array of questions assessing not only attitudes toward immigration and the immigrant population but also questions on a range of policy issues, basic ideology, and measures of party identification. Since the NAES identifies the zip code and state of residence of each respondent, contextual data can be merged into the sample. Data on local demographics, including immigrant population size broken down by country of origin come from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing. In subsequent analyses we present results from the 2000 NAES – largely because it has a wider array of policy questions – but analysis of the 2004 NAES leads to a nearly identical set of conclusions.

Our analysis consists of a series of regression models that simultaneously incorporate immigrant context, individual characteristics, and economic context to try to explain the individual political orientations of white Americans. Given that immigration has permeated the political debate on a wide range of policy questions, we include a broad array of policy questions

⁵ In this light it is interesting to note that while fully 48 percent of Americans believe there are too many immigrants from Latin American countries, only 31 percent say there are too many immigrants from Asian countries (Gallup 2008).

in our analysis. Specifically, we examine views on immigration (How serious of a problem is immigration into the United States?), poverty (How serious of a problem is poverty?), inequality (Should the federal government try to reduce income differences between rich and poor Americans?), four different health-care related questions,⁶ four different questions on criminal justice,⁷ and three different queries on tax policy.⁸ These are basically, all of the questions in policy arenas that are at least implicitly linked to immigration. To determine if immigrant context has influenced more fundamental political identities, we also incorporate ideology and partisanship as dependent variables. Liberal-conservative ideology is measured with a standard self-identified question (Generally speaking, do you consider your political views very conservative...very liberal?). Party identification is also measured with a standard self-identified question (Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or something else?).

To measure immigrant context, we utilize zip code demographics provided by the US Census. There are a number of different ways to measure immigrant context. The most obvious is to simply record the percent foreign born of the area. But as we have already mentioned, there is reason to suspect that white Americans will react differently to the two main immigrant populations from Asian and Latino America. Thus, another logical set of alternatives might be percent foreign born Asian and percent foreign born Latin America. But here there is a real

⁶ The questions on health care policy are: 1) Do you favor or oppose using government funds to make sure that every children the US is covered by health insurance? 2) How serious of a problem is having Americans without health insurance? 3) Should the federal government spend more or less money on health care for the poor? 4) Should the federal government spend more or less money on health care for the elderly? And 5) Should the federal government spend more or less money for health care to cover the uninsured?

⁷ The questions on criminal justice are: 1) Do you favor or oppose the death penalty? 2) How serious a problem is the number of criminals who are not punished enough? 3) Do you personally favor or oppose requiring a license for a person to buy a handgun? 4) Should the federal government do more to restrict gun purchases?

⁸ The questions on tax policy are: 1) Should the federal government reduce the taxes paid by higher income Americans? 2) How serious a problem is the amount of money Americans pay in taxes? 3) Should the federal government make all Americans pay the same percentage of their income in taxes?

question as to whether white Americans distinguish between the foreign born and native born of these two groups or whether they tend to lump all Latinos and all Asian Americans together. Anecdotal evidence based on personal narratives of individual Asian Americans and Latinos suggests that it might be the latter (Wu 2003, Johnson 1999, Liu 1995). Patterns in racial hate crimes and patterns in past discriminatory actions by the government also suggest that actual foreign nativity is often irrelevant to white actions (Kim 1999, Almageur 1994). Finally, more systematic analysis of racial stereotypes indicates that at least for Asian Americans, one of the main stereotypes of the group is as ‘perpetual foreigners’ unable or unwilling to assimilate (Lee 2000; Wu 2003). Thus, there is reason to believe that regardless of nativity, all Asian Americans and Latinos who look ‘different’ will be lumped together in the eyes of white Americans. For these reasons, we focus on percent Latino and percent Asian American as our primary measures of immigrant context.⁹ However, since it is not clear in advance what the best measure of immigrant context is, we repeat our analysis with each of these different measures to try to determine which best explains white views. The results of these tests are described below. We would also have liked to consider the distinction between legal and illegal immigrants but estimates of the illegal immigrant population at the zip code level are simply not available.

Given that the Annenberg survey identifies the zip code, county, city, metropolitan area, and state of each respondent, we could have chosen to measure context at a number of different levels. However, since we seek to assess the effects of living near a large minority population, then we believe that the smallest available unit – a zip code – is most appropriate. In larger geographic units such as counties or cities, we don’t really know if an individual white respondent lives in close proximity to the minority population that lives in the larger area. In

⁹ Branton and Jones (2005) use a measure capturing the level of ethnic/racial diversity in a neighborhood, but given our theoretical expectations, we control for ethnic/racial groups separately.

fact, residential segregation may mean that there is little correlation between diversity at the city or metropolitan level and the personal environment of a respondent who lives in that city or metropolitan area. Because zip codes are relatively small, there is more likely to be a correspondence between the demographics of the zip code area and the experiences of any given respondent in that zip code. Zip codes, however, are an imperfect measure of local context in that they are not always drawn around well-defined neighborhoods in which individuals from the neighborhood regularly interact but they are our best available approximation.

