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Not Just a National Issue: Effect of State-Level Reception of Immigrants and Population Changes on Intergroup Attitudes of Whites, Latinos, and Asians in the United States

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National discourse about immigration in the United States has become increasingly unwelcoming. In two studies, we examine whether regional-level (state) information about welcoming (vs. unwelcoming) immigrant policies in the context of either stable or increasing rate of immigration can influence intergroup relations in receiving communities. Among Whites (Study 1), welcoming policy proposals elicited more positive attitudes toward immigrants generally and toward Latinos, the ethnic group most closely associated with immigration in the United States, but only when rate of immigration is constant. In contrast, among Latinos (Study 2), an unwelcoming reception led to more positive attitudes toward immigrants (legal and undocumented) but again only when rate of immigration is constant. Asians' attitudes (Study 2) toward immigrants were not affected by contextual information about immigration. Together, these findings suggest that

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local conditions can affect community members' attitudes toward immigrants and toward specific ethnic groups associated with immigration.

In the United States, current national discourse about immigration is polarized. The controversy has escalated in part due to President Donald Trump's efforts to utilize federal action in the United States to increase deportation of undocumented immigrants, ban individuals from Muslim nations, and impose a family separation policy to deter migrants (including asylum seekers) from crossing the border into the country. However, focusing attention on federal policies risks overlooking the potential influence of the growing number of regional programs and policies (see also Silka, 2018). While some are aligned with federal policies designed to deter immigrants, others instead welcome immigrants into receiving communities (Steil & Vasi, 2014). For example, some states and cities have responded to federal efforts to limit immigration by enacting laws to support and protect immigrants and by refusing to assist in enforcing federal immigration laws (sanctuary cities).

Two studies investigated how state policies and conditions can influence U.S. residents' attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic groups closely associated with immigration. In particular, we examine the influence of information about regional norms around immigrant reception (state policy proposals to either welcome or deter immigrants) and rate of immigration into the state among Whites (Study 1) and among Latinos and Asians (Study 2). This approach offers a more comprehensive perspective on responses to immigration in two ways. One way is by illuminating the separate and joint effects of local norms and changing demographics on responses to social groups differing in the degree to which they are associated with the current immigration rhetoric. The other way is by considering the views of groups that are either associated with the host society (Whites) or with one of the two fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States yet differ substantially in their current economic and social status (Latinos and Asians).

Potential of Local Policies to Shape Intergroup Attitudes

The United States will, before mid-century, become a plurality nation in which no one racial or ethnic group constitutes the majority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This demographic shift began after the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act that opened the door to large numbers of arrivals from Latin America and Asia in the ensuing decades. Not surprisingly, immigration issues have occupied a prominent role in current political discourse and dominated the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Discussions focus on whether U.S. immigration policies should be more restrictive, what is the most effective way to secure U.S. borders, and what to do about the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the United States

through national policy (e.g., Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA) and through law enforcement. In the context of the Trump administration's adoption of national policies to deter immigrants and to slow down immigration into the United States, including a zero-tolerance policy resulting in the separation of children from migrant parents, it is important to examine whether local policies, which range from unwelcoming to welcoming, can play a role in shaping American residents' attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic groups associated with immigration (e.g., Latinos). State level immigration policies and programs have proliferated in the last two decades from nearly zero in 2000 to a high of 490 in 2012 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). On the one end is Arizona's SB1070 that requires law enforcement officers to determine individuals' immigration status during a stop or arrest when there is "reasonable suspicion." On the other end are a number of state and citywide policies that, in clear contrast to the unwelcoming tone of federal policies, are designed to welcome immigrants into the community. One notable example is the declaration by California Governor Jerry Brown to make his state an official sanctuary state with policies designed to shield immigrants from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E. agents). At the city level, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel declared that he is "committed to making Chicago the most immigrant-friendly city in the nation" as he unveiled a set of policies in 2012. Many other cities and counties, including Cleveland, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Santa Clara (CA), have similarly adopted programs that focus on immigrant integration and offering a welcoming environment for these newcomers.

Effect of State Immigrant Reception and Rate of Immigration on Whites, Latinos, and Asians

The current research utilized an experimental paradigm in which individuals were presented with information (a policy proposal) that reflects either a welcoming or an unwelcoming reception of immigrants in their state to test whether state-based policies affect people's intergroup attitudes and experiences. Individuals were also presented with information about rate of immigration into the state (increasing vs. stable). High rates of demographic change in a community brought about by immigration can influence how people think about newcomers (Hopkins, 2010; Koc & Anderson, 2018) and either offset or exacerbate the influence of local policies about immigrant reception. The effect of these two factors on individuals' perceptions of social groups including immigrants was then assessed across three U.S. ethnic groups: Whites, Latinos, and Asians. Whereas Whites are still the numerical majority in the United States, Latinos and Asians represent the two fastest growing ethnic groups due in large part to recent immigration patterns. We expected that the effect of exposure to information about immigrant reception on individuals' intergroup attitudes would depend on whether they are part of the

majority group (Whites) or ethnic minority groups associated with immigration in the United States (Latinos and Asians).

