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Welcoming the Stranger

Religion and Attitudes toward Social Justice for Immigrants in the U.S.

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Abstract

Every major religious tradition contains edicts for social justice on behalf of the marginalized, or, the stranger. However, the influence of religion on attitudes toward immigrants has been understudied. Along with other factors, this project analyzes the influence of religion on public sentiment regarding immigration policy in the United States. We find some effects of religious identification and religious behavior on attitudes toward the right to remain in this country, access to social services, and entitlement to public education. Religious measures show no influence on attitudes toward citizenship rights for children of immigrants born in the United States. Religious individuals and communities may play an important role in the acceptance and integration of immigrants.

Introduction

The sociological conceptualization of the “stranger” indicates a particular status in which an individual may be present in a social system, but does not share the same cultural knowledge, assumptions, and worldview. Thus, he or she cannot be considered a member, as their roots lie elsewhere (Simmel). Indeed, the presence of the stranger, or “other,” strengthens the identity of those who do “belong,” thus solidifying difference and distance. This distance can set the stage for fear, conflict, and exclusion (Marotta). However, the notion of the stranger in need and the responsibility of people of faith to address those

needs are prevalent in each major religion. If we accept that many immigrants, particularly the undocumented, to the U.S. may be “strangers in need,” the response of citizens in such a uniquely religious society merits inquiry. To be sure, the implication of viewing immigrants as strangers has vital consequences for public policy (Alexander).

Though the United States has long been a destination for immigrants, the last two decades have seen substantial growth in their number, thus setting the stage for a line of demarcation between those who belong and strangers. A record 40 million foreign-born residents were counted in 2010 (Greico, Acosta, de la Cruz, Gambino, Gryn, Larsen, Trevelyan, and Walters). Immigrants, documented and undocumented, face unique challenges and hardships compared to their native counterparts. While they exhibit comparable, sometimes higher, levels of labor force participation, they tend to work for lower wages, have higher rates of poverty, are less likely to possess health insurance, and are more likely than natives to experience a variety of economic hardships (Chaudry and Fortuny; Fortuny, Capps and Passel). In addition, many immigrants, particularly the undocumented, are subject to discrimination that can pose additional challenges to their integration and acceptance (Rawlings, Capps, Gentsch and Fortuny). All of these factors can contribute to the view that immigrants do not belong and inhibit policy implementation that would facilitate their inclusion and secure their well-being.

Many new immigrants seek permanent economic opportunity in this country while others send remittances to family in their home country. For some, the ultimate goal is to return home; others aspire to remain in the U.S. (Massey). Whether sojourners or permanent residents, the barriers they face often hinder access to the “American Dream.” Further, public sentiment can be negative or even hostile (Chandler and Tsai; Citrin, Reingold, and Green; Fennelly and Federico) to those who appear and sound different (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, and Martin). Nevertheless, the United States is a society that values hard work, opportunity, and the chance for upward mobility; in such a society, it may be the immigrant who especially embodies those cherished values.

Along with values of freedom and opportunity, America, an industrialized nation, is also distinctly religious. About 83% of Americans report some religious affiliation (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life) and 42% of Americans attend church weekly (Newport). The religious framework of this country should be considered a key factor in the receptivity to immigrants, attitudes toward their inclusion, and approaches to immigrant-targeted policy. It is notable that only recently has the relationship between individual religiosity and attitudes toward immigrants been considered. For example, Kotin, Dyrness, and Irazabal examined the role of religion in prompting political activism on behalf of Latino immigrants in California. Analyzing the same data, Knoll¹ illuminated the role that religion, particularly religious service attendance and minority religion membership, played in attitudes toward immigration policy. We hope to build on this, and other, research by considering additional immigrant-targeted policies. Knoll’s study considered attitudes toward guest worker programs and paths to citizenship. We consider other policies that, given the recent, often

¹ Knoll’s analysis uses data from the PEW Research Center for People and the Press and PEW Hispanic Center 2006 Immigration Survey.

volatile, public discourse surrounding immigration, elicit strong public sentiments. Nonetheless, the American ethos of fairness and equality may override concerns and fears about the presence of undocumented immigrants.