Finally, to ensure that the relationships we see between immigrant context and white views are not spurious, we include several contextual measures of individual characteristics that have been linked to political views as well as a number of different contextual measures that have also been tied to political views. In terms of individual characteristics, we control for education (the last grade of school completed sorted into nine categories), household income (divided into nine categories), gender, age in years, whether the respondent is unemployed or not, whether anyone in the household is a union member or not, and whether or not there are any children in the household. In alternate tests, we also incorporate mobility (years living in the same address) and religiosity (denomination and religious views), and region. To help ensure that other features of the local neighborhood are not driving white attitudes, we include a control for the median household income in the respondent's zip code in the main model and in alternate models also consider the educational attainment and unemployment rate of the zip code. As additional controls, we distinguish between respondents who live in urban areas, suburban areas, and rural areas. Our sample is restricted to those respondents who self-identify as both white and non-Hispanic.

Dealing with Selection Bias

As we have already noted, one real concern with much of the existing literature is selection. Individuals with a particular set of political views may select into or out of different types of neighborhoods. The most likely possibility is that white Americans with more negative views of minorities will leave neighborhoods and cities that have disproportionately large numbers of minorities. Indeed, there is clear evidence of wide scale white flight from neighborhoods and cities with large black populations (Frey 1979, Clark 1992, Massey and Hajnal 1995, Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996, Gamm 1999).¹⁰ And if past patterns are being repeated today, we may be seeing similar movement away from predominantly Latino or Asian American locales. If this kind of selection is occurring then any simple correlation between immigrant context and white views would likely understate the role of racial threat and might even produce a spurious positive relationship between immigrant context and white views.

Most studies recognize this problem but few are able to deal with it effectively. Fortunately, we can use larger geographic units to help model away the endogeneity of neighborhood selection. All of our respondents live not only in neighborhoods but also in states. The states that where individuals reside in no small part shape the diversity of the neighborhood they live in. It is hard, if not impossible, to live in a primarily black neighborhood in Idaho or Wyoming or several other states. It is probably even difficult to find an all-white neighborhood in a city in California or Texas. In fact, for the Annenberg respondents, the three zip code contexts we examine - percent Hispanic, percent Asian American, and percent African American - are correlated between .43 and .59 with the same variables at the state level.

¹⁰ It is also quite possible that minorities choose not to move into areas where they expect to face high levels of racial intolerance.

The other key factor with state context is that movement and selection across states is much less common than movement and selection across neighborhoods. Just as we know that neighborhood choice is likely to be significantly impacted by their racial views (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996, Clark 1992, Oliver and Wong 2003), we also have fairly strong evidence indicating that choice of states is largely unrelated to racial views. The first piece of evidence is that very few people move across states. According to the Census about one half of one percent of all Americans move across state borders in any given five-year period (Census Bureau 2003). If few people move from state to state, there cannot be a significant amount of selection occurring at the state level. Second, studies of inter-state migration – unlike studies of neighborhoods or municipalities – have not found that race plays a significant role in migration decisions (Greenwood 2000). Mobility across states is relatively costly and is thus driven almost exclusively by employment and family (Gimpel 1999). Concerns about the race and ethnicity of one’s neighbors, may be enough to move one out of the neighborhood or even to next municipality but they are seldom strong enough to move one out of the state.

As such, state context represents an exogenous context that can predict local context and serve as an effective instrument to deal with selection at the local level (see Dustmann and Preston 2001 for a more formal test of this proposition). We take advantage of this set of state level instruments and in all subsequent regressions we use a two-stage least squares model with percent Latino, percent Asian American, percent African American at the state level as instruments for percent Latino, percent Asian American, percent African American at the zip code level. This two-stage process should minimize concerns about selection affecting our results.¹¹

¹¹ It is worth noting that our results are different if we do not undertake this two stage process and use simple correlations between local context and white views. Without instruments for state context, the effects of

Context and Immigration Policy

Are large immigrant populations changing the politics of the nation? Are white Americans reacting to significant numbers of Latinos and Asian Americans in their local neighborhoods with a racial backlash and a shift to the right politically? Our first answers to these questions emerge in Table 1. The table displays the results of a two-stage-least-squares regression that models individual white views on immigration.¹² We start with views on immigration because it is the policy area that can be most logically tied to immigrant context. If immigrant context matters anywhere, it should be here.

[TABLE 1 GOES HERE]

Table 1 indicates that local context is, in fact, a significant factor shaping views on immigration. In a pattern that we will see repeated again and again, white Americans who live in neighborhoods with larger Latino populations have more conservative views and are, in this case, significantly more likely to view immigration as a serious problem. The magnitude of the effect is quite substantial. All else equal, an individual white American living in a zip code that is comprised almost totally of Latinos is likely to be almost one full category more conservative on a four category immigration scale than a white American living with no Latinos in the area. In other words, living in a Latino context as opposed to a white context might mean moving from viewing immigration as a ‘not too serious’ problem to a seeing it as a ‘serious’ problem. This pattern comports well with a racial threat view of the world. For white Americans it appears that larger numbers of Latinos may represent a threat.

neighborhood are more muted. In some cases, we still find a significant rightward shift in response to a larger Latino population but the effects are generally weaker. This is exactly what we would expect if selection is occurring at the local level and whites with more anti-Latino views are leaving areas with large numbers of Latinos.¹² We use robust errors and cluster by zip code to account for the non-independence of observations within the same zip code.

