REVISITING THE THREAT HYPOTHESIS: LATINO CONTEXT AND THE IMPACT ON REPRESENTATION

by

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(Under the Direction of AUDREY HAYNES)

ABSTRACT

The growth of the Latino population in the U.S. raises a series of issues regarding the political implications of Latino presence in the U.S. Among these are considerations of the disenfranchised nature of a large component of the Latino voting age population and the potential economic and political “threat” Latino growth poses to the majority population. I consider the impact of Latino presence on the legislative action of members of the U.S. House, testing for the possibility that there exists a potential “threat relationship,” similar to that found by V.O. Key in the pre-Voting Rights Act South, between Latino context and action on immigration issues. This study tests whether larger proportions of Latinos in a House district may be positively related to increased legislative hostility on the part of representation from that district. Through polynomial and linear regression analysis, our results indicate that district Latino context does not encourage restrictionism. However, other semblances of a threat relationship may persist.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, Latinos, Racial Context, Hispanics, Representation, Threat Hypothesis, Illegal Immigration
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V.O. Key, Jr.'s *Southern Politics in State and Nation* is remembered in part for its role in raising the concept of the "black threat hypothesis" to academic and public attention. Key's analysis of the eleven states of the former American Confederacy was laden with detail and analysis concerning the unique political structure and culture of the region prior to the major changes brought by the Civil Rights movement. Writing in the 1940's, Key described and explained the overwhelming dominance of the Democratic Party in each Southern state. At the time, the South was viewed as one of the major "problems" for the nation, with the poverty and racial problems in the area drawing much attention. Additionally, the Southern United States was characterized by political patterns that peaked the interest of political scientists like Key. Since the passing of the period of the Southern Reconstruction, merely a handful of Republicans had been elected to any office in the South. While the politics of other regions of the country were marked by at least *some* degree of partisan competition, the period of Democratic dominance in the South had already lasted over fifty years before Key began to conduct his observations of the phenomenon. The motivation for this pattern of dominance, Key argued in the nomenclature of the time, was "that there is one, and only one, real basis for Southern unity: the Negro" (Key, 1949). For Key, the one single factor that stood out as fundamentally influential to the character of Southern politics was the racial composition of the areas considered.
Key argued that the size of the black population in communities in the South had a direct impact on the political actions of white residents, their voting choices, and the character of their elected representatives. However, that relationship between the black population and these other variables is far different from that in contemporary politics. Today, one need only examine the members of the Congressional Black Caucus to find that nearly all of them represent districts with majority-black populations. The relationship is one wherein an increase in the number of black citizens in an area increases the likelihood of black representation. Key's findings were starkly different. In the period he studied, areas with high percentages of black residents were represented by white politicians who were more adherent to the existing white supremacist and/or segregationist political structures and cultures than representative of the black citizenry of their district. The white South rallied around segregationist Democrats in order to contribute towards the maintenance of a solid bloc of Southern power that could defeat federal Civil Rights legislation in the face of a more progressive national Democratic Party (Key, 1949).

Key recognized that the pre-Voting Rights Act black population in the South could be seen as a "sleeping giant," or latent threat, to the well-established white-controlled institutions of political, social, and economic power. Therefore, throughout the South, whites controlled these institutions despite often being statistical minorities in their communities. Using both legal and extra-legal tactics, from the white primary and the poll tax to intimidation and lynching, powerful whites maintained a stratified and segregated society in the South by disenfranchising and oppressing black citizens. The lack of black political power allowed Southern whites the
ability to dominate and prosper from an infrastructure and political system that was dependent on keeping blacks economically and politically subservient. In communities where the prospect of enfranchisement for blacks was a very real problem for whites benefiting from the status quo, political unity in the form of allegiance to the Southern brand of the Democratic Party was the well-practiced solution (Key, 1949; Bullock, 2007).

Key argued that larger proportions of blacks in a community were related to a greater likelihood of the community’s whites supporting a candidate seen as beneficial to the maintenance of segregation. His research into the presidential campaigns of 1928 and 1948 revealed that “rim south” states, or those communities with lower proportions of black citizens, supported Republican candidates sooner than those of the more heavily-black “deep South” states. Key argued that the prevalence of a more immediate and relevant “black threat” in the deep south prodded most whites to vote to maintain and support segregation via Democratic hegemony in the area even when faced with traits among the national Democratic candidates that were otherwise unfavorable to many Southerners (Key, 1949).¹

A series of factors contributed to the transformation of the Democratic South into a Republican stronghold and eliminated the significance of Key's "black threat hypothesis" in contemporary analysis. Northern Democrats, favoring progressive racial policies, eroded the power of the Southern Democratic hegemony by weakening the seniority-based system in Congress which previously afforded Southern Democrats the ability to block most Civil Rights legislation (Black and Black, 2002). Democratic majorities in the House and Senate were

¹ In 1928, most "rim south" states deviated from the Democratic Party for the first time since reconstruction to support a Republican candidate instead of the national Democratic choice - Catholic and anti-Prohibition New York Governor Al Smith (Bullock, 2007).
supplemented with newly elected liberals from Northern and Western states. Consequently, the national Democratic Party's passage of significant Civil Rights Acts in 1957, 1960, 1964, and 1968 continued to alienate Southern whites from the party. The degree of alienation was most evident in the incremental shift of the South from Democratic to Republican majorities and with regards to segregationist presidential campaigns by Alabama Governor George Wallace, a disenchanted Democrat. The legislation was accompanied by revolutionary court decisions which, taken together, would eventually permit black enfranchisement and force desegregation upon the Southern states. Consequently, the "sleeping giant" that the white-power structure of the South was designed to keep dormant was awoken. Black voters soon became a relevant constituency for politicians and calls for their outright suppression were no longer acceptable. Changes to the political structure resulted, as it could no longer legally maintain segregation. Therefore, continued loyalty by Southern conservatives to a nationally progressive Democratic Party became a fruitless strategy in regard to maintaining some semblance of the white power structure. As a result of these changes, the predictions and theoretical foundations of the "black threat hypothesis" soon seemed to become irrelevant to all but historical studies.

The Threat Hypothesis Revisited

Recent changes to the political landscape in the United States bring up new questions about the role of racial and ethnic demographics that seem to mirror facets of the issues studied by Key in *Southern Politics.*

Dramatic population shifts and growths due to the influx of legal and illegal Latino immigrants are inarguably having an impact on the nation's politics. Large

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2 For the purposes of brevity, in the rest of this study we shall use the term "racial" to refer to circumstances in which the terms "racial and ethnic" might otherwise be applicable.
numbers of Latinos\(^3\) now live and work in communities where, historically, few Latinos did in the past. Consequently, contemporary discussions on the social, political, and economic impact of these changes recently moved to the forefront of the news media and public discourse. Stories concerning infamous border-patrolling citizens groups or the reaction of local businesses to new discourse with Latino communities are commonplace in local newspapers and the nightly news.

Furthermore, debates concerning how federal, state, and local governments should treat the issues associated with Latino immigration and migration are far more visible. For example, proposed policies such as the strongly restrictionist H.R. 4437 in the U.S. Congress have elicited massive street protests by Latinos and their supporters and subsequent counter-protests by proponents of the legislation. The immigration and subsequent intra-national migration of Latinos is forcing all Americans to confront new problems of race, economics, and social integration that may have only been addressed with regard to black-white relations in the past.

The work of Key appears relevant when the similarities between the pre-VRA black population of the South and the present Latino immigrant population throughout the nation are considered. Many of the factors that Key theorized as influential to the relationship he analyzed using his black threat hypothesis are recognizable in the relationship between these new immigrants and the currently "native" white and black populations. For example, both pre-VRA Southern blacks and Latino immigrants in the U.S. are similar in being largely shut off from the franchise. Immigrants, both legal and undocumented, are not afforded the right to vote upon

\(^3\) "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably for the purposes of this study.
The presence of a massive population of Latinos without the opportunity to electorally impact the representation of the areas in which they live and work is analogous to the Southern blacks who were nearly totally disenfranchised before the Civil Rights movement. Furthermore, many of the social and economic hurdles faced by Southern blacks are also faced by Latinos. Some scholars note that "nativism," a label describing outwardly supremacist feelings on the part of native-born Americans (though hardly aboriginals) towards immigrants, is on the rise (Sanchez, 1997; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). Recent anecdotal evidence concerning the re-configuration of the Ku Klux Klan into an anti-Latino immigrant group is further direct evidence of the attitudinal hurdles Latinos face in the nation that are, particularly with this example, analogous to pre-VRA southern blacks (Knickerbocker, 2007). Additionally, Latino immigrants statistically have significantly lower standards of living and lower average wages than American whites. Recent survey from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (2006) shows that over half of Latino households in the United States garner an income in the lower two-fifths of the national distribution, while only thirty eight percent of whites fall in the same category. Furthermore, voluminous research exists which elaborates on the complex yet generally beneficial relationship small businesses and even large corporations enjoy with the immigrant population. While the perceived and real economic impact of Latino immigration will be thoroughly discussed later in this study, the incontrovertible fact is that many Latino immigrants, both legal and undocumented, are highly valued by American businesses. The provision of cheap labor and new customers for businesses historically garners massive and

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4 This is a right extended only when an immigrant officially becomes an American citizen; The term “undocumented” is substituted for “illegal.”
significant support for looser immigration restrictions from all aspects of the business world. Loose organizations of Texas agricultural growers were politically viable players in the defeat of pro-restriction legislation in Congress during the early decades of the twentieth century (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). A contemporary example of such activity comes from Bill Gates, chairman of the Microsoft Corporation, who recently announced that halting restrictionist policy is the top priority of his company’s active lobbying efforts. Gates even went so far as to call for the abolition of legal immigration caps for skilled laborers (Dunham, 2006). Such anecdotes work toward establishing the fact that businesses of all sizes value and depend on immigrant labor. Sanchez also suggests that immigrants are often economically exploited in their relationships with “native” white-run businesses (1997). Surveys of the immigrant labor force show that many are paid sub-minimum wages. This is an advantage employers enjoy because of the tenuous status of immigrant employees in the United States, which often prevents immigrant employees from reporting grievances to government officials (Greenclose, 2006). There again we see vestiges of the pre-VRA Southern black experience. Key discussed the economic exploitation carried out by the white-power structure in regards to powerless black citizens. The black population was utilized to benefit white businesses with low-paid labor and through the consumption of goods. Therefore, in many ways, it appears that the analogy between that population and much of the Latino immigrant population is a valid one.

The strength of this analogy suggests that there might be some explanatory power in the threat hypothesis originated by Key within this contemporary political setting. The theoretical foundations of Key’s argument appear to be mirrored in important ways among the Latino
demographic of today. Yet, the questions Key’s research answered remain somewhat untouched in political research concerning Latinos. The purpose of this study is to take Key's “threat” hypothesis and apply it to the contemporary Latino immigrant population in order to examine these questions: What is the relationship of Latino presence in a community to the political ideas that emerge from that community and subsequently the nature of the representation of that community by elected officials? After all, the large numbers of immigrants throughout the country remain disenfranchised and often economically exploited by American citizens. How does the unique status of the Latino population impact the political climate of the areas in which they live and work?

These questions are important to answer, particularly when considering the analogy posited above. Researching them may provide insight into how this new demographic in America is influencing politics, which, of course, impacts how the Latino population is handled by the government and, ultimately, society. These issues presently are and will continue to be very important in determining the path of political and social development in the United States over the next few decades, a period in which the Latino population is predicted to grow to be the nation's largest minority and the ethnic majority in many areas.

*Considering the "Latino Threat Hypothesis"

Based on the discussion above, it seems that circumstances for Latinos and pre-VRA Southern blacks are similar in important and fundamental ways. This comparison is made to suggest the applicability of the "threat hypothesis" framework to analysis of contemporary politics and the impact of Latino populations. However, in order to formally adopt such a
theoretical foundation, it is appropriate to address the analogized factors and the hypothesized causal relationships more thoroughly. The threat hypothesis and the theory that inform it provides a good starting point for developing a model focused on Latino context.

Before applying Key’s threat hypothesis on the contemporary situation regarding Latinos, we should briefly examine the history of immigration policy and the major changes in attitudes towards immigration. By doing so, the factors that have previously impacted attitudes towards Latino immigrants can be considered along with the “threat hypothesis” framework.
CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLITICAL RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION IN THE U.S.

Ernest Rubin (1966) characterized the United States as "the only world power today that owes its existence primarily to the phenomenon of immigration." In fact, the adage that the United States is a nation of immigrants is, of course, almost entirely true. Given the massive depopulation of indigenous North Americans due to war, disease, and oppression, few contemporary citizens can claim ties to the land of their nation; there is no historical connection as there is for Native Americans, Africans, Europeans or Asians who have lived on their land for centuries. Of course, the narratives and stories on the American immigrant experience are numerous, and range in content from heartbreaking tales of unconquerable obstacles and miserable conditions to uplifting triumphs over adversity. The nature of the reception for new immigrants to the United States has fluctuated greatly over the history of the nation. These changes may help us understand when populations are viewed as threats and when they are not.