The concept of social justice underscores what is considered to be fair in a society (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, and Huo). Moreover, as Rawls argues, justice is characterized by the allocation of resources in a society such that the least advantaged are protected. In regard to immigrants, social justice should be considered more than simply individual legal rights and protections, and should be expansive enough to include equal opportunities and access to important avenues for economic and social mobility (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007). For this research, we consider public sentiment regarding resources that could provide protection, opportunity, and mobility for undocumented immigrants: the right to remain in this country, citizenship rights for children of immigrants who are born here, access to social services, and entitlement to public education.

Every major religious tradition contains messages and edicts for social justice on behalf of the marginalized (DeYoung). Thus, it seems evident that religion would be a key factor in considering the determinants of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. This paper fills a gap in the literature on religion and immigration. We consider the relationship between religious tradition and religious behavior on attitudes toward social justice for immigrants, and focus on the major Christian traditions, Protestant and Catholic, in the U.S. The following sections review the literature on public opinion and receptivity toward immigrants, including the role of individual religiosity.

Literature Review

Religion and Attitudes toward Immigrants

The book of Deuteronomy states, “You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities in your land” (24:14). This biblical mandate suggests that people of faith should call upon their beliefs and values to understand and interpret the plight of immigrants. In doing so, their approach to immigrants and immigrant policy should be one that entails empathy, inclusion, and fairness. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that people of faith do engage in activism on behalf of immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007, 2008). However, there is a dearth of literature investigating the precise role religion plays in influencing public policy attitudes regarding immigrants. What is known suggests a complexity in views based on religious affiliation and religious behavior. For example, Daniels found a clear link between religious affiliation and policy preferences with conservative Protestants, particularly those in the southern U.S., favoring restrictive immigration policy. Fetzer and Knoll both found that religious minorities, such as Jews and Latter-day Saints, were more likely to support liberal immigration policies, including legalization rather than deportation. Further, Knoll demonstrated that those who attended church more frequently were also more likely to support liberal policies. In an analysis of Nebraskans, Bretkreutz found no relationship between Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, or Catholic affiliation and attitudes toward immigration. However, there were significant relationships between Evangelical Protestant affiliation and negative attitudes toward immigration and economic growth.

Breitkreutz, similar to others, showed that church attendance led to more empathetic attitudes toward immigrants.

Clearly, affiliation and behavior are salient considerations in understanding attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy. However, immigration attitudes are influenced by a variety of other factors. The following sections discuss economic factors, intergroup contact and group threat, and nativism and cultural threat for their impact on sentiment toward immigrants.

Attitudes toward Immigrants: Cultural Threat and Nativism

Resistance to strangers may rest on definitions of belonging. Symbolic politics suggests that American identity leads to in-group hostility toward out-groups (Chandler and Tsai). It follows, then, that public opinion is influenced by conceptualizations of what it means to be an American (Citrin, Reingold, and Green; Espenshade and Calhoun). Espenshade and Calhoun found that individuals who placed greater significance on the English language, a possible symbol of belonging in America, were more likely to be concerned about undocumented immigration. American identity and symbolic politics have also been demonstrated to influence Americans' willingness to support policies aimed at immigrant education (Garcia and Bass; Palmer and Davidson). Finally, Brown found that American identity even influences beliefs about children, observing that those with a strong American identity perceive American children to be smarter than immigrant children.

Attitudes toward Immigrants: Economic Factors

Economic factors have historically been cited as factors influencing public opinion and receptivity toward immigrants. Previous research has shown that those who have a pessimistic view of the economy are more likely to hold anti-immigrant opinions (Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong; Chandler and Tsai). Those who have higher incomes have been found to be more receptive to higher immigration levels (Espenshade and Hempstead). Similarly, those who are economically insecure (O'Neil and Tienda), live in areas with greater unemployment (Berg), fear loss of employment to illegal immigrants (Ceobanu and Escandell), are more likely to hold anti-immigration or anti-immigrant opinions. As Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, and Armstrong observe, attitudes toward immigrants are shaped by the extent that native populations perceive they are competing with immigrants for resources. Interestingly, immigrants' skill level also plays a role in public opinion; high skilled immigrants are viewed more warmly than low skilled workers, indicating that economic self-interest does not necessarily influence policy preference (Hainmueller and Hiscox).