As we expected, the contrast between Latino context and Asian American context is sharp. Whites who live in areas with high concentrations of Asian Americans are actually significantly *less* likely to view immigration as a serious problem. The effect is not quite as significant ($p < .10$) but the magnitude of the effect is large. These divergent effects for Latinos and Asian Americans mirror the divergent views that Americans have of these two pan-ethnic groups. Whereas large numbers of white Americans tend to view Latinos as less intelligent, more prone to welfare, and not especially hard working, the bulk of white Americans tend to view Asian Americans in roughly the opposite fashion. One group – Latinos – could thus be construed as representing a burden and a resource threat while the other group – Asian Americans – a potential partner. These patterns are consistent with previous findings; in a survey asking whites how well they generally get along with other racial groups, 92 percent say they get along with Asians, 59 percent with Blacks and 67 percent with Latinos. Moreover, a larger percentage of whites responded that they felt closer to Asians, relative to Blacks and Latinos.¹³

Moreover, as we will see, this pattern will tend to be repeated as we focus on other policy areas. The results will not be nearly as consistently and significantly positive for Asian Americans as they are consistently and significantly negative for Latinos but there will be little doubt that white reactions to the two groups are different. Although likely surprising to most readers, the liberalizing effects of the Asian American population have been echoed in past research. In a number of existing studies, there is at least a hint that the effects of the Asian American population are very different from the effects of the Black and Latino population. Hood and Morris (2000, 1998), Hero and Preuhs (2006), and Tolbert et al (1999) in different

¹³ Source: 2005 Intergroup Relations Survey, sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ).

ways all find that proximity to larger Asian Americans communities breeds more positive views about Asian Americans or policies related to Asian Americans. Hood and Morris (2000), for example, found that whites living in counties with larger Asian American populations were less willing to support Proposition 187– the California measure design to cut a range of public services to illegal immigrants.

Table 1 also begins to inform us about the role of African American context in American politics. The results indicate that whites living with larger concentrations of African Americans tend to be more concerned about immigration. The reason for this link is not immediately obvious. It is possible that whites are responding negatively to African Americans who are immigrants but since over 90 percent of the black population is native-born, that seems unlikely. One perhaps more probable interpretation is that for many whites, blacks represent a generalized threat that leads to heightened concern over a host of issues. Another interpretation is that whites living in areas with large black populations are especially likely to recognize the conflicts that have emerged between blacks and immigrant populations (see Kim 2003; Vaca 2004). In either case, these results suggest that despite the fact that blacks are no longer the largest minority group, black context is still far from irrelevant.

At this point, it is also worth noting that in Table 1 and in the tables to come, the individual control variables that are included in the model generally perform as expected. Self-identified Republicans are much more anti-immigration and significantly more conservative on the host of policy questions we assess. Likewise, self-identified conservatives are more anti-immigration and have rightward leaning views across the spectrum of policy areas. Effects for education, income, age, gender, employment status, union membership, and urbanity also all conform to expectations in most cases.

Context and White Policy Views

By focusing on immigration policy in Table 1, we are essentially replicating the work done by previous scholars. As we have noted, almost all of the research on immigrant context has limited its purview to attitudes about or actions toward minorities themselves. But given the increasingly prominent role of immigration in American politics today, we expect that immigrant context matters much more broadly in the political calculations of white Americans. Thus, we now turn to a larger set of core political questions to see if white views on these larger questions are shaped by the Latino and Asian American contexts in which they live. We start with the policy questions that we believe are most closely and most logically linked with concerns about immigrants and then slowly shift to away to less immigration focused but more core political decisions.

The results in Table 2 indicate that the impact of immigrant context does, in fact, extend beyond the confines of immigration policy. The table reveals the effect of context on two policy areas often tied to the immigration debate – social welfare policy and health care policy. In each case, subsets of the American population have expressed concern that immigrants are a fiscal burden on public resources (Tichenor 2002). And in each of the two policy areas there have been attempts to limit the resources expended on immigrants (eg Proposition 187). What the results here show is that immigrant context is affecting the larger policy debate itself. In both policy areas, white Americans who live in proximity to large numbers of Latinos tend to have more conservative views. All else equal, whites living in zip codes with larger Latino populations are less likely to want to the federal government to reduce income inequality, less likely to seek increased spending on health care for the poor, significantly less likely to want to

do more to cover the uninsured, and almost significantly less likely ($p=.11$) to view poverty as a serious problem.¹⁴ The implication of this set of findings is an important one. Latino context is now shaping core policy concerns of the American public. And it is doing so in a way that mirrors the negative reactions that have often faced the African American community in the past. In contexts, where Latinos are prominent (and perhaps threatening), whites tend to be eager to reduce services and expenditures that benefit the bottom rungs of society (Gilens 2001, Kinder and Sanders 1994).