Throughout much of the 19th century, the availability of vast lands west of the original American states (still being gradually depopulated of their native inhabitants) along with the industrialization of the economy created abundant incentives for immigration. At the time, population growth was needed to satisfy the needs of the growing national economy, and immigration remained largely unhindered by official government policy up until the economic

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5 For the former, consider the films Stroszek (1977) or Charlie Chaplin's The Immigrant (1917). For the latter, consider Stand and Deliver (1988) or even An American Tale (1986).
crises of the 1880s (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). Of course, life in the United States was not easy and a great degree of nativism and racism encumbered the existence of many immigrants. Nonetheless, restrictions at the border were few.

The problems of the late 19th and early 20th centuries suggested that fluctuation in economic conditions may have changed attitudes on immigration. While the economy was rattled, public perceptions prevailed that immigrants represented a threat to citizens for the available employment opportunities and government benefits and resources (Tichenor, 2002). Citrin et al. (1997) argue that, whether these perceptions of economic harm are accurate or not, minority groups and immigrants are often targeted for blame by the majority population via psychological scapegoat procedures or simplified calculations regarding available resources. Furthermore, Sanchez also argues that nativism and restrictionism are byproducts of economic hard times (1997). Other scholars agree that economic conditions are one of the most significant factors impacting attitudes about immigration (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999; Harwood, 1986). The relevance of these economically-oriented arguments will be further explored below. Nonetheless, the research cited supports the fact that there is a link between economic circumstances and anti-immigration sentiment. In that regard, we should consider the role economic circumstances have upon the politics of a community when using the "threat hypothesis" framework.

Pressure for restrictionism also evolved because of the United States' emergence as a globally competitive economic and military power. During the same time period as the economic fluctuation that drove anti-immigration sentiment upwards, the nation was involved in coinciding imperialist/expansionist conflicts in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. As a result, the
nation grew in global relevance and, coincidently, public attitudes underwent a change given America’s new prominence. Harwood (1986) associates this growth American dominance with an increase in aggressive nationalism and nativism. Such attitudes subsequently encouraged restrictionism, partially due to feelings of superiority and partially out of fear of destabilization of the growing nation. These attitudes were rampant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to scholars, and Harwood, among others, identifies them as contributing factors towards the restriction of immigration. Given these facts, the changes in the context in which the nation was growing consequently fostered the rather reactionary policy methods used to control the previously unhindered flow of immigrants into the country for the next three-quarters of a century.

The policy that was implemented in late 19th century included heavy restrictions, and occasional bans on the numbers of Chinese and Eastern Europeans allowed into the country. At the same time, somewhat larger numbers of immigrants from other nations in Europe were permitted. The resulting primary method of immigration control up until 1965 was permissible annual maximum caps on immigrants accepted into the U.S., with each nation of origin having a particular sized cap. These maximums were formalized in the Immigration Act of 1924 (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999).

The primary byproduct of this restrictive legislation was illegal immigration, as certain types of border crossings were instantly legally favored and other types now stood outside the boundaries of the newly established laws. Illegal immigration outside the boundaries of the quota system set in 1924 occurred with mixed reaction from both the public and elected officials. As
was noted above, the initial quota-based immigration restrictions that were in effect until 1965 were specifically designed to inhibit Asian and Eastern European immigration. The present-day issue of illegal immigration from Mexico and other Latin American nations was not of primary concern. Seasonal agricultural laborers made up the largest proportion of those coming to the United States without documents, and they remained mostly clustered around the Mexican border.

To the extent that such immigration was perceived as harmful, little legislation addressed the southern border of the nation. Notably, and in the interest of our inquiries, policy success for such legislation was hindered by a coalition of interests. Agricultural interests that benefited from cheap seasonal labor and religious groups focused on humanitarian concerns both fought and successfully killed most legislation attempting to quell the illegal immigration that was then largely limited to states adjacent to the southern border (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999).

This influence on immigration policy by business interests occurred frequently throughout the last century. With the labor drain of the Second World War, a temporary guest-worker, or *bracero*, program came into effect in order to allow agricultural interests to hire workers that would have otherwise been considered illegal. Gimpel and Edwards (1999) argue that this was due largely to business pressure on legislatures.

*From Consensus to Complex: Changing Historical Pressures*

Initially, in the early twentieth century, restrictions on immigration were favored by legislators from Southern States, along with backing from veterans and labor groups. Southern
states, still dominated by the politics of white supremacy, were not eager to see larger numbers
of racial minorities enter the country. At the same time, veterans groups opposed the settlement
of Asian immigrants in the Western states because of national security concerns. Conversely,
labor unions initially favored restrictions based on their belief that immigrants would create a
threat to the jobs their members already held.

Legislators from Northern states, where illegal immigration was not a problem and
where, in many cases, large numbers of foreign-born citizens accounted for portions of
legislative constituencies, tended to oppose restrictions. Nonetheless, given the history of the last
fifty years, immigration policy was largely a consensus issue in Congress. While these factions
generally favored their respective positions and held some firm ideological positions on the
issue, there tended to be widespread agreement on most actual immigration policy. For example,
the Immigration Act of 1924 (which established the quota system) passed with support from
every Southern member and seventy-four percent of other representatives. Party was no reliable
indicator of vote choice on most immigration legislation up until 1965. Instead, the primary
motivation for immigration policy voting at this time was maintenance of white power structure
by limiting or banning immigration from primarily non-white countries. Deviance from the
consensus, exhibited when certain legislators sought to challenge legal immigration caps, came
from members with large numbers of foreign-born citizens or second-generation American
constituents (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999; Tichenor, 2002).

The eventual erosion of consensus immigration politics occurred during the early
struggles over illegal immigration. When primary attempts were made in the 1920s and 1950s to
quell increasing undocumented immigration (with the temporary guest-worker program still in place), increased border security and sanctions on those who hired undocumented Latino laborers were the proposed remedies to the perceived problems. Illegal immigration was seen as a racial and economic threat by many legislators in border and Southern states. However, business interests strongly objected to employer sanctions and the increased burden they would face as a result, and therefore utilized their influence to strike sanctions from immigration bills (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Tichenor (2002) notes that for many business interests, costs and benefits relating to immigration were highly concentrated and the impact of policy changes would be immediate. Thus, business interests had a strong incentive to organize and lobby on immigration policy far sooner than immigration opponents, for whom benefits and costs were more diffuse.

Furthermore, business interests in this instance formed the foundation of what is identified as a one of the stranger voting coalitions in American politics. Joining business interests in supporting fewer restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration were free-market conservatives, humanitarian and religious groups (particularly Catholic groups with large Latino memberships, and what Tichenor identifies as “pro-immigration cosmopolitans”) (Tichenor, 2002, 36). This “incongruous coalition” certainly represents a motley group of interests, and the degree of cohesion between these interests varied given the policy and temporal context at any point of the immigration debate. Nonetheless, this coalition played a huge role in shaping the contemporary immigration debate.
The coalition was manifested in Congress in such a way as to make party an even less relevant indicator of vote choice on immigration. Pro-business and free-market Republicans recognized the value immigrants, both legal and undocumented, offered to their interests and separated themselves from culturally-restrictive fellow Republicans by opposing employer sanctions and derailing what would otherwise have been effective policy barriers to illegal immigration. At the same time, pro-immigration liberals found resistance in the Democratic Party from anti-immigration labor groups and their supporters in Congress (Tichenor, 2002; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999).

Most significantly for the history of immigration policy making is the relevance of the pro-immigration lobby in the functioning of Congress. Tichenor (2002) argues for a certain degree of institutionalization for pro-immigration interests that consequently held sway over the legislature of the United States. The early organization of these interests, spearheaded by business groups opposed to employer sanctions, gave them a competitive advantage, particularly with the succession of Democratically-controlled Congresses in the twentieth century. Gimpel and Edwards (1999) identify many Democrats of the 1950s and 1960s as inclined to a more “humanitarian” or open immigration policy, particularly in regards to legal immigration and refugee policy. This energy often combined with the identified Republican ideologies to oppose the notorious “Conservative Coalition” of Southern Democrats and culturally-restrictive Republicans that previously derailed most civil rights legislation (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999; Tichenor, 2002). Therefore, despite public opinion that may have favored restrictions on
immigration, Congress was able to successfully carry out a largely “expansionist” period of immigration policy (Tichenor, 2002; Harwood, 1986).

Thus, for an extended period of history, immigration policy voting was influenced by factors that were separate from party identification. However, party label did retain some importance due to a further evolution in the debate that thrust the bipolar ideological divide back into the spotlight and weakened the incongruous coalitions. Isolating the influences which made immigration a partisan issue among legislators will aid us again in understanding what forces change attitudes on immigration policy.

Gimpel and Edwards (1999) argue that the cost that came to be associated with immigration was the most significant variable in the creation of the partisan cleavage among legislators on immigration. When speculation arose that government expenditures on recently-arrived immigrants were high, the standard partisan preferences on government spending appeared to become relevant once again, they argued. This is, for the most part, a valid argument, but it would not be prudent to ignore other contributing factors to attitude change on immigration policy. Other factors such as racial politics, cold war nativism, and issue salience among constituencies also play important roles in making these issues take on a more partisan character.

Indeed, the first signs of major partisanship erupting on the immigration issue came during the debate over the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. At this time, the Republican Party, along with Southern Democrats (the two components of the occasionally powerful “Conservative Coalition”) had garnered a reputation for opposing a good deal of civil rights legislation, which allowed the rest of the Democratic Party to appear most favorable to
minorities’ interests. The voting patterns of this Conservative Coalition on immigration issues during the 1965 debate reinforced these ideas. For example, when proposals were made to remove certain limits on Western Hemisphere-origin immigration (which would have permitted more immigration from Latin America), Republicans and Southern Democrats strongly supported more restrictive policies (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). This attitude, occurring just around the time of one of the Civil Rights Movement’s greatest successes in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was partnered among these factions by differing attitudes about the treatment of immigrants from “second world nations,” or those under Communist rule. Echoing earlier arguments used by veterans groups against Asian immigration prior to the Cold War, Republicans and most Southern Democrats argued that the importation of immigrants from these nations posed a national security threat. The politics of racial supremacy were very much in play, and emerged with a partisan divide during this period.

These views on immigration were reversed among many Northerners, including some Northern Republicans, who were often from districts with significant immigrant histories. They argued that America’s immigrant roots strongly called for the nation to accept refugees from Cold War opponent states (Harwood, 1986). At the time of the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, Congress was dominated by the Democratic Party and thus the legislation included expansionist, rather than restrictionist, policy such as the abolishment of national-origin quotas and the establishment of unlimited family re-unification visas.

Of course, the most general divide between liberals and conservatives (and, by translation, the majority in the Democratic and Republican Parties) since the New Deal era
centered on government’s role in society. The GOP argued for restraint, while in the 1960’s the majority-party Democrats favored expansion, manifested in Great Society programs that offered assistance to many new immigrants. During the period around the 1965 legislation and into the 1970's when refugee policy and the associated costs of supporting the influx of new immigrants became prominent issues, the Conservative Coalition begin to favor increased immigration restrictions as a stance against the expansion of the government welfare programs, which they believed was implicitly tied to increased immigration (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). Thus, the aspect of cost emerged as relevant in creating a strong partisan-based divide on immigration policy. Recognizing this important development in the history of immigration policy certainly aids in searching out variables which assist our analysis of the “threat hypothesis.”

Nonetheless, the dominance of business interests and the corresponding pro-immigration coalition within the Washington establishment is regarded by scholars as significant enough to maintain a largely pro-immigration policy regime until the late 1980s and early 1990s, as Democrats continued to dominate the U.S. House (Tichenor, 2002). Most representative of the maintenance of this coalition was the fact that illegal immigration policy that included employer sanctions was continually rejected, demonstrating the ongoing sway business interests held on the debate. However, some important factors rattled the maintenance of these voting patterns and resulted in more strident partisan-oriented voting coalitions upon the coming of the 1994 elections.

Tichenor (2002) argues that the power of organized business lobbying efforts permitted more open immigration policies than the public supported, creating an intriguing incongruence.
In fact, public opinion on immigration became decidedly restrictionist throughout the economic struggles of the 1980s (echoing patterns noted above), and organizations such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform, an aggressive anti-immigration group, gained a foothold with some supportive legislators (Harwood, 1986; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). Furthermore, many free-market oriented conservatives and Republicans became disenchanted with open immigration policies that frequently were blamed for swelling government service rolls. The partisan divide began to widen. Nonetheless, liberal democratic dominance of the US House allowed for the maintenance and continuance of an expansive policy regime that was largely ineffective on illegal immigration and often raised caps on legal immigration.

In many ways, discerning the viability of a piece of immigration legislation became a complicated task. The efforts of Senators Simpson and Mazzoli in the 1980s are demonstrative of the degree to which immigration restrictions were complicated by an assortment of motivations among legislators. Simpson and Mazzoli sought to address the issues tied to increasing numbers of illegal immigrants and, at the same time, create smaller caps for legal immigration. Their initial solution incorporated amnesty for a large number of undocumented immigrants, employer sanctions for hiring undocumented immigrants, and skill filters on legal immigration (increasing skilled legal immigration and decreasing unskilled legal immigration). However, their legislation faced criticism from those of all different ideologies regarding immigration. Pro-business conservatives attacked the presence of employer sanctions while anti-immigration restrictionists disliked the increases in legal immigration and the granting of amnesty, a highly controversial proposal. The end result was a watered-down policy. It did
include an amnesty provision, and therefore was a high-water mark for many pro-immigration proponents. Over 2.5 million undocumented immigrants received legal status due to what came to be known as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. However, on the other side, the bill included mostly ineffective employer sanctions, only offering increased border patrol funding as a concession to restrictionist legislators, which was ultimately an insufficient solution for their goals (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999; Tichenor, 2002). Interestingly, the process of passing the IRCA of 1986 encouraged legislators to disentangle legal and illegal immigration policy and attempt to pass these reforms separately, thereby avoiding so-called poison pill provisions which could entirely neuter legislation (Tichenor, 2002).