Attitudes toward Immigrants: Contact Theory and Group Threat

Though viewing immigrants as strangers can lead to tension and discord, having contact with immigrants may reduce these problems. Contact theory suggests that increases in intergroup contact leads to reductions in intergroup conflict (Amir 1969 and 1976; Jackman and Crane; Stephan; Ellison and Powers; Kinder and Mendelberg; Lieberman; Allport). Research on the influence of contact, however, is mixed. Dixon and Rosenbaum found that Whites who knew Latinos were less likely to express anti-Latino attitudes than those who did not. Similarly, in a study of two North Carolina counties, O'Neil and Tienda showed that intergroup personal contacts foster acceptance of immigrants. Hood and Morris found that

while increases in documented immigrants were positively correlated with more optimistic attitudes toward future immigration, individuals who lived in areas with few undocumented immigrants were less likely to prefer large increases in immigration than those in areas with larger undocumented populations. In a similar vein, Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, and Kolody found that proximity to Latino populations increased opposition to legal immigration and amnesty among residents of San Diego, CA. Another study, however, found that those who socialize with immigrants are more likely to have empathetic feelings toward immigrants (Amuedo-Dorantes and Puttitanun).

Other perspectives suggest that a sizeable presence of strangers will promote tensions. Group threat theory proposes that large numbers of minorities in an area are necessary for minority-majority conflict (Dixon and Rosenbaum). In these settings minorities are seen as competition for scarce resources and a political threat. Threats can also include threats to basic safety and health, and security and can be fomented by the media (Fennelly and Federico). Indeed, some research has found that people feel hostile to immigrants, at least in part, because they feel threatened by the newcomers (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, White-Stephan, and Martin).

Religion and Public Opinion

Two theoretical perspectives inform our understanding of how religion influences individual attitudes, particularly those attitudes that shape political engagement. The *ethnoreligious perspective* argues that discrete religious groups engender distinct worldviews among their adherents (Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green). Thus, members of different religious traditions, such as Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and others possess unique outlooks that ultimately shape their approaches to political and social issues, affect political party affiliation, and even influence voting patterns (Hirschl, Booth, Glenna, and Green; Malka, Lelkes, Srivastava, Cohen, and Miller). Over time, other factors such as ethnicity, race, and regional location combine with religious tradition to further cement differences between groups (Guth et al.). While the bulk of this research has focused on voting in presidential elections, this framework could also be useful for analyzing the timely political and social issue of immigration.

Another perspective, known as *religious restructuring*, argues that within major religious traditions there exist conservatives and progressives who are not unified in their perspectives on politics and social issues (Wuthnow). In this light, it may be more productive to consider levels of religious commitment and behavior, rather than tradition, to understand individual political attitudes and policy perspectives. Indeed, researchers have shown that the religious restructuring framework is illuminating in understanding individual political behavior (Smidt, Guth, Kellstedt, and Green) as well as progressive immigration policy (Knoll). Thus, we expect that religious behavior will show some relationship to immigration attitudes.

For the purposes of this research we consider both the ethnoreligious and the religious restructuring perspectives for their contributions to public opinion regarding undocumented immigration. We are particularly interested in how religious group membership and religious behavior influence four distinct social justice measures: allowing illegal² immigrants to

² The authors prefer the term “undocumented” to “illegal”; however, the PEW survey uses the term “illegal.”

remain in the U.S., the extension of social services to illegal immigrants, allowing the children of illegal immigrants to attend public schools, and an amendment to the constitution that would prohibit U.S. born children of illegal immigrants to be citizens. We are unaware of any other studies that consider these four key measures of social justice in one analysis.

Data and Methods

This project uses data from the 2006 Immigration Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press and the Pew Hispanic Center between February 8 and March 7, 2006. The respondents include a nationwide sample of 2,000 adults, age 18 or older. In addition, five metropolitan area surveys were conducted with each sample containing roughly 800 respondents. The areas sampled include Chicago, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Raleigh-Durham, and Washington, D.C. (Kohut and Suro).

Dependent Variables: Social Justice for Immigrants

The concept of social justice signifies those values and processes that members of a society consider fair and equitable. Two components of this notion are procedural (also called processual) justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to the process via which distribution decisions are made while distributive justice indicates the distribution of valued economic resources and social goods in a society (Longres and Scanlon; Tyler et al.). Thus, outcomes can be unjust, but so can the process by which the outcomes are derived (Tyler et al.). Both components can affect the relations between the dominant and minority group in a society, maintaining inequality and perpetuating the marginalization of the minority group.