[TABLE 2 GOES HERE]

In Table 2, we see again that Asian American context has a very different impact on white views. As we saw earlier, proximity to Asian Americans is associated with more liberal views. On both social welfare policy and health care policy, whites living in zip codes with larger Asian American populations are significantly more likely to view poverty as a serious problem, to favor actions to reduce income inequality, and to favor more spending on Medicaid. One reading of the divergent contextual effects is that the two pan-ethnic groups do, in fact, represent very different threats and possibilities to members of the white community. One could also interpret the results as saying that if the poor or those in need of health care are disproportionately Latino, then individual white Americans are less likely to want to help. For these white Americans, Latinos may not be trying hard enough or they may be too different to empathize with. Latinos may also be considered to be an undeserving group, given that a considerable portion of the population is comprised of undocumented immigrants (Newton 2008). By contrast, if the poor or those in need are of Asian descent (or perhaps white), then it

¹⁴ Latino context has a similar effect for two other questions in the Annenberg survey that address health care. Whites living in areas with larger Latino populations are significantly less apt to want to spend on Medicare and significantly less eager to expand resources to ensure that all children are covered by health care. The one health care question where Latino context plays no evident role asks whether or not a lack of health insurance should be viewed as a serious problem.

appears that white Americans are more likely to want to help. Asian Americans may be hardworking enough or similar enough in eyes of white Americans to warrant more aid.

The other interesting conclusion that emerges out of Table 2 is the ongoing relevance of black context. The effects for black context are not as consistent or as robust as they are for the other two groups but there is still a clear tendency for whites living in areas with large black populations to be opposed to expanding services or aid to the needy.¹⁵

Table 3 furthers the same themes by illustrating a range of links between context and criminal justice policy. Once again, we see the importance of Latino context and the backlash that a large Latino population can engender. Whites who live with higher concentrations of Latinos favor more punitive criminal justice policies. As Table Three demonstrates, they are significantly more likely to approve of the death penalty and to believe that the number of criminals not being punished enough is a serious problem.¹⁶ By contrast, proximity to Asian Americans leads to leniency on the part of whites. The contrast between the punitive nature of the response to Latino context and the forgiving nature of the response to Asian American context suggests that white perceptions vary widely about how threatening or deserving the two pan-ethnic groups are. Echoing past research, whites faced with a large local black population are also apt to want to punish criminals more harshly (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). In a ten-year study conducted on the portrayal of Latinos in the media, more than one-third of the Latino-based news stories focused on either crime or the issue of immigration, particularly undocumented immigration.¹⁷

¹⁵ Moreover, for one of the other questions in the survey that asked whether the number of Americans not covered by health insurance should be viewed as a serious problem, black context had the same type of conservative effect and was the only significant contextual variable on that policy question.

¹⁶ Latino context also matters for the two related questions on gun control that are part of the survey. Proximity to Latinos is associated with support for looser restrictions on hand guns and hand gun licensing.

¹⁷ “Network Brownout Report 2005: The Portrayal of Latinos and Latino Issues on Network Television News, 2004 with a retrospect to 1995.<http://www.nahj.org/resources/networkbrownoutreports/brownoutreports.html>

[TABLE 3 GOES HERE]

The results for tax policy are no different. On this core policy debate, living amongst high concentrations of Latinos leads whites to favor policies that favor the well off at the expense of the lower rungs. In particular, whites in zip codes with larger Latino populations are, all else equal, significantly more likely to favor reductions in the taxes paid by higher income Americans and significantly more likely to propose that all Americans pay the same percentage of their income in taxes. The lack of generosity that a heavily Latino context provokes is yet more evidence that the growing Latino population is breeding resentment among at least some sectors of the white population. Blacks too produce less charitable views among the white population. High numbers of African Americans are associated with a greater willingness to punish criminals more sternly. And yet again, a heavily Asian American context tends to lead in the opposite direction, which in this case means more liberal tax policy preferences.¹⁸

One other arena of public policy that is regularly linked to immigration is trade policy. Concerns about immigrants and their impact on America are often coupled with concerns about the effects of expanded international trade on jobs and the overall economy of the nation. Although there were no trade policy questions in the 2000 survey, there is one trade measure in the 2004 Annenberg survey. That survey asked whether the federal government should negotiate more free trade agreements. When we analyzed white views on this question, a similar pattern of contextual effects re-emerges.¹⁹ Living amongst large numbers of Latinos appears to increase fears amongst whites and is associated with a significant decline in the willingness to expand fair

¹⁸ The identical pattern resurfaces when respondents in 2004 were asked to consider making the Bush tax cuts permanent. Here living with more blacks and more Latinos means greater support for a permanent cut while proximity to a large Asian American population is tied to a greater willingness to pay taxes and support government services.

¹⁹ The regression model for 2004 is essentially identical to the model presented in Tables 1-4.

trade. By contrast, proximity to Asian Americans tends to lead to support for liberalizing trade. As one might expect black context is unrelated to views on trade [Analysis not shown].

All told, these results point to the centrality of immigrant context in the minds and political calculations of white Americans. When many whites think about core policy questions, they are partly driven by their local Latino and Asian American context. Where Latinos are numerous, concerns and fears appear to lead to more conservative or punitive views. Where Latinos are yet to arrive in large numbers, the absence of these concerns and fears appears to engender a more liberal or lenient political viewpoint. Large numbers of Asian Americans, by contrast, appear to stimulate less fear and instead generate more liberal or more generous politics.

Context and White Political Identity

The ultimate test of how far immigrant context is re-shaping the politics of the nation is to determine if proximity to Latinos and Asian Americans is changing how Americans identify politically. Is immigrant context influencing how they view themselves on the core liberal-conservative ideological dimension that underlies the politics of this country? Is it shifting their partisan allegiances?