Public sentiments continued to grow increasingly in favor of restricting both legal and illegal immigration, particularly as immigration continued unhindered in the wake of the ineffective IRCA of 1986. At the same time, the dominant coalitions continued to pass legislation contrary to such attitudes. The groundswell of restrictionist fervor, however, eventually took hold in Washington, D.C. As mentioned above, many legislators allied themselves with the anti-immigration group FAIR. Initial failures on restrictionist bills contributed to the creation of a coalition of interest groups and ideas that could oppose the dominant pro-immigration coalitions, including the establishment of a restrictionist think tank, the Center for Immigration Studies. Finally, the election of 1994 replaced liberal and pro-immigration Democrats with anti-immigration Republicans. As a result, partisanship was reinforced as a useful indicator of immigration vote choice in Congress. It was the new Republican majority that spearheaded the passage of two significantly restrictionist pieces of legislation: the Personal Responsibility Act of
1996, which limited immigrant access to some government services, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Individual Responsibility Act of 1996, which increased border controls and set stricter standards for the deportation of undocumented immigrants (Tichenor, 2002).

Interestingly, neither piece of legislation included employer sanctions, hinting at the power business interests held even with the new restrictionist majority, and suggesting a variable to consider in the new fractures on immigration policy today. It is notable, as well, that the new Republican majorities in Congress quickly addressed the cost aspects of immigration which initially created partisan-based cleavages. This restrictionist policy regime fostered by conservative Republican dominance proved formidable and well-supported by staunch anti-immigration groups, as noted earlier in our discussion.

This discussion of the history of immigration policy is meant to provide an overview of the general factors which have impacted the policy that has been created to handle immigration over the past century and a half. However, it is also meant to serve a greater purpose than simply contextualizing the issues we hope to examine. Instead, it should provide pictures of the variables which influence immigration attitudes that we can utilize as controls in our analysis attempting to isolate significance of the “threat hypothesis.” Some of these variables observed include economic situation, increased nativism, community party identification, support from the business community, and support from restrictionist or expansionist interest groups. In that regard, such an understanding of policy history is very significant.
CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY EVENTS AND THE UTILITY OF THE THREAT HYPOTHESIS

It is uncertain whether the patterns and trends of the past concerning immigration still exist. Nonetheless, there is an urgency among citizens, politicians, and immigrants alike to come to a favorable solution regarding the friction created because of mass immigration. This urgency results from several factors. First, the number of Latino immigrants, both undocumented and legal, has skyrocketed in the past 15 years. The conditions created by these changes of recent years highlight the necessity to rethink the proper way to analyze the impact of Latino immigrants on American politics. Simply utilizing the factors we find in a general historical overview leaves many stones unturned. Briefly accounting for recent demographic trends in regards to the Latino population and providing sufficient support for the analogy between pre-VRA blacks and Latino immigrants will be valuable in establishing the utility of the “threat hypothesis” framework. To support the theory properly, we can use such observations in addition to considerations of the historical variables impacting immigration.

News coverage of immigrants and immigration is doubtlessly more prevalent today than even five to seven years ago. However, such coverage is not the product of media-created hysteria. The spectacular growth of the Latino immigrant population in the United States in just the last five years warrants attention. In a noteworthy study, Passel (2006) estimates that since 2000, approximately 500,000 unauthorized immigrants arrived yearly. Furthermore, Passel
estimates that over 11 million undocumented immigrants resided in the United States as of March of 2005. This number is up from 8.4 million in 2000 and just five million in 1996 (Passel, 2006). Clearly, illegal immigration has not been quelled by numerous attempts by the federal government to beef up border security in recent years, or by any other solutions attempted to stop illegal immigration. The numbers continually increase, despite the solutions the U.S. government has attempted.

Passel (2006) found that 78% of all illegal immigrants are from Latin America, with over 56% of this number originating from Mexico. Of all undocumented immigrants, the population is over-represented in industries such as construction, farming, and the service industry while dramatically under-represented in traditional “white-collar” occupations, indicating that undocumented immigrants tend to occupy the lower-income positions within the workforce (Passel, 2006).

Furthermore, some argue that Latino immigrants in particular tend to end up isolated in “ethnic enclaves” due to housing costs, therefore rarely interacting with non-Spanish speakers, blacks, and non-Latino whites (Keen, 2004; Fischer and Tienda, 2006). The lack of interaction between communities almost surely prevents assimilation and likely fosters the process of “othering” frequently discussed in social-psychology studies. Such sentiments and conditions

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6 It is useful to remember that the Immigration Act of 1986 (Simpson-Mazzoli) gave amnesty/legal status to over 2.5 million undocumented immigrants.

7 “Othering” is the concept of a process, first discussed by Hegel, wherein a dominant group contrasts its own definition of itself against minority groups. Through othering, minority groups are often excluded and seen as inferior due to racial, ethnic, or gender differences, with the process facilitated by the dominant group’s isolation from the “other” population. Often, “othering” is a process associated with imperial colonization or theories such as Gramsci’s work concerning dominant structures and hegemony. For more on the subject, see Sander Gilman’s 1985 article “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art,
are conducive for the growth of nativism, visible again in such things as the resurgence of the KKK and other local and internet based anti-immigrant organizations such as the American Patrol and the American Resistance Foundation (Knickerbocker, 2007).

Alternately, pro-Latino organizations have increased the visibility of new immigrants as well. Groups such as the National Council of La Raza (and its incarnation as a third party in Texas as La Raza Unida) and the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund have contributed a pro-immigrant voice to the debate. As these groups often defend individuals who are acknowledged to have broken federal laws due to their immigration status, these organizations often become targets of criticism from restrictionists. Furthermore, organized protest activities and lawsuits coordinated by these groups can subsequently raise the profile of the debate on immigrant and immigration-related issues.

At the same time that they are physically secluded, market forces inevitably make the Latino population more visible in some ways via the media and ethno-centric marketing campaigns. Spanish-language television channels now exist in most communities along with Latino-oriented newspapers and radio stations. Furthermore, the pervasive reach of American corporations does not neglect to reach for the expendable income of the Latino populations. Increasingly, chain stores now stock food and beverages from Mexico to cater to this new consumer base. Additionally, observers have noted an increase in marketing campaigns catered for the massive Latino population in the United States (Farah, 2006).

Medicine, and Literature," the work of bell hooks (sic) on race, studies by Simone De Beauvoir on gender, or Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), in which Said applies the theory of “othering“ to the problems of the Middle East.
The increased visibility of the Latino population elicited even more attempts to address the immigration issues incorporated with their presence. The most notorious attempt of recent years was the controversial H.R. 4437, the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Act of 2005. The bill failed to pass in the Senate, despite sailing through the House. It resulted in massive public outcry among supporters and opponents, with critics noting that interpretations of the bill could lead to simple acts of charity being considered as a felonious administration of aid to undocumented immigrants. At the same time, it should be noted that important pro-restriction organizations such as FAIR thought this bill did not go far enough.

Clearly, there exists a highly-charged atmosphere concerning Latino immigration, with a good deal of “nativist” sentiment abundant. Such intense organization in opposition to an entire segment of the population is certainly reminiscent in some ways to the pre-VRA days of the South. At the same time, that analogy we earlier explored briefly can be better recognized through a more thorough examination of Latino economic and political standing.

A Statistical Portrait of the Electoral Potential of Latinos in the United States

The picture painted by V.O. Key of the pre-VRA South is one in which the marked inequality between races is plainly evident in anecdote and through statistics. The comparisons between Latinos and the majority of the U.S. are equally demonstrative of such inequality when figures concerning political participation and economic standing are examined.

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8 The legislation eliminated the “Green Card Lottery,” required employer verification of the legal status of employees, directed federal funds to the construction of a barrier on the southern border, facilitated the transfer of undocumented immigrants from local to federal authorities, enacted fine-based employer sanctions, and broadly redefined the sorts of actions which could be considered “assisting” an illegal immigrant (H.R. 4437, 2005).
Of course, the contemporary Latino population faces different contextual circumstances when compared to the pre-VRA South. Most primary among the differences are the nature of the origins of the populations in question. On the one hand, the black population in the pre-VRA South faced the legacy of the institution of slavery. Nearly all of the population was the ancestors of slaves that had been transported to the South involuntarily. The maintenance of a structure which disenfranchised them can be seen as part of the legacy of such an institution.

Conversely, much of the Latino population entered the U.S. under entirely different circumstances. There are those Latino-American citizens who have traditional roots in the United States, in some cases pre-dating white settlement in parts of the Southwest. Furthermore, there are Latinos who are the American-born children of other immigrants (legal or undocumented), and therefore citizens. Each of these first two groups has the full ability to participate in elections (after their 18th birthday) and the rights of any other American citizen. Additionally, a portion of this population entered the country under legally acceptable immigration methods, such as by obtaining a Permanent Resident card (also known as a "Green" card). This population can electorally participate, but only after the completion of the naturalization process and being granted citizenship. Finally, there is the Latino population that either entered the country illegally or has seen their legal status lapse (due to an expired temporary visa, for example). Such a segment of the population has no voting rights. U.S. law extends those rights upon citizenship only.

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9 The process of naturalization is open to legal permanent residents of the U.S. with at least five years of residency. Applicants who meet those qualifications must then pass citizenship and language examinations (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2007).
Therein lays one of the primary differences between the two populations of our analogy. The black population, involuntarily present in the U.S., was disenfranchised via the activities of various political institutions. The contemporary Latino population is, at least, partially enfranchised. Furthermore, the character of their presence in the U.S. is entirely different than the pre-VRA Southern blacks in that it is voluntary.

Nonetheless, there is a recognizable chasm between the potential power of the Latino population and the actual power they wield. This gap can be seen when examining statistics regarding the number of Latinos eligible to vote and the number of Latinos actually registered to vote. Table 1 provides a state-by-state illustration of these figures based on data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2005).

Table 1 shows the proportion of each state’s population that is Latino and of voting age (VAP). The Latino population comprises over ten percent of the population in at least ten states. These numbers provide a picture of the pure statistical force of the Latino populations. In New Mexico, Texas, California, and Arizona, Latinos comprise a significantly large proportion of the population. Latinos are over a quarter of each states population, according to these Census estimates. Such figures are relevant in showing the areas in which Latinos are concentrated and their potential strength in each state, which could be hypothetically realized should the entire VAP ever be afforded electoral power.

However, as we have noted above, pure numbers and statistical concentrations do not always equal power (Key, 1949). In fact, across the nation, an average of just 60% of the Latino VAP per state is even eligible to vote by right of citizenship. In each state, the size of the
eligible-to-vote Latino population varies. In the ten states with the largest proportions of Latinos, over half of the VAP have citizenship and voting rights. Nonetheless, such a figure still means that in states such as California, there is a VAP of approximately 3.7 million Latinos that are ineligible to vote due to their immigration status. Furthermore, in many states, the eligible population is just a small fraction of the total VAP. Georgia, for example, is 5% Latino, yet only 23% of these are citizens, demonstrating that there is a large immigrant population in this state.

These statistics on eligibility are noteworthy to the extent that they show the large number of immigrants who presently reside throughout the U.S. without citizenship. This ineligible Latino VAP accounts for the Latinos that would be most directly “threatening” with regard to our “threat hypothesis” framework. This population would likely be the primary benefactor from the amnesty provisions often discussed in the U.S. Congress (and passed in 1986, yet pertaining to a now legal population), or any other policy that may facilitate their economic, political, or social assimilation in the U.S. in the face of a dominant structure that otherwise may benefit from their presence.¹⁰

¹⁰ The relationship of the majority population and the illegal Latino population will be briefly discussed again below.
Table 1 - A Statistical Picture of Latinos in the U.S. - Political Power and Potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Latino VAP (thousands)</th>
<th>% of State Latino</th>
<th>% of Latino VAP Eligible</th>
<th>% of Latino VAP Registered</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Latino VAP (thousands)</th>
<th>% of State Latino</th>
<th>% of Latino VAP Eligible</th>
<th>% of Latino VAP Registered</th>
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<td>AL</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>MT</td>
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<td>50.0</td>
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<td>81.8</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
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<td>54.2</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>NV</td>
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<td>50.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
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<td>34.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>NH</td>
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<td>81.8</td>
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<td>54.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>NJ</td>
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<td>87.3</td>
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<td>64.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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<td>34.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<td>60.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>77.8</td>
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<td>44.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
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<td>323</td>
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<td>65.6</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>WA</td>
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<td>48.4</td>
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<td>201</td>
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<td>71.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
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<td>43.5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Avg.** | 7.8 | 59.5 | 34.3 | 57.0

Source: United States Census Bureau
30
However, in only two of these states (Massachusetts and New Jersey) and Washington, D.C., do Latinos make up more than 5% of the population. Thus, the size of the registered Latino electorate likely has little impact when considered in the context of many states. Furthermore, in states with large concentrations of Latinos such as California, Texas, and New Mexico, the eligible Latino registration rate is at least seven percent lower than the nationwide figure. In that regard, eligible Latinos appear to be participating in electoral politics at a lower rate than the nation as a whole. Such circumstances likely only further exacerbate the political-outsider status of Latinos in the U.S., increasing the degree to which a large portion of the Latino population is culturally and politically detached from the American electoral system. As a result of such detachment, the degree to which Latinos can be perceived as “threatening” in the context of our hypothesis increases, whether because of the aforementioned “othering” process or by the general decrease in political activity that further paints the Latino population as a latent threat.