Procedural justice is measured by two questions tapping into legal processes that affect access to valued goods and resources: First, “Should illegal immigrants be required to go home, or should they be granted some kind of legal status that allows them to stay here?” Second, “Would you favor changing the Constitution so that the parents must be legal residents of the U.S. in order for their newborn child to be a citizen, or should the Constitution be left as it is?” *Distributive* justice is also measured by two questions: First, “Should illegal immigrants who are in the U.S. be eligible for social services provided by state and local governments, or should they not be eligible”? Second, “Should the children of illegal immigrants who are in the U.S. be permitted to attend public schools, or don’t you think so?” Each measure captures access to a valued good in society: economic support and access to education. All four measures are coded dichotomously to reflect opposition to those positions that would facilitate social justice for immigrants.

Independent Variables: The Ethnoreligious Perspective and Religious Restructuring Perspective

To capture the Ethnoreligious perspective we create five variables to reflect religious tradition: Evangelical Protestant, Black Protestant, all other Protestants, Catholic, and Non-religious. Evangelical Protestants are those who identify as “born again” or Evangelical and as Protestant on the religious preference question. Black Protestants are those who identified as Black when asked about race, and identify as Protestant when asked about religion. Those who identified as Protestant, but not as Black, and did not identify as “born again” are placed into the Other Protestant category. Catholics and Non-religious are those who

identified as such on the religion question. The comparison categories include all other religious identifications such as Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, Orthodox, or other religion. We include one measure of religious commitment to operationalize the religious restructuring perspective, and church attendance is a dichotomous measure with those who attend weekly or more assigned “1” and those attending less frequently assigned “0.”

Control Variables

We include eight measures that, based on previous research, should have an effect on attitudes toward social justice for immigrants. The measures tap into respondents’ perception of economic conditions, contact with immigrants, and perceptions of American threat brought by immigrants. Our first set of measures gauges nativist concerns and cultural threat. First is a dichotomous measure of those who feel “American life should be protected from foreign influence” (1 = completely or mostly agree, 0 = mostly disagree, completely disagree). Next we measure concerns about threats to American values and culture. Respondents were given two options and asked to choose the one that most closely reflected their views. The question stated, “The growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens tradition, traditional American customs, and values, or, the growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society.” We code as “1” those who feel newcomers threaten American values and “0” those who feel they strengthen American society.

To capture respondents’ perceptions of economic conditions we control for three measures. Feelings about the national economy are assessed via the question, “how would you rate economic conditions in this country?” We dichotomized the response categories such that “1” are those who feel it is excellent or good and “0” are those who feel it is only fair or poor. Next, respondents are asked to rate their own personal financial situation. Those who feel it is in excellent or good shape are given “1” and “0” for those who feel it is in fair or poor shape. Finally, we include a dichotomous measure of respondents’ perception of immigrants’ effect on jobs. We code as “1” those who feel “immigrants take jobs away from American citizens” and “0” those who feel they “take unwanted jobs” or “both.”

Finally, we include three measures of respondents’ contact with immigrants. The first measure asks “how often do you personally come in contact with immigrants who speak little or no English?” with the response categories “often” assigned “1” and “sometimes, rarely, or never” assigned “0.” Next is a dichotomous measure reflecting whether the respondent has friends who are recent immigrants (1 = yes, 0 = no). Finally, we include a measure of respondents’ perception of the number of immigrants in their area. Those who feel there are “many” new immigrants are assigned “1” and those who say “some, only a few, or none” are assigned “0.”

Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

We control for gender (male=1, female=0), education (a categorical measure ranging from no education to postgraduate or professional training), and income (a categorical measure ranging from less than \$10,000 to \$150,000 annually). Regarding race, we include those who identify as non-Hispanic white and those who identify as Hispanic, with all other races as reference category. For political party identification, Democrats and Independents

are included with Republican serving as the reference category. Political ideology indicates how respondents describe their political views and ranges from very conservative (1) to very liberal (5). Finally, we control for whether or not the respondent was born in the U.S.