In Table 4 we attempt to answer both of these questions. The first column of the table focuses on liberal-conservative ideology and the second column examines party identification. The results are striking. In both cases, immigrant context plays a role in the core political identities of white Americans. The effects mirror the patterns we have seen in Tables One through Three. In both cases, larger Latino populations push white Americans to the right politically. In both cases, the effects are substantial. In terms of self-described ideology, whites

living in zip codes with no Latinos are, all else equal, predicted to place themselves almost one full category to the left of whites living in zip codes that are largely Latino. On the five point ideology scale, that could signal a shift from ‘very liberal’ to ‘liberal or from ‘liberal to ‘moderate. The predicted shift on party identification is just as dramatic. The predicted difference between a zip code with no Latinos and one with almost all Latinos is close to a half a category on the three-point party identification scale. Living with a large concentration of Latinos does not normally cause a shift from Democratic ties to Republican affiliation but it could easily shift a weak Democrat toward Independence or a wavering Independent toward the Republican Party. Thus, areas with a sizeable Latino population have the potential to shift the partisan preferences of whites that identify as Independent or are weak party identifiers.

[TABLE 4 GOES HERE]

Proximity to Asian Americans once again tends to push white Americans to the left. Whites in zip codes with greater concentrations of Asian Americans are substantially more likely to identify as liberal and substantially more likely to identify as Democratic than whites residing in areas with few Asian Americans.

The importance of this set of findings should not be underestimated. Liberal-conservative ideology and party identification are arguably the two most important factors driving American politics. If the placement of white Americans on the two most fundamental scales in American politics is being strongly shaped by their proximity to the growing immigrant population, then immigration is clearly playing a prominent role in the politics of the nation.

There is yet more evidence in the 2004 NAES that immigrant context is altering core beliefs and partisan attitudes. The 2004 NAES examined views on different groups in American society and included a measure of approval of the Bush presidency. In both cases, immigrant

context played a significant role. Proximity to large Latino populations led to less favorable views of labor unions and more favorable views of corporations. More Latinos also meant stronger approval of the Bush administration. The results suggest again that a growing Latino population is pushing white American to the right. The results for Asian American context on these two sets of questions repeat our earlier findings. Whites living in zip codes with larger Asian American populations are apt to shift to the left favoring unions more and corporations and the Bush administration less [analysis not shown].

What is also interesting about Table Four is the relatively small role that black context plays in shaping views on these two key scales. Black context still matters in terms of white ideology and as before being close to large black communities pushes whites to the right. But the effect is about the half of the size of the Latino contextual effect. And on the party identification question, black context ceases to be significant. We should not, however, jump to the conclusion that the black-white divide is irrelevant in party politics or indeed is less central than immigrant context in any of the policy arenas we examine. Although the results presented here indicate that black context has a less consistent and less robust impact on the political calculations of white America than does immigrant context, it is far too early to dismiss the importance of African Americans on the politics of the nation. The black-white divide has shaped politics in this country for most of its history. The Latino population and the Asian American population have been far less visible for most of that time and may be just beginning to shape white political preferences. It is entirely possible that views of African Americans have become so deeply entrenched in the minds of white Americans, that perceptions of blacks affect white views regardless of whether individual whites live near to or far from large concentrations of blacks. Context aside, past research has shown that perceptions of the black community have

long filtered into white views on crime, welfare, and other policies (Gilens 2001, Kinder and Sanders 1994, but see Sniderman and Carmines 1997). And concerns about policies designed to help the African American community have, at times, arguably been the core factor driving white partisan choices (Carmines and Stimson 1989 but see Abramowitz and Saunders 1998). We believe that our results warrant making relatively strong claims about the increasingly relevance of Latino and Asian American context in the political calculus of white Americans but they do not merit dismissing the centrality of a black-white divide.

Robustness Checks

To help ensure that the results in Tables 1 through 4 do measure the underlying relationships between context and white political positions, we performed a series of additional tests. First, we repeated as much of the analysis as possible on the 2004 NAES. The 2004 survey has fewer policy questions but does have the same large sample and wide geographic sampling and includes questions on the same set of individual characteristics that we incorporated into the regression models in all of the tables in this paper. Thus, for at least a few of the policy areas as well as for the liberal-conservative ideology question and the party identification measure, we can replicate our earlier tests. This replication corroborates the results from the 2000 survey. In 2004, as in 2000, proximity to large concentrations of Latinos is associated with significant shifts to the political right. Whites near large numbers of Latinos were once again more conservative on social welfare and health care policy, they tended to be more likely to self-identify as conservative, and they were more likely to align themselves with the Republican party. The effects of Asian American context were not always as significant in 2004 as in 2000 but generally speaking living amidst large concentrations of Asian Americans

pushed whites to the left politically. Once again, more Asian Americans meant a significant shift to the left ideologically and movement to the left on the partisan scale.²⁰

Second, we repeated the analysis using a Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM). Ideally, when analyzing data with a multi-level structure an HLM regression should be used (Steenbergen and Jones 2002). An HLM model explicitly takes into account the different levels of units and minimizes the correlation in error terms among respondents in the same geographic unit. However, because of the selection concerns that we have outlined, running an HLM model that employs simple uncorrected measures of local context is highly problematic. For this reason we rely primarily on the two-stage-least squares analysis in the paper. Nevertheless, an HLM model does provide a chance to assess the robustness of our results under different methodological constraints.²¹ Fortunately, the results of this HLM analysis generally mirror the findings that we present here.