Of course, the VAP registration rate is significantly lower than the eligible population in each state, and is provided in Table 1 to further illustrate the magnitude of the politically dormant Latino population in each state.

A different illustration of Latino power in each state is provided in Table 2, wherein the Latino proportions of registered voters in each state are provided. As can be seen by comparing Tables 1 and 2, the actual size of the Latino electorate consistently falls short in each state of the numbers indicating the potential power of the Latino population, such as each state's Latino VAP. Such shortcomings further demonstrate the state of latency necessary to constitute a “threat” for our hypothesis.
Table 2: The Relevant Size of the Latino Electorate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Latino % of Registered Voters</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Latino % of Registered Voters</th>
</tr>
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<td>NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>MO</td>
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<td>AVG</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2005

The final indicator of the gap between potential and realized Latino political power concerns turnout. For example, in the 2004 elections, the Latino turnout rate was well short of national trends. Approximately 7.6 million of the Latino VAP population voted in that last presidential election. Therefore, approximately 47.2% of the eligible Latino population made it to the polls (Suro et al., 2005). Such turnout is significantly lower than both overall turnout
(64%), non-Hispanic white turnout (67%), and black turnout (60%) (Faler, 2005). In this regard, eligible Latino voters evidently are not exercising their political potential to the extent that other racial and ethnic groups do, further fostering the idea that the Latino population is truly an electoral "sleeping giant," in more than one sense of the term.

In summary, a large gap exists between the potential and realized power of the Latino populations in several ways. First, a large portion of the Latino VAP remains shut off from the franchise due to their immigration status. An average of 40% of the Latino VAP per state is ineligible to vote, and this population is that which presents the greatest dormant threat in terms of the “threat hypothesis” framework. Additionally, eligible Latinos appear to register and vote at a lower rate than the nationwide average in most states where they are a significant part of the population. Again, the gap between potential power and realized power seems to be large. The political power of the Latino population remains mostly dormant. The large un-enfranchised legal and undocumented immigrant population contributes to the staggeringly small proportions of the Latino population even eligible to vote. Furthermore, low participation rates in regards to registration and voting play a part in making Latino political power a latent threat as opposed to an active consideration. Such circumstances are noteworthy and seem appropriate for the application of a "threat hypothesis" framework.
Thus far, the discussion of this study has focused on establishing the appropriateness of utilizing the threat hypothesis by thoroughly explaining the nature of the theory and the context in which it may be applied, such as the history of the policy realm examined and the political circumstances under which the “threatening” population exists. As can be seen, the Latino population faces a similar context as the black population which was initially stipulated to be the “sleeping giant” threat in Key’s work.

The goal of this study is to examine what impact the presence of large numbers of this "threatening" population has upon the more advantaged majority population and the resultant representation by elected officials. In that way, we are examining the questions answered by Key, but in a different context. In other words, we seek to study how the number of Latinos in an area influences the way that area is represented by elected officials in Washington.

It is clear that much animosity exists towards Latinos in the U.S. This is evidenced by the attempts of many members of Congress to pass strict restrictionist legislation and the creation of anti-immigration and anti-immigrant organizations discussed above. However, on such evidence alone, we cannot be sure of the degree to which this sentiment exists in particular communities, wherein the number of Latinos may vary. Furthermore, the variables which have tended to influence immigration attitudes among the majority do not completely illustrate the relationships at work in the threat hypothesis. In order to firmly understand the relationship between the presence of Latinos in a community and the resulting character of the representation, we should
examine the existing perspectives on immigration among the majority population that may foster either a restrictionist (generally, anti-immigration) or expansionist (favoring looser immigration restrictions) style of representation. This will aid in our understanding of the causal link between Latino presence and the sorts of attitudes the threat hypothesis predicts.

The Components of Restrictionism

The purpose of this study is not to examine the validity of the motivations which foster restrictionist or expansionist sentiments towards immigration. Nonetheless, a brief understanding of the major justifications provided on either side of the argument will inform our analysis more thoroughly, especially when coupled with our contextual discussions and the historical summary on attitude changes.

Economic-Based Restrictionism

There are several different strains of restrictionist thought. One of the more oft-repeated and socially-acceptable explanations concerns the economic impact of immigration. Many argue that immigrants, whether they are legal or undocumented, drain the resources of government services and damage the economy. The debate over refugee admission policies in the 1960s and 1970s was one of the first in which the costs of immigration began to be incorporated into discussions on the issue. At the time, many opponents of immigration expansion considered the relationship between refugee presence and rising government costs to “care” for these immigrants as a major reason to discourage immigration through government policy (Tichenor, 2002). Today, the cost to government services is frequently a justification for restriction policies. One of the major pieces of anti-immigration legislation in the history of the nation was California’s Proposition 187, a voter referendum that intended to close off all public benefits to undocumented immigrants. The so-called “Save Our State” legislation was crafted in the face of
rising costs for government programs that were blamed on undocumented immigrants. Closing these off was seen as potentially discouraging to future immigration from South and Central America. The referendum passed with 58.8% percent of the vote, but was later halted in enactment by a federal court (Hero & Tolbert, 1996).

The second prong of the economic-focused arguments for restrictionism relates to the general impact on the economy of immigration (as opposed to merely on the public sector). In this case, it is important to stress that the motivator for restrictionism is related to the perception of the economic impact of immigration, as opposed to reality. The topic remains heavily researched, and contradictory findings are abundant. Generally, the argument persists that immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, drive down wages and thereby take job opportunities from American citizens. Further, restrictionists offer evidence that undocumented immigrants remit much of their earnings back to their nations of origin and are not taxed on their wages as proof of the negative impact of immigration. The reality of the situation is somewhat clouded due to the salience of the issue and the continual research that is released. Some researchers have found a difference between the impact of skilled and unskilled immigrants on an economy, with skilled workers offering a net benefit (Citrin et al., 1997). Others have found a net decrease in economic conditions due to immigration (Cornelius and Rosenblum, 2005). Still others argue that many of the economic benefits of immigration are not properly accounted for in many studies, while the negative burdens are exaggerated (Boudreaux, 1997). Nonetheless, the link between attitudes on immigration and economic conditions, as we previously discussed, is that rough economic conditions lead to more restrictionist attitudes. Whether due to misinformed scapegoating, anecdotal evidence, or valid threats, immigrants are viewed less favorably due to
perceptions about the negative economic impact they may create (Harwood, 1986; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999).

**Politically Oriented Restrictionism**

One particularly notable motivation driving some restrictionists forward is the belief that immigrants pose a legitimate political threat to the nation. While overlooking the fact that most Latino immigrants do not have the franchise, and thereby cannot participate electorally in the American political system, a strain of restrictionist ideology centers on the perception that immigrants are “invading” the U.S. While the most extreme holders of this belief contend that immigrants consist of a furtive invading force intent on expanding the borders of their nations of origin, others contend that the main political threat emerging from immigration has to do with the ideology of the immigrants. Some observers argue that many immigrants hold political beliefs categorizable as Marxist or Socialist. Their fear of the importation of political “revolution” along these lines leads them to oppose immigration (Hawkins, 1994). There exists a variety of organizations holding similar beliefs, or some derivation thereof, attempting to garner support throughout the nation. Some of the more notorious are the Minutemen, the American Patrol, and the American Resistance Foundation.

**Other Factors Related to Restrictionism**

Some additional important factors motivating restrictionist policy focus on the cultural, racial, and ethnic differences between the majority population and Latino immigrants. As is implicit in many contemporary policies, racial and ethnic preferences as well as some notion of cultural protectionism underlay much of the rhetoric concerning immigration. The favoring of some understanding of “American culture” is often used to support restrictionism. Such a
tendency is observed in arguments favoring “English-only” language policies in schools and businesses.

A more contemporary manifestation of a similar mindset that drives much anti-immigration sentiment is the concept of “nativism,” wherein the pre-existing population of the nation (although in the case of the United States, not typically referring to the actual Native Americans), favors policy that protects its interests. Sanchez (1997) argues that this philosophy also tends to coincide with racial superiority attitudes about the dominant race and/or culture. Furthermore, he argues that nativism tends to rise when economic circumstances are negative (Sanchez, 1997).

Thus, the key factors contributing to the maintenance of restrictionist ideas among the majority population are nativism/cultural protectionism, fear of political threats, and fear of economic threats.

The Components of Expansionism

While there exists a plethora of justifications for restrictionist policy, there are also a series of arguments as to why the U.S. should favor pro-immigration, or expansionist, policy. On the one hand, there are those who argue that immigration is actually economically beneficial to the economy of the United States, as was briefly mentioned above. For example, some researchers argue that immigrants play a role in helping offset labor shrinkages and provide a revitalization to struggling areas (Paral, 2006).

Furthermore, the benefits of illegal immigration to business were noted earlier. Many business interests, large and small, utilize low-paid immigrant laborers. Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005) argue that owners of land and capital benefit from falling wages often associated with large immigration-related growth. These same businesses defend their ability to
do so with strong political organization in the form of lobbyists and interest groups (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). One particular U.S. Representative went so far as to say that business favors illegal immigration so much that "the illegal immigration lobby in the U.S. is big business" (Durham, 2006). The fact that business interests organized to defeat employer sanction legislation for decades is evidence that many hold immigration, even illegal immigration, to be an economically valuable force.

Furthermore, another expansionist argument concerns the diversity provided by the immigrant population. Some contend that supplementing the diversity of the nation via immigration is valuable in that it expands individual world views and broadens the potential for tolerance among many Americans. Others also argue that immigration provides a means through which the U.S. can better adapt to a globalizing economy. The presence of a culturally-different population with an alternative language preference can facilitate the adoption of ideas, customs, and skills (such as second language acquisition) that may benefit American workers when faced with the necessities of interacting with foreign citizens for business or political purposes.

Finally, immigration has historically been a centerpiece of the development of America. Many argue that the continuation of accommodating policies for immigrants is necessary for the nation to live up to the promises of the past. There is the tendency on the part of these expansionists to accuse restrictionists of a sort of historical amnesia, in which the traditions of the past are ignored in favor of new concerns. For example, these expansionists may point to the historical presence of Latinos in much of the contemporary American Southwest. This presence often predates American occupation of the land. Furthermore, the American tradition of immigration is often regarded as fundamental to the nation’s development, as the aforementioned quote of Rubin’s accentuated. Some expansionists would argue that neglecting such a history is a
flawed ethos. Often, such support for the traditions of expansionism comes under the auspices of making more “humanitarian” policies, as were favored by what Tichenor (2002) called pro-immigration cosmopolitans throughout the early debates on this sort of policy.
CHAPTER 5
LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of Key's *Southern Politics* and the utility of the "racial threat hypothesis" have been reflected in a number of studies concerning racial contexts and corresponding impacts on attitudes and representation. Most directly, some scholars revisited the South following the passage of the VRA and other significant legislation that were meant to alter the allocation of political power in the region. They examined the role racial context played in the "new South," and often found the relationships Key discovered still operable. One follow-up study of Southern politics was conducted by Matthews and Prothro (1966), in which many of Key’s findings were re-visited. These scholars found the relationships that Key examined still held. For example, in their study, Matthews and Prothro (1966) found that lower black political participation was more common in areas with larger black populations, while whites supported black suffrage at higher rates when there were fewer blacks in their communities. Glaser (1994), utilizing NES data to examine individual attitudes, found that white residents in "black belt" communities remained the most racially conservative in the South. Additionally, Knoke and Kyriazis (1977) found that the presence of large black populations encouraged whites in the deep South to support the pro-segregation presidential campaigns of George Wallace.

Other scholars have transplanted the "threat hypothesis" framework to analyze black-white relations in different areas of the country and found a similar relationship. Taylor (1998) found that even non-Southern white attitudes were increasingly racially conservative in the presence of larger black populations.
Many studies utilizing the tenets of the threat hypothesis found the ideas of “group conflict theory” to be prevalent in the creation of hostile attitudes between racial groups. This theory is a fundamental foundation to the original results in Key's study as well (Glaser, 2003; Campbell et al., 2007). Group conflict theory posits that competition develops between different interested groups due to competition for resources, therefore often creating inter-group hostility that can frequently be manifested via racial animosity (Glaser, 2003). Such a theory clearly relates to many of the restrictionist attitudes discussed above and is an integral formalization of the way which these attitudes are created.

Removed from the setting of the South and the traditional focus on the dichotomous black-white relationship, studies on threats and racial context have continually yielded varying results. Quillian's (1995) transplant of the threat hypothesis to the environs of Europe resulted in findings that indicate that the presence of a racial group-based threat contributed to racially prejudicial individual attitudes, similar to Key's findings.