Table 1. Sample Descriptives

Measure (n = 8,019)	Mean/Proportion	
Dependent Variables		
Illegal Immigrants Should be Required to Go Home	.522	
Favor changing the Constitution so Parents must be Legal Residents for Child to be Citizen	.426	
Illegal Immigrants Should Not be Eligible for Social Services	.677	
Children of Illegal Immigrants Should Not be Permitted to Attend Public School	.260	
<i>Religious Traditions</i>		
Black Protestant	.108	
Evangelical Protestant	.178	
Protestant	.215	
Catholic	.278	
Non-religious	.120	
<i>Religious Commitment</i>		
Church Attendance	.375	
Control Variables		
<i>Nativism & Cultural Threat</i>		
Immigrants threaten values and culture	.481	
America should be protected from foreign influence	.507	
<i>Economic Conditions</i>		
Country's Economic Condition Excellent/Good	.361	
Personal Financial Situation Excellent/Good	.536	
Immigrants take Jobs	.241	
<i>Contact Theory</i>		
Often have Contact with Immigrants Don't Speak English	.583	
Have Friends/Relatives Recent Immigrants	.301	
Perceive Many Recent Immigrants in Area	.432	
Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics		Min/Max
Male	.504	
Age	.434	18.0 – 93.0
Education	4.38	1.0 – 7.0
Income	5.16	1.0 – 9.0
White	.758	
Hispanic	.127	
Democrat	.360	
Independent	.313	
Political Views	2.86	1.0 – 5.0
U.S. Born	.866	

Findings

Descriptive Findings: Dependent Variables

Regarding our dependent measures, a slight majority, 52%, feels that illegal immigrants should be required to go home. About 43% of respondents favor changing the constitution so that parents must be legal residents for their children to be citizens. About 68% feel that illegal immigrants should not be eligible for social services. Finally, 26% feel that the children of illegal immigrants should not be permitted to attend public school.

Descriptive Findings: Independent Variables

In terms of respondents' religious affiliations, about 11% are Black Protestant, 18% are Evangelical Protestant, and 22% are some other form of Protestant. Twenty-eight percent are Catholic and 12% are non-religious. Regarding religious behavior, about 38% of respondents attend church weekly or more. Considering nativism and cultural threat, about 48% of respondents feel that immigrants threaten American values and culture and about 51% feel America should be protected from foreign influence. Regarding economic conditions, about 36% of respondents feel that the country's economic situation is excellent or good. Roughly 54% feel that their personal financial situation is excellent or good. About 24% feel that immigrants take jobs away from American citizens. Finally, in assessing contact with immigrants, approximately 58% report that they often come in contact with immigrants who do not speak English. About 30% have friends or relatives who are recent immigrants. Roughly 43% of respondents perceive many recent immigrants to their area.

Descriptive Findings: Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Half (50%) of the sample respondents are male, the average age is 43, has had some education beyond high school (4.38), and earns roughly \$50,000 per year (5.16). About 76% are White and roughly 13% are Hispanic. Thirty-six percent claim a Democratic political affiliation while 31% consider themselves Independent. The average respondent falls between moderate and conservative (2.86) on the five-point scale of political ideology. Finally, nearly 87% were born in the U.S.

Logistic Regressions

Table 2 presents the logistic regression results for those who feel illegal immigrants should be required to go home. In terms of religious affiliation, Evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely (1.338) than others to desire that illegal immigrants return home. Regarding religious behavior, those who attend church weekly or more are significantly less likely (.837) to feel that immigrants should return home. Our measures of cultural threat and nativism both show significance with the dependent variable. Those who feel that newcomers threaten American values (1.779) and those who feel that American life should be protected from foreign influence (2.444) are more likely to feel that immigrants should be required to go home.

Two of our three economic measures are predictors. Those who feel that the economy is doing well (.881) are less likely to want immigrants to return home. Those who feel that immigrants take jobs from citizens (3.944) are nearly four times as likely as those who do not

feel this way to desire that immigrants return home. One's personal financial situation has no effect on this sentiment. Regarding contact and group threat measures, only one, if the respondent has a friend or family member who is a recent immigrant, shows any relationship to the dependent variable. Those who have a family or friend who is an immigrant (.831) are less likely to feel they should return home. On our control variables, gender, age, and level of education are not predictors. However, those with higher income levels (1.034), Whites (1.312), and the U.S. born (1.267) are more likely to desire a return home for immigrants. Hispanics (.220), Democrats (.682), Independents (.791), and those who consider themselves more liberal politically (.749) are less likely than their counterparts to feel this way.