Our use of state level context in a two-stage least-squares model may not allay all concerns about selection. To help discount the role of whites selecting into and out of neighborhoods with more or fewer minorities, we controlled for mobility by adding a variable that measured the number of years the respondent had lived in their current address. In some cases, long-term residence in an area was associated with more conservative views but inclusion of the mobility measure did little to affect the rest of the results. It is also worth noting, that the general patterns we present here do not fit a typical selection story. If selection were driving the results (e.g. large numbers of whites with more negative views of Latinos leave areas with high concentrations of Latinos) then we would expect a positive link between Latino context and white views rather than the negative one that we find.

²⁰ Black context also played roughly the same role in 2004 as in 2000.

²¹ HLM, for example, enables us to simultaneously control for state and local context – a test that helps ensure that the contextual effects detailed in Tables 1-4 are not solely due to state level effects.

Another concern is that we may be missing other factors about local context that are shaping white political views. In our models we are already controlling for the overall economic status of the zip code with a measure of median household income but it is possible that Latino and Asian American neighborhoods are different on other dimensions.²² We attempted to rule out this kind of omitted variable bias by incorporating two different measures of local context – local educational attainment and percent unemployed. Neither measure alters the basic findings outlined here.

We also performed a series of tests in which we included a range of different individual characteristics into our model. Specifically, we accounted for one’s religious denomination (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim), a measure for whether the respondent was born again or not, another for households with a member in the armed forces, and a variable that gauged occupational status. These additional controls did little to affect the results.

One other potential issue is multicollinearity between the key contextual variables. Fortunately, at the zip code level, the proportions of residents who are Latino, Asian American, and African American are only minimally correlated with each other ($\rho < .13$). Nevertheless, to help ensure that correlation between different contexts was not affecting our results, we repeated the analysis while including only one of the three racial contexts and dropped the other two. This did nothing to alter the basic conclusions that we present.

Finally, we sought to verify our results by looking for immigrant contextual effects in areas where we should not find them - on views of groups that are generally absent during discussions on immigration or immigrants. Accordingly, we found no significant ties between

²² Interestingly, individual white Americans who live in wealthier neighborhoods do tend to be more conservative and more likely to identify as Republican.

immigrant context and views on feminist groups, gay and lesbian groups, and Muslims.²³ It is not the case that immigrant context matters for all arenas of American politics. Immigrant context tends to matter only for those issues that are infused with talk about immigrants or immigration.

Is it Race or Foreignness?

Up to this point, we have focused on two ‘racial’ measures of immigrant context – percent Latino and percent Asian American. We have separated out the two groups because we suspect that white Americans view the two pan-ethnic groups very differently. We have also combined foreign born and native born members of each group because we suspect that white Americans tend not to distinguish between the native and foreign born of each pan-ethnic group when reacting to the local population. But we could be wrong on both accounts. To determine if white Americans most strongly react to race or foreignness, we repeated our analysis with a series of different measures of context including percent foreign born overall, percent foreign born Latino and percent foreign born Asian American.

The overall percent foreign born results are the most telling. Here we found relatively few significant effects. The reason for these null findings is likely quite simple. We believe that because white Americans tend to react to immigrants from Latino America by shifting to the right politically and to immigrants from Asia by shifting to the left politically, the two effects tend to offset each other and to reduce the significance of any findings. Thus, if we want to uncover how immigrant context is shaping white views, we need to separate out these two divergent effects.

²³ Views of Muslims were, however, tied to black context. Whites who lived in areas with larger black populations had significantly less favorable views of Muslims.

The results for percent foreign born Latin American and percent foreign born Asian American are messier. When we substituted these two contextual measures into our model, they tended to work similarly to the percent Latino and percent Asian American measures. This is because the two sets of measures are very highly correlated. Percent foreign born Asian is correlated at .84 with percent Asian American at the zip code level. The correlation for Latinos and foreign born Latin Americans is .89. Thus, there is very little to distinguish the two sets of measures empirically. If we do, however, include all four measures of context in the same model, the two racial measures perform better than the two foreign born measures.²⁴ From this meager evidence it appears that whites are reacting more to the larger pan-ethnic group and less to the foreign born members of each group. At least at first glance, it appears to be more about race than about foreignness. This is, however, a finding that requires much more extended analysis in the future.²⁵ Finally, in terms of measuring context, we would also like to consider population change as a factor. It may well be that whites respond differently when the local Latino and Asian American communities are expanding rapidly than when they are stagnant. It is also possible that growth in areas that have not previously seen immigrants stirs a stronger reaction than immigrant growth in long time immigrant receiving communities. Unfortunately, given that a high proportion of zip code borders or numbers change every census, it is difficult to do this analysis at the zip code level (Fernandez and Neiman 2008).