However, other studies examining contextual racial threats have found alternative results, deviating from the predictions of the group conflict theory and the findings of Key. Carsey's (2001) examination of several New York mayoral races was surprising in that the context of a large black population didn't necessarily discourage white voters from supporting a black candidate. In other words, the threat relationship was not actualized along the lines of the group conflict theory. Carsey (2001) referenced the interpersonal relationships present in densely-populated diverse urban areas and the different social cues that may influence white voters in the areas he studied as a potential explanation for this different relationship.

Furthermore, Oliver and Wong (2003) focused on multi-ethnic communities and the applicability of the threat hypothesis therein. They also found a more complex relationship than
the simple group conflict explanation, stressing the relative economic and social positions of different minority ethnicities as well as the spatial distance between ethnicities in communities as relevant towards the impact their presence has on racial attitudes. Specifically, their study noted that diversity at the metropolitan level increased racial antagonism and conceptions of competition, but at the neighborhood level, when members of different racial groups must interact closely, diversity decreased these attitudes (Oliver and Wong, 2003). Such findings echo the tenets of "contact theory," wherein personal interaction due to the proximity between members of groups that may otherwise compete for resources creates a sense of inter-group understanding and an amelioration of antagonism (Emerson et al., 2002). The work of Oliver and Wong is most interesting in regards to its findings concerning the level wherein diversity is present, with city-wide diversity contributing to the prevalence of group conflict theories and neighborhood-level diversity contributing to the prevalence of contact theory. For the purposes of this study, it is not as likely that contact theory will be as relevant as in this multi-ethnic study of individual attitudes, given the aforementioned tendency of Latinos to end up living and working in relative ethnic isolation, among themselves in enclaves that may be part of larger regions of analysis (Keen, 2004; Fischer and Tienda, 2006). Nonetheless, this is an important relationship to understand, and studies of racial context are increasingly finding it to be useful in their analysis.

The Threat Hypothesis and Previous Research on Latinos

Most significantly for the purposes of our study, the racial threat hypothesis has been applied several times to examine the relationship between the presence of Latinos in a particular community and the resultant racial and political attitudes on the part of other racial groups in that area.
Several studies concerning California's Proposition 187 have examined racial context in order to see if anything resembling a racial threat relationship is present. Different researchers utilizing divergent methods and theories have, not surprisingly, found different degrees of applicability in regards to the group conflict propositions of the racial threat hypothesis. Hero and Tolbert (1996) examined the impact of Latino presence on electoral support for the restrictive Proposition 187 referendum at the county level. They found that bifurcated counties, or those with high proportions (over 20%) of Latinos and a majority white population, strongly favored the restrictive referendum. Even when accounting for partisanship and economic conditions, this relationship still held. Furthermore, they also found that homogeneous counties with few minorities supported the referendum at high rates. The authors suggest that the perception of illegal immigration as a statewide problem may have contributed to this finding. They argue that both the perceived impact of immigration on state-run benefit programs and the fact that the referendum was titled the "Save our State" referendum demonstrate such a relationship (Hero and Tolbert, 1996). This study, using aggregate-level data, supports the threat hypothesis to a good degree, particularly with its findings in bifurcated counties. The perception of illegal immigration as a statewide issue that even impacts homogeneous and predominantly white areas is also of note for researchers on the issue, as it demonstrates, along the lines of Oliver and Wong's (2003) work, that certain spatial distances combined with the public perception of a threat may contribute to restrictionist sentiments.

Hood and Morris (2000) approached the vote on Proposition 187 in a different way, yet were still interested in the impact of racial context and the potential pressure of racial threats.

11 Hero and Tolbert (1996) argue that "context is critical beyond individual-level factors; social context shapes individual perspectives and policy."
These researchers diverged from Hero and Tolbert's usage of aggregate county-level data, and instead examined the relationship of racial context and individual economic conditions on individual support for 187 using exit poll data. Interestingly, the study found no relationship between the Latino percentage in a county and the surveyed individuals' vote choice on 187. Hood and Morris (2000) argued that such a finding devalued the utility of the racial threat hypothesis in this particular context, given the lack of significance they found for Latino context.

Research by Campbell et al. (2007) addresses racial context and voter preference for not only Proposition 187, but also Propositions 209 and 227. The researchers again utilized exit poll data as well as county-level contextual data for their analysis. They found that the partisanship of a community impacted vote preference on all the referenda. However, racial context was only slightly significant for Proposition 187, the referendum concerning illegal immigration, and not significant for the other two proposals. Interestingly, racial context/threats were found to have little impact upon support for ending bilingual education via Proposition 227. The authors argue that the combination of individual- and contextual- level data permits them to challenge many findings that had previously supported the "racial threat" hypothesis because they are permitted to control for individual characteristics such as education and ideology. They further posit that political context is most significant as a predictor of votes on all the proposals considered (Campbell et al., 2007). Nonetheless, Latino context still appeared relevant to some of their research.

Understandably, much of the contemporary discussion concerning racial context has focused on California, a state with a considerably large and growing illegal immigrant

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12 Proposition 209 was intended to prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, or ethnicity and was viewed as a blow to affirmative action proposals. Proposition 227 was intended to end bilingual education in California (Campbell et al., 2007).
population that has attempted to address the issue with research-ready referenda (Passel, 2006). Of course, the various methods of analysis and divergent findings resulting from the research on California and its racial context may leave some questions unanswered. Furthermore, it is important to note that each of the studies discussed above examined the impact of racial context on individual attitudes and vote preferences on immigrant- and immigration-related policy. While this study benefits from much of the analysis provided above, and should be informed by the complex findings concerning these influential variables, we will nonetheless examine different relationships, namely those between racial context and resulting representational character.

One recent study came closest to the project at hand. Using party and the estimated number of undocumented immigrants in an area, Paral (2006) examined the relationship between the presence of undocumented immigrants and voting in the House of Representatives. He found, contrary to the assumptions of the "threat hypothesis," that a great deal of the support for the bill came from districts in which, using his estimates, few undocumented immigrants resided. Conversely, districts with high undocumented populations tended to oppose the bill and its restrictions. Paral (2006) contends that this result is because the representatives of these areas are most familiar with the benefits the undocumented population provides to the area. Methodologically, the study is very limited and focused only on the vote for the restrictionist and highly-controversial H.R. 4437, with few other controls or considerations included in the analysis. Nonetheless, it provides a reasonable finding with which to compare this study and a point of contrast to other researchers who found contrary results. Furthermore, this study investigates the link between racial context and representation in which we are most interested for the purposes of this study.
Finally, the comprehensive analysis of the history of congressional action on immigration policy up until 1997 conducted by Gimpel and Edwards (1999) provides further information concerning the racial threat hypothesis. Most directly, the researchers examine constituency characteristics, certain legislator attributes (such as race and party), and the relationship of these variables with a legislator’s vote choice on a series of relevant procedural and legislative questions on immigration policy over an extensive period of time. An illustration of the trends in congressional voting on immigration is traced over dozens of votes and a number of different congressional configurations (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999).

Despite the rather broad examination conducted by Gimpel and Edwards, some generalizations can be drawn from the research relevant to this study. First to stand out are the restrictionist tendencies of Republican legislators and legislators from the South. Conversely, Democratic legislators tended to favor looser immigration restrictions. Furthermore, the authors found legislators who were members of a racial or ethnic minority also tended to favor fewer restrictions on immigration (independent of party) (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999).

Few constituency characteristics consistently influence immigration policy in one way or the other. However, one noticeable trend throughout the analysis was the tendency for legislators from areas with high unemployment rates to favor restrictionist policy (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Such a finding closely relates to the aforementioned group conflict theory, wherein economic competition encourages restrictionist attitudes by one racial group towards another competitor group, which could then impact legislator preferences on particularly salient issues (Kingdon, 1989).

The closest measure of Latino presence that had any consistent impact on immigration policy was the variable concerning the “percent of foreign born” in a legislator’s district. Of
course, such a measure is by no means interchangeable with a measure of “percent Latino” in a district (not included in the analysis), but it nonetheless provides a barometer for our analysis in regards to what it reveals. There should be some relevance in the measure, as all immigrants are, by nature, foreign-born, yet all foreign-born are not necessarily Latino. To the extent that such a measure is useful, increases in the percentage of foreign born residents in a legislator’s district tended to relate to votes that favored fewer immigration restrictions (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999).
CHAPTER 6
RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

The literature on the racial threat hypothesis confronts the question in a number of different ways and within a number of different contexts. However, the recent explosive growth of the Latino population across the U.S. requires a re-evaluation of the ways in which racial context and potential racial threats play out politically. Therefore, this analysis will attempt to answer some of the lingering questions.

Addressing the Gaps in the Literature

The studies discussed earlier focus their analysis on the impact of racial context on individual attitudes and the vote choices of communities (Hood and Morris, 2000; Hero and Tolbert, 1996). The few studies that address context and representation fall short of providing significant evidence to support or undermine the notion that "Latino threat" may influence the choices legislators make on policy (Paral, 2006; Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Understanding the relationship between an area's Latino population and the representation that emerges is important, yet remains limitedly researched. To some extent, we understand the potential impact of Latino context on vote choice, given the studies on individual attitudes. However, the goal of this study is to focus on those who are elected to office and to analyze the choices these office holders make. Such a focus may contribute towards illuminating the impact Latino context on elected officials’ vote choices and subsequent governmental policy.

In many cases, it is easy to predict that a large population of a particular ethnicity may be related to a legislator favoring that population’s preferences on policy. However, given that the
state of the Latino presence in the U.S. is reminiscent of aspects of V.O. Key's *Southern Politics*, and given the level of political empowerment of the Latino VAP discussed above and seen in Table 1, there may be a complicated interaction between population and representative character that can be better explored using the ideas of the threat hypothesis.

_Focal Points of the Design and Causal Linkage_

Studying the relationship between the demographics of a constituency and its representative is appropriate given the very strong evidence of a causal connection between constituency preference and representative action. This connection is present especially when considering preferences on the most salient political issues. The concern throughout the nation on issues pertaining to the large and growing Latino population is among the most prominent of all contemporary domestic policy debates. Some observers regard constituency concerns on immigration as equivalent to the mobilizing force of such issues as abortion (Galloway, 2007). In his research on the U.S. Congress, John Kingdon (1989) contends that when an issue is of great importance to a representative's constituency, that representative will have few choices but to respond to the policy preferences of his district. In fact, multiple deviations from the preferences of the constituency on prominent issues such as immigration can result in the termination of that thing which representatives tend to cherish more than anything else: their jobs (Kingdon, 1989). Kingdon (1989) argues that constituency preference on such issues is the primary factor motivating the actions of a member of Congress. The preferences within a representative's constituency are considered in the representative's decision and he or she usually makes the voting choice that best reflects the district, thereby best protecting the member's seat.
Other factors impact votes, such as party, interest group support, and staff input, but these often take a secondary position to constituency when salient issues are in question (Kingdon, 1989).

The presence of this well-supported linkage between constituency and representation suggests that on important issues a representative is responding to constituency pressure in their voting and policy decisions in elected bodies (Kingdon, 1989). Therefore, an opportunity arises to analyze whether areas with varying proportions of Latino populations act in accordance with the presumptions of the "threat hypothesis" framework. The decisions made by legislators on issues directly pertaining to the Latino community should be demonstrative of the sort of relationship that exists between Latino context and representation. For example, recalling the low level of political participation among the Latino VAP, if there is a large Latino population in a district, and the elected representative from that community makes a series of pro-restriction voting decisions, we may have evidence of the importance of a racial threat and group conflict relationship along the lines of Key’s (1949) findings. Alternately, if such a legislator in the same context votes consistently against immigration restrictions, this may be proof of the prevalence of the contact theory, similar to Paral’s (2006) findings discussed above.

Because of the nationalization of the immigration issue, the focus of our study will be the members of the U.S. House of Representatives and their behavior on immigration policy matters. This is a suitable focus for a number of reasons. First, the research Kingdon (1989) conducted regarding the relationship between constituency and legislator voting decisions was in Congress, thereby offering a solid theoretical link through which the forces of causation potentially flow. Secondly, each member of the House is elected from a single-member district representing a unique constituency. This variation and the sheer number of Representatives provides a large
sample size (435 members) with which to study the relationship between Latino context and representative character. Further, immigration is generally understood as a federal issue. Of course, it is a matter of federal law whether a person is legally deemed to be a citizen, a legal immigrant, or illegal immigrant, whether they have the right to vote, or whether they can collect benefits from federal programs. Therefore, most legislation concerning immigrants and immigration is formed in the U.S. Congress by consequence, such as the controversial HR 4437.13

**Basic Hypothesis**

Stated simply, the purpose of this research is to understand the influence that Latino populations have upon the votes of representatives on Latino-related issues. This population can be partially composed of undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, or Latino citizens of the United States. As Table 1 indicated, the size of the Latino electorate is much smaller than the size of the Latino VAP. Therefore, all else being held equal, the racial threat hypothesis would assume that large numbers of Latinos in a congressional district would result in the presence of a relatively un-empowered minority population that would be perceived of as an economic and latent political threat to the majority. Statistically, only a portion of this population would be eligible to vote, with an even smaller subset registered to vote. Therefore, the probability that a member of Congress would likely vote for more immigration restrictions and less-immigrant friendly policy would increase as the size of the Latino population grows. Such votes would be the manifestation of the conflict between the majority and the threatening “out-group.”