Table 2. *Illegal Immigrants Should Return Home (Logistic Regression)*

Measure (n = 3,748)	Odds-Ratio	Standard Errors
<i>Religious Traditions</i>		
Black Protestant	1.147	.137
Evangelical Protestant	1.338**	.114
Other Protestant	1.171	.107
Catholic	1.033	.104
Non-religious	1.046	.118
<i>Religious Commitment</i>		
Weekly or More Church Attendance	.837**	.062
<i>Nativism & Cultural Threat</i>		
Immigrants threaten values and culture	1.779***	.060
America should be protected from foreign influence	2.444***	.060
<i>Economic Conditions</i>		
Country in Excellent/Good Economic Condition	.881*	.062
Personal Financial Situation Excellent/Good	.882	.064
Immigrants take Jobs	3.944***	.074
<i>Contact Theory</i>		
Contact with Immigrants Don't Speak English	.981	.059
Have Friends/Relatives Recent Immigrants	.831**	.064
Recent Immigrants in Area	1.065	.059
<i>Controls</i>		
Male	1.058	.056
Age	.997	.002
Education	1.026	.019
Income	1.034*	.015
White	1.312**	.093
Hispanic	.220***	.114
Democrat	.682***	.075
Independent	.791**	.072
Political Views	.749***	.033
U.S. Born	1.267*	.102
Nagelkerke R Square		.357

***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05

Table 3. Favor Changing Constitution so Parents must be Legal Residents in Order for Newborn Child to be Citizen (Logistic Regression)

Measure (n = 3,887)	Odds-Ratio	Standard Errors
<i>Religious Traditions</i>		
Black Protestant	.891	.128
Evangelical Protestant	1.117	.105
Other Protestant	1.178	.100
Catholic	1.092	.097
Non-religious	1.116	.112
<i>Religious Commitment</i>		
Weekly or More Church Attendance	.953	.056
<i>Nativism & Cultural Threat</i>		
Immigrants threaten values and culture	1.798***	.056
America should be protected from foreign influence	1.909***	.055
<i>Economic Conditions</i>		
Country's Economic Condition	.969	.057
Personal Financial Situation	.977	.059
Immigrants take Jobs	1.938***	.062
<i>Contact Theory</i>		
Contact with Immigrants Don't Speak English	1.209**	.054
Have Friends/Relatives Recent Immigrants	.849**	.059
Recent Immigrants in Area	1.233***	.053
<i>Controls</i>		
Male	.951	.052
Age	1.005**	.002
Education	.977	.018
Income	1.062***	.014
White	1.071	.086
Hispanic	.463***	.103
Democrat	.738***	.068
Independent	.840**	.065
Political Views	.853***	.030
U.S. Born	1.078	.094
Nagelkerke R Square		.204

***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05

Table 3 presents the logistic regression findings for those who feel there should be a constitutional amendment requiring that parents be legal residents before their children born here can gain citizenship. In terms of religious tradition there is no relationship between tradition and feelings about a constitutional amendment. Likewise, church attendance has no bearing on this question. Cultural threat and nativism each show a relationship with this outcome. Those who feel that immigrants threaten American values (1.798) and those who feel that America should be protected from foreign influence (1.909) are more likely to support the idea of a constitutional amendment. Regarding the economic measures, those

who feel that immigrants take jobs (1.938) are more likely to feel there should be a constitutional change. Feelings about the economy overall and one's own personal economic situation are not related. All our measures of contact and group threat show significance with the dependent measure. Those who report frequent contact with immigrants who don't speak English (1.209) and those who feel there are many new immigrants to their area (1.233) are more likely to support a constitutional change. Those who have family or friends who are recent immigrants (.849) are less likely to feel this way.