Discussion

The patterns illustrated in this paper suggest that immigration is indeed transforming America. This may not be particularly surprising to many observers. But what is novel here is

²⁴ This specification also generates a significant amount of collinearity, thus making it problematic to use this particular specification.

²⁵ We also considered separating out the foreign born population by national origin group but variation in the size of most national origin groups at the zip code level was too limited to assess empirically.

that we are exposing just how broadly immigrant context is shaping the political calculus of white Americans. It is not simply that larger concentrations of Latinos or Asian Americans do or do not cause fear and concern. It is that larger concentrations of immigrants lead to a fundamentally different political orientation among members of the white population. On many of the major policy debates that we face, on the core liberal-conservative ideological line that delineates much of our politics, and on the partisan scale that helps to structure many if not most of our political decisions and attitudes, immigrant context is a key contributor. The degree to which white Americans live in areas with large numbers of Latinos and Asian Americans shapes that they are politically.

The patterns also suggest that immigrants –or at least reactions to all immigrants - are far from uniform. The response to proximity to Latinos is very different than the response to proximity to Asian Americans. Living in areas with high numbers of Latinos is associated with a consistent move to the right politically. Whites residing in zip codes with high concentrations of Latinos are more concerned about immigration, more conservative on social welfare policy, and health care policy, more punitive on criminal justice questions, less generous on taxation, more likely to see themselves as conservative and more likely to identify as Republican. By contrast, whites who live in areas with more Asian Americans tend to shift to the left and are more willing to expend resources to alleviate poverty and cover the uninsured, they are apt to want to lessen criminal penalties and raise taxes, and they are significantly more likely to identify as a liberal or a Democrat.

Just why white Americans react so differently to these two pan-ethnic groups is less clear. As with most contextual analysis, the results we have presented here are somewhat of a black box. We can demonstrate that different sets of demographic numbers translate into distinct sets

of views but we have not shown how that translation works. Does a larger Latino population, as we have sometimes implied, generate a greater sense of threat among local white residents? And if so, are whites afraid of Latinos taking jobs and lowering wages, are they concerned about Latinos using up precious public resources, or do they simply not like the Latino community? Likewise, why is proximity to a larger Asian American community associated with more liberal views? Is it that white stereotypes of Asian Americans are more empathetic, is it that because they are well educated and have higher incomes, they tend to represent less of a threat to public resources, or is it something else? And how does proximity actually ‘work’ to change individual white views? Are whites responding to personal interactions with immigrants or other minorities, to immigrant political activism in the area, to local white political campaigns, to the portrayals of immigrants that are prevalent in local media outlets, or to something else altogether?²⁶

The other unanswered question is who exactly is responding to immigrant context. It is doubtful that all white Americans react in the same way to living near large concentrations of minorities. If Branton and Jones (2005) are correct, then reactions to immigrants should be more pronounced in areas with low socioeconomic standing. Alternatively, it may be that white reactions depend on the legal status, profession, and/or ethnicity of the immigrants themselves. Work by Hood and Morris (1998) suggests that responses to illegal immigrants will be more severe, while research by Scheve and Slaughter (2001) predicts that the consequences of immigrant context will depend on the relative skill level of immigrants and natives. Clearly,

²⁶ We are personally doubtful that individual interactions play a big role – in large part because studies that actually test for the effects of personal interactions find that they generally have a positive effect on white views of minorities (e.g. Pettigrew 1997, Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004). But the other explanations seem more plausible. We know, for example, that media portrayals of Latinos are more negative in areas with higher concentrations of Latinos (Branton and Dunaway 2009).

much more work needs to be done before the full contours of this immigrant political transformation are known.

Nevertheless, it is important to demonstrate that immigrant context does change the political calculus of many white Americans. Decades ago, to the extent that race mattered, it was largely – if not exclusively – driven by a black-white dynamic. That is no longer true today. Along with dramatic growth in the immigrant population, major changes in the racial makeup of the nation, and the increasing visibility of immigration in the economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of this nation has brought forth a real change in the racial dynamics of our politics. Blacks still matter but when we talk about the role of race in American politics, we have to talk about the fears and concerns that a growing Latino population seems to provoke and the sympathy and generosity that an expanding Asian American population may be generating.

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Table One. Determinants of Believing Immigration is a Serious Problem¹	
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT	
Percent Latino²	.94 (.21)**
Percent Asian American²	-1.30 (.74)^
Percent African American²	.59 (.19)**
Median Income	-.03 (.12)
POLITICAL ORIENTATION	
Party Identification (hi=Rep)	.04 (.01)**
Ideology (hi=Conservative)	.07 (.01)**
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	
Education	-.10 (.00)**
Income	-.01 (.01)
Unemployed	-.04 (.08)
Age	.00 (.01)
Gender (1=female)	.10 (.02)**
Union Member	.04 (.03)
Have Children	-.02 (.02)
Urban	-.16 (.04)**
Suburban	-.06 (.03)^
Constant	2.98 (.07)**
N	7640
R Squared	.09

¹Two-stage least squares regression. ² Endogenous variables-instruments are percent Latino, percent Asian American, and percent African American at the state level. ***P<.01 **P<.05 ^ p<.10