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13 With the increasing size and visibility of the immigrant population, states are often attempting to address immigration-related issues in their own way. See, for example, California’s Proposition 187 or Georgia’s recent S.B. 529, which requires certain employer checks on the immigration status of prospective employees and legally requires that localities turn undocumented immigrants charged with felonies over to federal immigration authorities (Campos, 2006). Nonetheless, such practices are not extremely widespread.
Again, some scholars articulate an alternative assumption in which contact with these immigrants would result in friendlier attitudes and more positive policy choices (Oliver and Wong, 2003). However, these findings have typically emerged using individual-level controls and from communities with diversity at the neighborhood level, and therefore may not be entirely relevant to our analysis. This study is concerned with representation for the entire congressional district and focuses on an “out-group” that, especially among the undocumented and un-empowered illegal population, tends to be isolated (Keen, 2004; Fischer and Tienda, 2006).

In summary, our analytical model will attempt to test the threat hypothesis contending that larger Latino populations foster representatives who are more restrictionist in their immigration and immigrant-related legislative voting records. However, the existence of elected Latino representatives in Congress encourages us to include an exception to this theory that will be further discussed below.

Data

In order to test the hypothesis that the larger the Latino population in a congressional district, the more likely the representative from the district will be restrictionist, I have gathered data on each of the members from the 109th Congress and their corresponding districts.14 The 109th Congress is a particularly appropriate session to examine as much of the lingering tension concerning the immigration debate surfaced during its sitting. The pro-restriction group Federation for American Immigration Reform (2007) counted over 200 bills in the House as relevant to immigration policy. Among these were proposals such as the restrictionist and

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14 Serving from January 3, 2005 to January 3, 2007, consisting of 232 Republicans, 201 Democrats, and one independent. The independent caucuses with the Democratic Party, and for purposes of Party ID, he is labeled as a Democrat.
controversial H.R. 4437. Furthermore, in the face of opposition from his own party, President George W. Bush attempted to guide legislation that would create a temporary guest worker program for undocumented immigrants, alienating many of the administration's conservative allies (Fears, 2005). All the while, Latino immigration numbers continue to increase and media coverage of the issue became extraordinarily prevalent. Therefore, immigration policy action during this session comes at a time when the topic was particularly salient, and the link between representative and constituency was likely very strong for that issue. Because of this, legislative action during the 109th Session is an appropriate venue in which to test the threat hypothesis.

**Dependent Variable**

In order to test the hypothesis, I will use least squares regression. As we are looking for the impact of Latino context on legislator behavior, the dependent variable needs to appropriately represent a legislator’s actions on immigration issues. Fortunately, several interest groups rate each member of Congress relative to their position on immigration policy for each session of Congress. One of these well-established groups representing a highly restrictionist ideology is Americans for Better Immigration (ABI). This group has been rating legislators for over ten years, although the breadth of the analyzed actions has increased over time. Presently, these scores appear on Vote-Smart (a non-partisan website designed to inform voters of the positions of all candidates nationwide) and the ABI website. Of course, these scores reflect a bias towards restrictionism: earning a perfect score of 100 means that the legislator is in line with the agenda of these strongly anti-immigration groups. Nonetheless, the variation on scores is extensive and the actions accounted for in each score go beyond simple roll call vote tabulation to include the co-sponsorship of bills and amendments.

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15 These sites are located at [http://www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org) (Vote Smart) and [http://www.betterimmigration.com](http://www.betterimmigration.com) (ABI).
Typically, interest group scores are calculated by accounting for the amount of times a legislator agrees with the group on a set of about twenty bills. The ABI scores are significantly different in this regard. The ABI scores are notable for accounting for over 200 potential legislative actions in a series of different policy realms for the years 2005-2007. Within each realm, a particular grade is generated based on all relevant policy action. These grades are created via the allocation of points relative to the organization's perception of how significant an immigration policy action will be with regards to the size of the immigrant population in the U.S. If an action is thought to create more immigrants and higher population growth, points are deducted from the score, and vice versa. Points are consistently and justifiably allocated based on the severity of the impact of each action. The grades in each realm are weighted and compiled into an overall score. While the methodology may be unique, the scores serve the purpose for which we need them for this analysis: they provide a useful barometer from a staunchly-restrictionist group that rates the immigration actions of members of congress relative to that ideological position. As a dependent variable, they account for a diverse series of immigration-related policies from each session of Congress and consistently allocate scores based on the legislative responses to each. In fact, because of their comprehensive coverage of the policy making process and the utilization of weights which stress the most significant policy, nearly every piece of immigration legislation of the 109th session is accounted for and considered.

16 The realms are illegal immigration, citizenship for the children of illegal immigrants, chain migration, amnesties, worker importation, refugee/asylum policy, and visa lotteries. As the group bases their ratings on the impact policy has on the numerical magnitude projected as a result, the categories are weighted when compiling the overall grade to stress those which contain the policy most significant in raising or lowering these numbers. Illegal immigration and chain migration are weighted the most heavily, because of this, while reforms to the visa lottery are weighted less.

17 A full report on the method of calculation is available at http://grades.betterimmigration.com/howcalculated.php3
Therefore, these scores measure the legislative action that citizens and legislators alike would recognize as relevant to Latinos and immigration-related policy.

Utilizing interest-group ratings is a commonly used practice by scholars for measuring legislator behavior. For example, ratings annually released by the interest-group Americans for Democratic Action are frequently cited as a reasonable representation of the overall ideology of members of Congress (Schwab, 1988; Gay, 2002). Other studies utilize ratings from the AFL-CIO or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Tate, 2001; Krehbiel, 1990). Some scholars do criticize certain aspects of these scores and their usage in research. For example, some point to the frequent injection of bias on the part of the rating group or the inability to compare scores across different sessions of Congress because they are each structured on specific policy action from one session (Groseclose et al., 1999; Herron, 1999). Nonetheless, most accept that these interest group rating scores provide a barometer as to where a legislator stands relative to the position of that interest group’s policy preferences (Gay, 2002; Shaffer, 1988). Therefore, to measure legislative behavior on immigration policy, we utilize the 2005-2007 ABI ratings on members of the U.S. House as our dependent variable.

Independent Variables

The independent variable of most concern is the size of the Latino population per congressional district. To account for Latino context, our measure is the proportion of a district's population that is Latino. The data for the size of the Latino population comes from the latest demographic estimates in the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey (ACS), compiled in a district-by-district breakdown by the Pew Hispanic Center (2006). Of course, the methods of the Census Bureau cannot capture the exact size of the Latino population per district, a feat made difficult by the fact that those branded with “illegal” residential statuses are not as
likely to respond to government researchers as legal immigrants or citizens, and they may be less likely to reside in one place for an extended period of time (Robbins, 2006). However, the Census Bureau utilizes well-tested methods for their research, and they do not inquire into the legal status of residents, thus they still should gather a reasonable estimate of the size of a Latino community in an area. Given the tendency of the Latino population to reside in ethnic enclaves, it is likely that even an undercount of the size of the population would still indicate the contextual relevance of the population in the district, as the undercount would be drawn from the area containing most of the district’s Latinos (Keen, 2004; Fischer and Tienda, 2006). As we are most concerned with the potential “threat” this population poses, a close estimate in this regard is acceptable and, at present, these ACS figures are all that can be used. In fact, other accurate district-by-district breakdowns of the population are not available. Therefore, the 2005 ACS estimates are most appropriate for our analysis given their up-to-date illustration of the demographics of the fluctuating Latino immigrant community, even if they cannot provide an exact number.

I choose to measure the entire size of the Latino population in the context of the district as opposed to the size of the undocumented population. Such a measure would be damaging to our analysis for several reasons. Again, accurate estimates of the undocumented/illegal alien population are difficult to make for the reasons noted above. The estimates of the illegal population that do exist are often based on complex methodologies founded on assumptions of potentially out-dated migration patterns. 18 Furthermore, the nature of the threat hypothesized in

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18 Paral (2006) attempts to estimate the size of the undocumented population per district using a method wherein a matching proportion of the nationwide illegal population is allocated to each district based on the existing legal Latino immigration population there. However, it is possible that these patterns do not necessarily reflect each other proportionately, given recent changes in Latino settlement in the U.S. The Latino population is spreading across areas in the South, with the rate of growth much larger than in traditional large Latino strongholds in the
this relationship is based on the perception of the Latino context in a community by the rest of a
district's population and its representative. If the population is larger, it may be seen as more of a
threat, or so I hypothesize. Measuring this population by only looking at the size of the
undocumented community is logically flawed. It would be impossible for anyone to differentiate
between legal and undocumented Latinos in a community, or congressional district, without
complex methodologies, and questioning methods or, perhaps, the force of law. That is to say,
when a member of the majority population encounters a Latino individual or group, it is
impossible for them to determine if they are legal or undocumented. Undocumented immigrants
are not marked as such and cannot be perceived of as a separate “threat” apart from the rest of
the Latino population. Instead, the perception of a Latino economic and political threat by the
majority population is likely to be based on the total size of the Latino population in an area and
the consequent visibility of the Latino community, i.e. their presence. Therefore, measuring
Latino context is measure best by accounting for the overall size of the Latino population in an
area.

Crossing the Threshold: Latino Political Relevance

Hero and Tolbert (1996) indicated that they found evidence of a racial threat relationship
in “bifurcated” communities on Proposition 187. These bifurcated communities are those where
a large number of Latinos, though not a majority (typically upwards of 20%), interacted with the
majority population to create group political conflict. As a result, these areas were marked by
strong support for the restrictionist referendum. However, once the size of the Latino population
in a community approached and surpassed the majority threshold, Hero and Tolbert (1996) found
more opposition to the policy. Opposition to the referendum in majority-Latino communities

Southwest, New York, New Jersey, and Florida (Suro and Singer, 2002; Fischer and Tienda, 2006).
outweighed support. Such a finding makes sense. Despite the large gap between the size of the Latino VAP and the eligible Latino population, once the population is large enough in a community, its political power should become significant enough to make a policy impact. Briefly comparing Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrates that as the proportion of a state’s Latino population grows, so does the proportion of the state’s electorate that is Latino. Therefore, one must consider the fact that there is likely to be a threshold for the size of the Latino population that, when reached, transitions the population from being “threatening” to politically relevant. For our purposes, once this threshold is reached, it is likely that we will see a decrease in the extent that a legislator favors restrictionist policy. This is true given the strong evidence that indicates that Latinos tend to favor less-restrictive policies on immigration, (Harwood, 1986; Gimpel & Edwards, 1999; Tichenor, 2002). Therefore, in a majority-sized bloc, these Latinos would encourage a representative to reflect these views. With this holding, this research differs from that of Key’s, wherein pre-VRA southern black participation was never a factor because of the fierce legal and extra-legal repression. The concept of this threshold may explain the existing Latino political presence in many levels of government.

In order to test for this hypothesized threshold relationship, we will include a polynomial term in our regression analysis. Such a methodology is designed to account for the parabolic relationships that are present with most active “thresholds.” The polynomial term is the squared value of the variable which we hypothesize to have a threshold relationship, in this case the 2005 measure of a district's Latino population. Both this polynomial term and the single measure of Latino context are, by necessity, included in our regression equation. If our threshold hypothesis is correct, the coefficient on the measure of Latino context will be positive and the coefficient on
the polynomial term will be negative, indicating the theorized direction on either side of the
threshold is accurate.

Other Influences on Voting Decisions

The voting decisions of a member of Congress on immigration policy do not simply rely
on the percentage of their district that is Latino. Many districts lack a significant Latino
population but still have highly restrictionist representation. The purpose of utilizing the threat
hypothesis framework to look at this relationship is not to provide a single variable explanation
for all variance in representative behavior. Instead, we suggest that the relationship may be more
complex than is often considered. Of course, other variables must be incorporated in order to
fully understand this relationship, including other attributes of the constituency and the members
of Congress.

Legislator Characteristics

Numerous scholars point to the significance of political party upon the voting preferences
Previous discussion indicates that the roll of party on immigration policy and individual attitudes
towards immigration is significant. Gimpel and Edwards (1999) found that party was one of the
more consistent predictors of policy preference in Congress. Furthermore, Campbell et al. (2007)
also found partisanship to be the primary indicator of vote choice for individuals on the
restrictionist Proposition 187. Generally, all of this research found that Republicans tended to be
more restrictionist, while Democrats favored fewer restrictions (in Congress and among
individuals). This split reflects the divide initially fostered between parties, when cost became a
factor in the history of immigration policy formation Gimpel and Edwards, 1999).
Party should remain a consistent influence on voting decisions, particularly given the recent increased ideological polarization of parties in Congress (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). For the purposes of our study, it is presumed that the existing patterns for each party will be maintained because those of similar ideologies are likely clustered in the same party. Legislators from the Republican Party are expected to favor more restrictions, while Democrats should oppose them. For our analysis, we will use party labels as of the 109th Congress for each member of the House.