Table 4. *Illegal Immigrants Should Not be Eligible for Social Services (Logistic Regression)*

Measure (n = 1,934)	Odds-Ratio	Standard Errors
<i>Religious Traditions</i>		
Black Protestant	1.046	.188
Evangelical Protestant	2.054***	.177
Other Protestant	1.753***	.158
Catholic	1.407*	.149
Non-religious	1.276	.163
<i>Religious Commitment</i>		
Weekly or More Church Attendance	.821**	.094
<i>Nativism & Cultural Threat</i>		
Immigrants threaten values and culture	2.231***	.096
America should be protected from foreign influence	1.915***	.093
<i>Economic Conditions</i>		
Country's Economic Condition	1.042	.091
Personal Financial Situation	.932	.096
Immigrants take Jobs	2.114***	.114
<i>Contact Theory</i>		
Contact with Immigrants Don't Speak English	1.090	.088
Have Friends/Relatives Recent Immigrants	.564***	.091
Recent Immigrants in Area	.951	.087
<i>Controls</i>		
Male	1.196*	.085
Age	.999	.003
Education	1.110***	.028
Income	1.060**	.022
White	1.365*	.128
Hispanic	.230***	.152
Democrat	.434***	.117
Independent	.430***	.114
Political Views	.790***	.047
U.S. Born	1.764***	.142
Nagelkerke R Square		.381

***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05

Several of our control measures show a relationship to the dependent measure. Those who are older (1.005) and those with higher levels of income (1.062) are more likely to

support a constitutional amendment limiting citizenship. Hispanics (.463), Democrats (.738), Independents (.840), and those with a more liberal political ideology (.853) are less likely to support such a change.

Table 4 presents the logistic regression findings for those who feel that immigrants should not be eligible for social services. In terms of religious tradition, Evangelical Protestants (2.054), other Protestants (1.753), and Catholics (1.407) are more likely than Black Protestants, the non-religious, and other religions to feel that immigrants should not be eligible for social services. However, those who attend church weekly or more (.821) are less likely to feel this way. Those who feel that immigrants threaten American values (2.231) and those who feel that America should be protected from foreign influence (1.915) are more likely to feel that immigrants should not be able to access social services. On our economic measures, only those who feel that immigrants take jobs (2.114) feel that immigrants should be ineligible for social services. Feelings about the overall economy or one's own financial circumstances show no relationship to this measure.

Regarding contact with immigrants, those who have a friend or family member who is a recent immigrant (.564) are less likely to feel that immigrants should be excluded from social services. Other contact with non-English speaking immigrants and perception of immigrants in the area show no relationship. All of our control measures, except age, are significant in the model. Males (1.196), those with higher levels of education (1.110), those with higher levels of income (1.060), Whites (1.365), and the U.S. born (1.764) are more likely to feel immigrants should not have access to social services. On the other hand, Hispanics (.230), Democrats (.434), Independents (.430), and those who tend toward a more liberal political ideology (.790) are less likely to feel this way.

Table 5 presents the logistic regression predicting opposition to public school attendance for the children of illegal immigrants. None of the religious tradition measures show a relationship to this measure. However, those who attend church weekly or more (.769) are significantly less likely to support this idea. Cultural threat and nativism are significant predictors of attitudes about school attendance for immigrant children. Those who feel immigrants are a cultural threat (1.609) and those who feel that America should be protected from foreign influence (1.932) are significantly likely to feel that immigrant children should not be able to attend public school. Regarding economic concerns, those who feel that the country's economic conditions are poor (1.203) and those who feel immigrants take jobs (2.463) are more likely than those who do share these views, to feel that children of illegal immigrants should be excluded from public schools.

On the question of group threat and contact, those who perceive many new immigrants to their area (1.217) are more likely than those who do not to feel children should be excluded from public school. The measures for those who have contact with non-English speaking immigrants and those who have friends or relatives who are recent immigrants show no relationship to the dependent measure. Most of our control measures show a significant relationship to the dependent variable. Males (1.221), those with higher levels of education (1.081), those with higher levels of income (1.076), and those born in the U.S. (1.554) are more likely to support the idea of excluding the children of illegal immigrants

from public schools. Hispanics (.340), Democrats (.706), Independents (.745), and those leaning toward a more liberal political perspective (.836) are less likely to endorse this idea.