Table Two. Context and Views on Poverty and Health Care¹

	Social Welfare Policy		Health Care Policy	
	Poverty a Problem	Reduce Inequality	More for Medicaid	Help Cover Uninsured
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT				
Percent Latino²	-.17 (.10)	-.47 (.12)**	-.49 (.16)**	-.53 (.11)**
Percent Asian American²	1.11 (.37)**	1.21 (.42)**	1.28 (.58)*	1.15 (.39)**
Percent African American²	.03 (.10)	-.17 (.10)^	-.26 (.14)^	-.06 (.10)
Median Income	-.01 (.00)^	-.02 (.00)**	-.02 (.01)*	-.01 (.00)*
POLITICAL ORIENTATION				
Party Identification (hi=Rep)	-.08 (.01)**	-.07 (.01)**	-.12 (.01)**	-.14 (.01)**
Ideology (hi=Conservative)	-.11 (.01)**	-.09 (.01)**	-.13 (.01)**	-.16 (.01)**
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS				
Education	-.01 (.00)**	-.02 (.00)**	-.01 (.00)**	-.01 (.00)**
Income	-.02 (.00)**	-.03 (.00)**	-.02 (.00)**	-.02 (.00)**
Unemployed	.06 (.04)	-.06 (.04)	.03 (.06)	.04 (.04)
Age	-.01 (.00)*	.01 (.00)**	-.00 (.01)	-.01 (.00)^
Gender (1=female)	.27 (.01)**	.06 (.01)**	-.01 (.02)	.09 (.01)**
Union Member	.04 (.01)**	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.01)
Have Children	.04 (.01)**	.06 (.01)**	-.01 (.02)	.04 (.01)**
Urban	-.04 (.02)*	-.00 (.02)	.04 (.03)^	.01 (.02)
Suburban	.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	.04 (.02)^	.00 (.02)
Constant	1.62 (.04)**	.80 (.04)**	.62 (.06)	.58 (.04)**
N	18606	7527	7648	18321
R Squared	.09	.11	.08	.11

¹Two-stage least squares regression. ² Endogenous variables-instruments are percent Latino, percent Asian American, and percent African American at the state level. ***P<.01 **P<.05 ^ p<.10

Table Three. Context and Views on Criminal Justice and Taxes¹

	Criminal Justice		Tax Policy	
	Favor Death Penalty	Punish Criminals More	Tax Wealthy Less	Tax All Incomes the Same
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT				
Percent Latino²	.53 (.09)**	.31 (.11)**	.24 (.10)*	.24 (.12)*
Percent Asian American²	1.55 (.33)**	1.67 (.39)**	-.57 (.37)	-.85 (.43)*
Percent African American²	.19 (.09)*	.77 (.10)**	.28 (.09)**	.01 (.11)
Median Income		.01 (.01)	.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.01)
POLITICAL ORIENTATION				
Party Identification (hi=Rep)	.06 (.01)**	.07 (.01)**	.06 (.01)**	.04 (.01)**
Ideology (hi=Conservative)	.05 (.01)**	.11 (.01)**	.05 (.01)**	.06 (.01)**
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS				
Education	-.02 (.00)**	-.07 (.00)**	-.00 (.01)	-.02 (.00)**
Income	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.00)**	.02 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**
Unemployed	-.01 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.04 (.04)	-.04 (.04)
Age	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.01)
Gender (1=female)	-.06 (.01)**	.15 (.01)**	-.04 (.01)**	-.07 (.01)**
Union Member	-.01 (.01)	.04 (.01)**	-.04 (.01)**	.02 (.02)
Have Children	.01 (.01)	.06 (.01)**	-.01 (.01)	.03 (.01)**
Urban	-.07 (.02)**	-.08 (.02)**	-.00 (.02)	-.04 (.02)*
Suburban	-.02 (.01)^	.01 (.02)	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.02)
Constant	1.63 (.03)**	2.79 (.04)**	.85 (.04)**	1.49 (.04)**
N	8092	18419	7595	7492
R Squared	.05	.10	.05	.05

¹Two-stage least squares regression. ² Endogenous variables-instruments are percent Latino, percent Asian American, and percent African American at the state level. ***P<.01 **P<.05 ^ p<.10

Table Four. Context and Its Impact on Ideology and Party Identification¹		
	<i>Liberal-Conservative Ideology</i>	<i>Party Identification</i>
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT		
Percent Latino²	.94 (.13)**	.42 (.10)**
Percent Asian American²	-4.98 (.45)**	-1.76 (.37)**
Percent African American²	.56 (.12)**	.07 (.10)
Median Income	.04 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS		
Education	-.03 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**
Income	.04 (.00)**	.03 (.00)**
Unemployed	-.13 (.05)**	-.05 (.05)
Age	.01 (.00)**	-.01 (.00)^
Gender (1=male)	-.14 (.01)**	-.10 (.01)**
Union Member	-.12 (.02)**	-.19 (.01)**
Have Children	.02 (.01)	.08 (.01)**
Urban	-.19 (.02)**	.01 (.02)
Suburban	-.10 (.02)**	.02 (.02)
Constant	3.31 (.04)**	.73 (.03)**
N	22722	20394
R Squared	.03	.19

¹Two-stage least squares regression. ² Endogenous variables-instruments are percent Latino, percent Asian American, and percent African American at the state level. ***P<.01 **P<.05 ^ p<.10