Some fractures have recently emerged in these otherwise cohesive parties that should be accounted for in our model. While there remains much allegiance to party on immigration policy, on some recent votes and in some public debate observers have noted that a divide exists between some segments of the Republican Party (Westhead, 2006). This divide mirrors earlier schisms caused by the involvement of the business community in immigration policy. Little research exists on the issue, but some patterns in the work of Gimpel and Edwards (1999) demonstrate that legislators who are supported by the business community tend to favor fewer restrictions on immigration, given the economic benefits businesses reap with a larger workforce and consumer base. Recent observations contend that this pattern remains in existence, with social conservative Republicans supporting more restrictions and those backed by business favoring fewer (Westhead, 2006). Therefore, we should expect that legislators closely aligned with the business community would support fewer immigration restrictions.

We again turn to interest-group ratings to measure business support for legislators. The annual U.S. Chamber of Commerce scores provide a good barometer in this regard. Other studies have utilized the ratings of this group before to measure ideology and allegiance to “pro-business” policy (Tate, 2001; Krehbiel, 1990). This nationwide organization claims ties to over
three million businesses in the U.S. of all sizes, representing numerous sorts of fields (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2007). The organization is a traditional foe of labor unions and a favored lobbying voice for the small and large business community. Furthermore, the organization has recently made it a “policy priority” to oppose most of the restrictionist immigration legislation of recent years, aiming to facilitate the exchange of goods and the intake of foreign workers valuable to business interests (Chamber of Commerce, 2007). Therefore, the organization's ratings of legislators account for exactly the sort of issue stances that may be influential on immigration policy action. The latest scorecard released by the Chamber of Commerce is from the year 2005, accounting for votes from that year. Each legislator is rated on a 0-100 scale, with a 100 representing perfect congruence with the organization's vote preferences on twenty-seven different policies.

One further legislator attribute we should consider is race and ethnicity. For the relationship under consideration, and given the tendency of Latinos to support fewer immigration restrictions, we expect that Latino legislators would tend to vote against most restrictions (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Some of the Latino members of Congress are Republicans and maintain relatively conservative voting records, such as the Florida delegation of Cuban-Americans including Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart. However, these legislators still tend to favor looser immigration restrictions. On the other hand, Henry Bonilla, a Mexican-American Republican from Texas, was regarded as having a restrictionist voting record in Congress despite having a district with large Latino population. Nonetheless, we expect that the nearly thirty Latino legislators in Congress will oppose immigration restrictions.
Constituency Characteristics

The proportion of a district that is Latino is not the only constituency attribute that may impact the way a representative votes on immigration issues. As we have seen above, a series of other factors have contributed to impacting attitudes about immigration in the past and should be accounted for in our model. Many of these factors are considered because they may be influential in the “threat” relationship.

The economic circumstances in a district may foster more restrictionist attitudes among the populous and the representative. As we discussed above, changes in economic circumstances historically contributed to restrictionism due to the majority’s perception of Latinos as either threats to access for scare resources or the cause of the economic downturn. Consequently, we should expect that as the economic situation in a district begins to appear direr, more restrictionist attitudes on immigration policy will result, in an attempt to lessen the impact of the perceived threat of Latino immigrants. Therefore, members of Congress from these districts will likely oppose immigration more consistently.

There are several ways to measure for these economic circumstances. In the past, some scholars have utilized measures of occupational status to characterize the socio-economic circumstances of a district (Ardoin and Garland, 2003). The proportion of a district that is engaged in employment described as “blue” or “gray” collar is that which may perceive of the Latino population as an economic threat. Latinos tend to be over-represented in these sorts of jobs (Passel, 2006). Therefore, we should expect, given the potential of group conflict, that

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19 “Blue Collar” jobs are those in the construction, production, and transportation industries. “Gray Collar” jobs are those in farming, fishing, health care, and food preparation.
representatives from districts with large blue and gray collar populations will favor immigration restrictions.

A link between the median income in a district and the ideology of legislators on race-related policy has also been observed by some scholars (Feagin, 1972; Hood and Morris, 1998). In fact, higher median incomes have been linked to increasingly liberal voting records for members of Congress. Furthermore, the median income in a district can provide us with an additional indicator of the economic circumstances in an area. Lower income districts may be directly economically threatened by the presence of a large Latino population, and therefore have a resultant restrictionist pattern of representation by elected officials. As a result, we will account for the median income of congressional districts in our model and expect that lower median incomes are tied to higher levels of restrictionism for the corresponding members of Congress.

Many point to the black population of the U.S. as a potential competitor with Latinos for these same sorts of jobs, as both tend to be over-represented in each sector (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Conflict between blacks and Latinos also occurs given the proximity in which many of these groups live within concentrated urban areas, wherein competition for resources is strong. Oliver and Wong (2003) found more competition when diversity in these areas was city-wide. Conversely, on some legislation, Gimpel and Edwards (1999) found mixed tendencies among legislators from districts with larger black populations on restrictionist policy. On occasions, a larger black population encouraged restrictions, and at others, the impact was the opposite. No consistent pattern emerged on all immigration votes, and the black population did not always have a statistically significant relationship on votes. Nonetheless, we should expect, given the potential for group conflict, that larger black populations in an area contribute to increasing restrictionism on the part of a districts representative.
The data measuring the blue collar, gray collar, median income, and black population in each district is up-to-date as of 2004, and has been collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. This information is compiled in the annual *Almanac of American Politics* on a district-by-district basis (Barone and Cohen, 2006). For each of these three measures, we simply take the percentage of each district that falls under each attribute and assign it to the corresponding legislator.

Finally, the general partisanship of a district is very important in terms of understanding the attitudes on immigration that persist there. While the party of the representative elected from this district is a good indicator of this factor, it is perhaps a better indicator of the attitudes of the legislator. The legislator remains constrained by the preferences of the district on particularly salient issues such as immigration. This is especially true if the legislator is elected from a district with moderate tendencies or one that generally favors the other party. Thus, the partisan tendencies of the district are worthy of consideration in our model. This is particularly true as partisanship remains a reasonable indicator of liberalism or conservatism, given the recent polarization of political parties and their memberships around these foci (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). To measure district partisanship, we look to the results from the most recent nationwide campaign among the sharply divided American electorate (Botelho, 2004). Given the discussed polarization and the nature of the political divide in the country, the figures of support for candidates should provide a reasonable measure of the partisan tendencies of a district. In fact, other well-known measures of partisanship, such as the Cook Partisan Voting Index, also are formulated using the results of recent presidential campaigns (Barone and Cohen, 2006). Therefore, each district's percentage for George W. Bush in 2004 is included to measure
partisanship.\textsuperscript{20} Again, we expect that districts that favor Republicans would increasingly support immigration restrictions, given the relationship between these two positions discussed earlier.

The location of a congressional district also has been shown to make an impact on the behavior of elected representatives on immigration issues. Historically, representatives from Southern states and states bordering Mexico have favored more immigration restrictions (Tichenor, 2002; Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Some scholars suggest that the proximity of these areas to Mexico encourages this behavior. In the past, many immigrants crossing the Southern border would settle in these states, thus making the potential of the “threat” all the more immediate (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Additionally, Gimpel and Edwards (1999) argue that the history of racial supremacist ideas in Southern states contributes to representatives historically opposing policy that may permit an influx of non-white citizens. Therefore, we expect that legislators in Southern and border states will favor more immigration restrictions.

Summary

These factors are those which likely contribute to the variations in a legislator's behavior on immigration policy in the U.S. Congress. We expect that each will make an impact in the direction indicated, and hope to contribute to the literature with a new perspective on the way that the size of the Latino population impacts representation that echoes the literature of a different era.

To approach our threat hypothesis, we utilize regression analysis. Because of the presence of a hypothesized “threshold” relationship, all of the measures for each district and its member of Congress will be input into a polynomial regression equation and analyzed through computerized

\textsuperscript{20} The Bush campaign of 2004 pre-dated the split in the Republican Party on immigration encouraged by the Bush administration's desire for a less-restrictionist guest worker program (see Westhead, 2006). Therefore, these votes shouldn't necessarily be viewed as endorsements of the administration's future position.
calculation. Our primary independent variable is a 2005 measure of the size of a district's Latino population, while our control variables include median income, the size of the blue collar, gray collar, and black populations in a district, district partisanship, location, a legislator's party, race, and business allegiance. Our dependent variable is the ABI measure of legislative restrictionism.
CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis suggests mixed results. I find no evidence to support the threshold hypothesis. Moreover, the racial threat hypothesis, in general, is not applicable to the relationship between Latino context and the actions of elected members of the U.S. House on immigration policy. Nonetheless, the analysis as whole provides evidence of important trends in this politically important relationship, including a potentially different manifestation of the racial threat relationship.

I conducted a regression analysis with a polynomial term in order to test for the potential presence of a threshold relationship relative to the size of the Latino population in a congressional district, as discussed above. The results for these analyses are included in Table 3. Our model utilizes the ABI scores from 2005-2007 as a dependent variable.

Evidence of the threshold relationship would be confirmed if the regression coefficient for the size of the Latino population was found to be positive while the coefficient for the polynomial term (“Latino Squared”) was found to be negative. Such findings would indicate that a parabolic curve could fit to the data points of our analysis, with higher values for the Latino population relating to higher values of restrictionism up until the threshold of “Latino relevance.” Again, our hypothesis was that once this threshold was met, restrictionism would decrease, as the size of the population demands the positive attention of elected representatives.

Table 3 shows that the coefficients do not indicating a threshold relationship. Both terms have a negative coefficient. Furthermore, in neither are the terms statistically significant,
indicating that the polynomial regression is likely not the appropriate way to model this relationship. As a result, we can reject the threshold hypothesis. There is no evidence of this aspect of the threat relationship in our analysis.

Table 3: Polynomial Regression Results, Impact on Legislative Restrictionism (ABI Scores 2005-2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Latino</td>
<td>-.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Squared (Polynomial Term)</td>
<td>-.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D=0, R=1)</td>
<td>3.115**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Support</td>
<td>.071**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Gray Collar</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Blue Collar</td>
<td>.641**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>-.154*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Legislator? (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>-7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Partisanship (Bush 2004 %)</td>
<td>.420**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern State (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>7.396**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border State (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>5.30*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01  
\[r\text{-squared}= .76, \text{adj.}= .75\]

I also conducted a linear regression analysis, without a control for the threshold. Table 4 includes the results for each of our variables from this analysis under examination. With this specification, many of the variables in the model have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable.

As earlier work concerning racial context and immigration attitudes discovered, a legislator's party has a strong influence on immigration voting. Evidence supporting the hypothesized relationship with party can be seen in Table 4. On average, we find that Republicans are likely to have ABI scores approximately 19 points higher than Democrats,
demonstrating the hypothesized tendencies towards restrictionism among the more conservative Republican Party.

Table 4: Linear Regression Results, Impact on Legislative Restrictionism (ABI Scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Latino</td>
<td>-.372**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D=0, R=1)</td>
<td>19.139**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Support</td>
<td>.291**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Gray Collar</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Blue Collar</td>
<td>.586**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Legislator? (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>-10.735*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Partisanship (Bush 2004 %)</td>
<td>.430**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern State (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>7.267**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border State (No=0, Yes=1)</td>
<td>5.959**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01 r-squared=.76, adj.=.75

Along the same lines, our analysis shows that partisanship in a district also has a significant positive relationship with legislator restrictionism. We find that, on average, each one percent increase in the percent vote for Bush in a congressional district relates to a .43 unit increase in the ABI score of the corresponding legislator. In other words, more Republican districts tend to foster more restrictionist representation on immigration issues.

These findings indicating a strong relationship between partisanship and high restrictionism are not surprising, given the polarization of parties around ideological foci that we previously discussed. As was predicted, the Republican Party appears to be the party of choice for those with restrictionist ideas (with both voters and legislators, in this case). Our findings here reinforce those of Campbell et. al (2006) regarding as a factor that encourages restrictionism. Additionally, our finding that Republican legislators tend to be more restrictionist echoes the results of Gimpel and Edwards' (1999) historical analysis.
Observers have speculated that recent intra-party division among Republicans on immigration policy has been rooted in the level of business support for fewer restrictions (Dunham, 2006; Westhead, 2006). In order to test the validity of such an observation, we included the 2005 rating from the Chamber of Commerce (COC) for each legislator in our analysis, upon which higher scores from the group relate to a more pro-business attitude. Table 4 provides evidence that, instead of a pro-business stance encouraging less restrictionism, higher COC scores relate to more restrictionism. On average, each unit increase on COC scores relates to a .29 increase in ABI scores.