Table 5. Children of Illegal Immigrants Should Not be Permitted to Attend Public Schools (Logistic Regression)

Measure (n = 1,936)	Odds-Ratio	Standard Errors
<i>Religious Traditions</i>		
Black Protestant	.951	.218
Evangelical Protestant	.829	.166
Other Protestant	1.240	.157
Catholic	1.326	.155
Non-religious	1.287	.181
<i>Religious Commitment</i>		
Weekly or More Church Attendance	.769**	.092
<i>Nativism & Cultural Threat</i>		
Immigrants threaten values and culture	1.609***	.091
America should be protected from foreign influence	1.932***	.093
<i>Economic Conditions</i>		
Country's Economic Condition	1.203*	.094
Personal Financial Situation	1.015	.096
Immigrants take Jobs	2.477***	.095
<i>Contact Theory</i>		
Contact with Immigrants Don't Speak English	1.000	.088
Have Friends/Relatives Recent Immigrants	0.994	.098
Recent Immigrants in Area	1.217*	.086
<i>Controls</i>		
Male	1.221*	.083
Age	.998	.003
Education	1.081**	.030
Income	1.076**	.022
White	1.074	.148
Hispanic	.340***	.198
Democrat	.706**	.110
Independent	.745**	.106
Political Views	.836***	.050
U.S. Born	1.554**	.168
Nagelkerke R Square		.203

***p< .001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Discussion and Conclusion

On the question of religion and its influence on attitudes toward social justice for immigrants, we have demonstrated that, indeed, religion is an important consideration in shaping public opinion on this important issue. However, that relationship is nuanced such that identifying with a particular religion is not the same as religious behavior when it comes

to welcoming strangers. While religious affiliation shows a relationship to sentiments about requiring illegal immigrants to return home and restricting their access to social services, it is not related to feelings about changing the constitution or permitting the children of immigrants to attend public schools. On these issues, those who claim one of the more dominant Christian affiliations are no different from those with other religious affiliations or the non-religious. It should be noted, however, that on the question of immigrants returning home, Evangelical Protestants stand out in their support of this measure. Likewise, while all major traditions, except for Black Protestants, feel illegal immigrants should not be eligible for social services, Evangelicals are the most likely to feel this way. These findings lend some support to the ethnoreligious perspective (Guth et al.) as affiliation does seem to matter on the question of immigration policy.

The religious restructuring perspective (Wuthnow) also contributes to our understanding of attitudes toward immigrant policy. Notably, regular church attendance predicts support for those measures that would facilitate social justice for immigrants. Compared to those who attend services less frequently or not at all, those who attend church weekly or more are less likely to support measures to send immigrants home, less likely to feel immigrants should be prohibited from accessing social services, and less likely to feel the children of immigrants should be kept from attending public schools. It appears that church attendance, rather than just affiliation, affects people of faith in a way that would promote fairness in the treatment of immigrants. It is likely that regular service attendance ensures that scriptural edicts about welcoming and assisting those in need are being heard and internalized. As Hondagneu-Sotelo argues, the shared rituals and collective practices within religion can generate communal responses from adherents oriented toward justice and social change (2008). Professing allegiance to a particular tradition, without engagement in a community of believers, may simply not be enough to receive scriptural pronouncements regarding those in need.

Religion is clearly an important factor influencing public opinion. Additionally, nativism and cultural threat are prominent predictors of opposition to social justice in every model. Concerns that immigrants take jobs is the strongest predictor, in all models, of resistance to procedural and distributive justice. Our findings are in line with previous literature (Ceobanu and Escandell; Chandler and Tsai; Garcia and Bass; O'Neil and Tienda).

Despite the resistance to immigrant-related policy based on cultural and economic concerns, our study demonstrates a clear relationship between contact with immigrants and support for social justice measures. In every model, at least one measure of social contact predicts less support for punitive approaches to the treatment of undocumented immigrants. In this vein, people of faith may be able to play an integral role in reducing prejudices and fears about “the stranger.” Places of worship can play a welcoming and supportive role for newcomers at the same time they expose adherents and surrounding communities to immigrants. This can reduce prejudice and also facilitate assimilation of immigrants. Indeed, previous research has established that faith communities can “soften the landing” of immigrants by reducing violence directed toward them (Shihadeh and Winters), facilitating integration and assimilation (Bankston and Zhou), and even engaging in social and political activism alongside immigrants (Kotin et al.).

Permitting undocumented immigrants to remain in this country to pursue their goals and dreams, providing them with access to social services that are often much needed due to their economic marginalization, and ensuring their children have access to public education can go far toward the goal of justice that Rawls and others have articulated. Indeed, individuals and communities can partner with immigrants toward these ends, particularly those who feel their religious values summon them to do so. This study affirms the important role faith communities can play when it comes to welcoming the stranger.

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