This finding may indicate that even pro-business legislators have a difficult time voting against immigration restrictions, despite potential pressure from high-powered business interests. Alternately, given the weight of the discussion on the difficulties Republican legislators have had concerning immigration voting decisions, it may be necessary to evaluate this relationship more carefully, in order to be sure the directionality of influence is accurate. This can be done by accounting for the size of the contributions business interests make to legislators as a measure for business allegiance, as opposed to these scores. The COC scores account for a smaller number of votes than the ABI scores do. Perhaps a more precise measurement may result in different findings. Nonetheless, our findings here regarding business influence and restrictionism are surprising and counter to existing theory and evidence.21

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21 It is possible that these scores may only measure “business support” as to whether a legislator supports business interests generally. Businesses may have a diverse set of opinions on immigration policy. For example, those benefiting from unskilled labor may be more likely to oppose restrictions, while small business owners who are ideologically conservative may favor increased restrictions. A different measure of business support could possibly measure such diversity in business support.
Racial Context

The first aspect of racial context to consider in our analysis is the size of black population in a district. Our analysis indicates that as the proportion of a district that is black increases, there is a small decrease in legislative restrictionism. Prior theory suggested that the percentage black of a district may tend to lead to more restrictionism, given the potential for competition for resources that may be acknowledged by legislators for heavily-black districts. This analysis found the opposite. Instead, it may be that the relationship is influenced by the fact that many congressional districts including large proportions of black residents also include a large number of Latinos, as they are located in densely populated urban areas. As a result, Representatives from these areas may act according to a dual loyalty to both these racial minorities, reflected in a voting pattern that is less hostile to minorities, in general, and Latinos specifically. Additionally, it may be that, on the part of the representative, there is recognition of the common issues and struggles confronted by both black and Latino populations that that nullifies the potential for racial conflict. These districts heavily populated by both minorities are likely to be some of the more liberal in the country. Therefore, these Representatives may attempt to appease both populations by favoring fewer restrictions, a position generally considered more liberal.

As to the major focus of this study, examining the Latino threat hypothesis, I found limited support. I found no confirmation for the threshold hypothesis. This component of the overall threat hypothesis was intended to account for a certain point of saturation whereupon the otherwise “threatening” Latino population would come to be regarded as an electoral factor for legislators. While theoretically attractive, the data did not support such a relationship, in general.

Our model that excludes the threshold also supplies minimal support for the Latino threat hypothesis. The relationship illustrated in Table 4 is such that a larger Latino population tends to
encourage lower ABI scores. The threat hypothesis would predict that ABI scores would be positively related to growth in the Latino population. Instead, we find the opposite effect. On average, every one percent increase in Latino population is related to a .37 drop in ABI score for the corresponding legislator. In other words, in general, districts with larger Latino populations have less restrictionist representatives.

As a result, we cannot apply the threat hypothesis with confidence to the relationship between Latinos and legislative action on immigration issues. Instead, we must turn to alternate explanations for the tendency of members of Congress to support fewer restrictions as the size of the Latino population in their district grows.

One possibility is the contact theory that we have previously discussed. Under such a relationship, the attitudes of the population of a district grow increasingly friendly to the “out-group” population as that population increases in size and in the amount of interaction with the majority population. With contact theory, this interaction ameliorates the potential animosity of the relationship. Consequently, legislators may support fewer legal hurdles to the out-group’s presence as the coalition of support for the group begins to include members of the majority population as well as the “out-group” population (in this case, Latinos).

However, the application of this theory, as we discussed above, is not without its potential flaws. The tendency for Latinos to reside and work in isolated “ethnic enclaves” is only showing initial signs of erosion as the population grows (Fischer and Tienda, 2006). The relative segregation of the Latino community potentially decreases the likelihood of the contact required for its hypothesis to be applicable.

Alternately, the relationship we have found may result because of simple calculations by the legislators of the districts under examination: as the size of the population grows, the size of
the potential vote grows. Therefore, legislators may alter their voting patterns to assuage the minority population in their district, and potentially garner their vote. Of course, the theoretical justifications supporting the potential utility of the racial threat hypothesis were based in part on the large disenfranchised bloc within the Latino community, comprised of unregistered Latino citizens as well as legal and illegal immigrants. I predicted that their lack of power could possibly frame them as threat to the majority population in a district. This factor makes these findings surprising, and potentially significant in terms of future policy. If legislators are responding to the electoral potential of Latino populations as a whole, it could encourage expansionist votes on anything from border control legislation to amnesty provisions.

One other consideration of note is the fact that I attempted to apply the threat hypothesis outside of its typical level of focus. As can be seen from our discussion of previous literature using group conflict analysis, the levels of analysis have typically been individuals, their attitudes, and voting choices. Even with Key, this was the case. Of course, individuals and legislators consider different things when they formulate their attitudes and make their vote choices. Legislators, for example, must consider the policy which best represents their district and best insulates them from electoral defeat. Our results indicate that, instead of voting to oppose Latinos, legislators may act to support them as constituents. Again, measuring racial attitudes among individuals in the majority groups in these districts may present different results: the threat relationship may be present. After all, it is these individuals who may be in the most direct competition for the resources Latino groups may “threaten.” However, legislators instead may recognize that they may be threatened by not recognizing new electoral forces, and therefore respond in with less hostility to Latinos in their districts. Of course, these issues require further research.
At any rate, the contextual racial threat hypothesis is not supported by our findings. The propositions of these other theories, and their application to legislative action, suggest the need for additional research.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Expanding the Conception of the Latino Threat Relationship}

Generally, we have found that the size of the Latino population in an area has a negative relationship with legislative restrictionism. However, our findings do not entirely support the rejection of the proposition that Latino immigration is seen as a threat by members of the U.S. House. The one factor that potentially illustrates a threat-based pattern of legislative action is not related to Latino context. Instead, it appears to be connected to occupational-status. Legislators from districts with large proportions of workers who may perceive of Latino immigration as an occupational threat tend to favor increased restrictions on immigration policy. The relationship between legislative restrictionism and the proportion of a district that is employed in blue-collar positions is a positive one. On average, every one percent increase in a district's blue collar population relates to a .58 increase in a legislator's ABI score.

This relationship was expected to exist, given the widespread perception that Latinos provide competition for jobs for lower-paid blue-collar workers and the fact that legislators typically vote in the interest of their districts on salient issues such as immigration. However, the lack of a positive relationship between racial context and restrictionism requires that we reconsider the theory underlying our threat hypothesis. While racial context in a district appears to play no role, it seems that Latino immigration in general may still be perceived of as a threat

\textsuperscript{22} In the process of the analysis, other potential manifestations of the threat hypothesis relationship were tested. I tested interactive terms that attempted to account for the partisanship of a district as well as the size of the Latino population (\% Latino x \%Bush 04 vote), recognizing that more conservative districts may be more restrictionist in nature, up until a threshold of Latino concentration. However, the relationship remained the same: higher values of this interaction term still encouraged lower ABI scores in members of the House. This term was tested in polynomial form as well, with similar results.
by legislators from districts with large blue-collar populations. In other words, the threat relationship may exist, just not in the manner which we initially predicted.

The perception of the Latino immigration threat to those workers who are employed in fields in which Latinos provide the most direct competition may be based on national perceptions of the Latino population, as opposed to local ones (for which the measure of Latino context accounts). In fact, given our findings regarding racial context, it seems that the absence of large numbers of Latinos in a community coupled with the presence of a large blue-collar population would foster a high degree of restrictionism. In fact, an examination of legislators with districts meeting this criteria seems to indicate that this pattern may be worthy of further inquiry.

In Table 5, we have compiled information regarding each member of the 109th Session from the House of Representatives with a district consisting of 35% or more blue-collar workers and less than ten percent Latinos. The tabulation indicates that, with a few exceptions, this occupational threat in areas with low Latino populations persists. All but two of the nineteen legislators who meet the stated criteria scored above their party’s mean ABI score. Many score notably higher, indicating restrictionism well beyond that typically found within their party when elected from these sorts of districts.

Members from these districts may be supporting restrictionist policy in an attempt to halt the perceived economic threat presented by Latino immigrants by trying to keep them out of their districts. Restrictionist votes by legislators from high-blue collar communities may be attempts to halt the perceived nationwide Latino “threat” from becoming localized in their districts. In that regard, this analysis provides evidence to support the proposition that the Latino population
may still be viewed as an economic threat by some legislators, simply not on the level upon which we were initially focused.

Table 5: Examining High Blue-Collar, Low Latino Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislator</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% Latino</th>
<th>Blue Collar %</th>
<th>ABI 05-07 Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick McHenry</td>
<td>NC-10*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Aderholt</td>
<td>AL-4*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Davis</td>
<td>TN-4*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil Gilmor</td>
<td>OH-5</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Wicker</td>
<td>MS-1*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Oxley</td>
<td>OH-4</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>63 (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Ney</td>
<td>OH-18</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Spratt</td>
<td>SC-5*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Whitfield</td>
<td>KY-1</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tanner</td>
<td>TN-8*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Deal</td>
<td>GA-10*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gresham Barrett</td>
<td>SC-3*</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Souder</td>
<td>IN-3</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>58 (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Petri</td>
<td>WI-6</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Rogers</td>
<td>KY-5</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Boucher</td>
<td>VA-9*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Lewis</td>
<td>KY-2</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion Berry</td>
<td>AR-1*</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Pence</td>
<td>IN-6</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*D - Mean ABI Score = 32.28  R – Mean ABI Score = 78.38  X=lower than party mean

Furthermore, the predicted relationship between restrictionism and location is supported by the findings shown in Table 4 and Table 5. We can see that legislators from both Southern states and Border States tend to increasingly support immigration restrictions. Generally, much of the theory supporting the explanatory power of such a finding is rooted in racial context arguments in Border States and historical racial attitudes in Southern states (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). However, as I explained above, the hypothesis on racial context is not supported by our results. Instead, due to the possibility that legislators may vote to keep out threatening populations based on a broader perception of the existence of the threat, this theory
may need to be revisited. We suggest that it may be statewide perceptions of threat that may encourage border-state legislators in these locations to favor restrictions in an attempt to hinder the influx of immigrants into their districts. However, such a proposition requires further research.

With regards to Southern legislators, the findings of Table 5 present an interesting picture. It appears that many of the districts with these high blue collar proportions and low Latino populations that may be responding to an alternate, occupational status-based variation of the threat hypothesis are clustered in the South. Ten of the nineteen considered members of the House are from former states of the Confederacy, and an additional three are from nearby Kentucky. It is possible that many of the considerations regarding the reasons for Southern restrictionism may need to be reconsidered in this light. Given the migration of many blue-collar manufacturing jobs to the South as well as the increased Latino growth in the region, a plethora of new research questions may emerge as a result. It may be that the historical racial problems of the South have been assumed to be the explanation for restrictionism, when in fact the racial-based threat may be emerging because of the status of the workers therein.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

V.O. Key’s study of Southern Politics emphasized the proximity of the threatening black out-group as a major explanatory factor for level of hostility towards that group by the existing white power structure. Larger populations went hand-in-hand with more majority population hostility. The findings of this study indicate community racial context may not be the place where economic and political “threats” from the new and growing Latino population in the United States are perceived.

The findings indicate that a larger Latino presence in a congressional district encourages less, and not more, policy-based hostility on the part of elected representatives towards the Latino community. The hypothesized presence of a threshold of Latino relevance does not appear to be supported, even when we control for numerous other considerations. Restrictionism simply tends to decrease as the size of the Latino population grows. However, a focus on the rate of increase and the level upon which the presence of Latinos relates to Latino representation may be of interest for future research. The assumptions of our threshold hypothesis were based upon the notion that Latino presence in a district translates into the election of Latino officials at some particular point of concentration. Our findings indicate that assuming this relationship was parabolic was inappropriate. Nonetheless, analyzing the point at which Latino presence becomes accelerated into symbolic representation may be a suitable future research direction. Studies akin to those of Lublin (1999), in which a particularly proportion of a minority presence is identified as the point of transition, could perhaps be built upon given the findings of this analysis.
Nonetheless, the concept of the racial out-group threat is not entirely discarded by our findings. While immediate racial context does not appear to function according to the predictions of the racial threat hypothesis, nationwide perceptions of an economic threat from the Latino population may encourage restrictionist voting patterns by members of Congress. At the very least, I can say that the finding that larger blue-collar populations in a district are related to more restrictionist representation is notable in demonstrating that the Latino population may be perceived of as an economic threat by legislators and constituents alike. The combination of this factor along with the apparent applicability of the inverse of the racial threat hypothesis may provide future research questions for scholars interested in these topics.

The policy implications for our findings are numerous. On one hand, it appears that simply the contextual presence of Latinos in a district does not encourage restrictionist voting patterns. Such a tendency may be notable in the future when it comes to considering new amnesty provisions that could potentially mobilize large portions of the Latino population that may not otherwise be mobile. Furthermore, our findings concerning blue-collar populations are equally notable. It may be that the potential threat perceived by these legislators could be translated into further opposition to the less restrictionist guest worker programs supported by the Bush Administration, which would offer many of the undocumented immigrant population legal status to pursue certain occupations. Given that many of these legislators are Republicans, our findings suggest that the divide within the Republican Party on the issue may only increase, as legislators from heavily blue-collar districts may resist the passage of such bills.

In summary, we reject the notion that racial threat explains the relationship between Latino context and legislative restrictionism. A series of factors appear to have a significant impact on the voting patterns of members of the U.S. House, and one in particular seems to
indicate that at least some variation of the threat relationship may exist at some level of American politics.

The overwhelming demographic shifts wrought by the influx of the large Latino population in the United States are sure to remain of great concern to the population of the country and its elected representatives. These findings can contribute to a greater understanding of the role this growing population plays in the political arena by illuminating the impact some important contextual considerations have upon the attitudes of elected officials in the U.S. House. A good deal of evidence has been provided to support and defeat particular ideas about the relationship of a member of Congress to his or her district. Most specifically, the explanatory power of the threat hypothesis appears to have been altered. In the case of the Latino population, it appears that growing numbers in a congressional district are not related to increased restrictionism on the part of elected representatives. However, the threat hypothesis appears to be useful in understanding some of the relationship between occupational context and restrictionism.
REFERENCES