Whites' Response to Immigration Conditions in the State

State policies about immigrant reception can communicate norms about how immigrants should be treated. Past research show that perceptions of norms can shape intergroup attitudes among dominant social groups including White Americans (Crandall & Stangor, 2005; Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005). Thus, we hypothesized that a welcoming reception would elicit more positive attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic groups associated with immigration (e.g., Latinos, Asians, and Muslims) among Whites. Moreover, because people are more affected by norms relating to intergroup relations communicated by others who are more closely associated with them (Paluck, 2011), even against the backdrop of national discourse and policies that strongly discourage immigration, normative information conveyed by more welcoming policies at the state level may influence intergroup attitudes (see also Kotzur, Tropp, & Wagner, 2018; Silka, 2018).

Another key piece of information that can affect Whites' intergroup attitudes in response to immigration is rate of immigration. Past research found that information about national demographic shifts that threatened Whites' status as the majority ethnic group elicited more negative attitudes toward Latinos, Asian Americans, and Blacks (Craig & Richeson, 2014) and less tolerance of immigrants (Danbold & Huo, 2015). Because increases in immigration are seen as adding to the growth of the non-White population and threaten Whites' majority status, Whites are likely to respond more negatively when they perceive that immigration is increasing rather than stable (Enos, 2017). Perceptions about the rate of immigration into the state may also moderate the effects of local immigrant reception. As the immigrant population increases, Whites may feel that their group is in competition with immigrants and thus be less positively influenced by information about a welcoming reception for immigrants in their state of residence. Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, and Armstrong (2001) found that after reading a newspaper editorial about the benefits of immigration (vs. a neutral condition), those who perceived relatively low levels of intergroup competition reported more favorable attitudes toward immigrants compared to those who viewed relations with immigrants competitively. These findings indicate that welcoming reception in the state would be less likely to produce positive intergroup attitudes when the rate of immigration is increasing than when it is stable.

Latinos and Asians' Response to Immigration Conditions in the State

Studying how members of minority groups respond to immigration-related factors, in addition to considering how members of the dominant group (Whites)

react, is essential for developing a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of immigration. In previous survey research (Schildkraut, Jiménez, Dovidio, & Huo, 2018), Latinos, regardless of their current citizenship status, who resided in a state with welcoming policies toward immigrants (New Mexico), had a significantly stronger sense of belonging compared to those living in a geographically adjacent state with similar demographics but with unwelcoming policies for immigrants (Arizona). In experimental work (Huo, Dovidio, Jimenez, & Schildkraut, 2018), both Latinos and Whites' sense of belonging were affected by manipulations of future immigrant reception in their state. The present research drew from this experimental paradigm, but instead of belonging as an outcome of interest, as in the prior research, focused on attitudes toward immigrants and other social groups. Furthermore, the current work sampled not only Whites and Latinos but also Asians.

Although Latinos and Asians are well represented in recent waves of immigration to the United States, it is not clear whether responses from members of these two groups would be similar. Among immigrants, there are a greater number originating from Latin America than from Asia, and thus debates about the impact of immigration have focused more on the former than the latter (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015). Moreover, studies show that the explicit association of Latinos with immigration is also reflected in implicit attitudes at the unconscious level (Perez, 2016). Because Latinos are more closely associated with immigration issues than Asian, both in terms of how they are perceived by others and by Latinos and Asians themselves, it is possible that Latinos, compared to Asians, may react more strongly to information about immigration.

Compared to Whites, the effect of information about immigration reception and rate of immigration may be quite different for Latinos and Asians. Whereas information about local reception of immigrants may convey normative information to Whites, for Latinos and Asians, information about an unwelcoming (relative to a welcoming) reception may instead make salient a shared identity with immigrants as potential targets of discrimination. This sense of common identity can enhance the motivation to form alliances among different disadvantaged groups and be reflected in more positive attitudes among Latinos and Asians toward immigrants when presented with information that the state is unwelcoming of immigrants (Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2016). Thus, in contrast to our prediction that Whites would show more positive intergroup attitudes when the reception is welcoming (vs. unwelcoming), especially when immigration is stable, Latinos and Asians may show the opposite effect.

With respect to rate of immigration, learning that immigration is on the rise in the state (vs. stable) could, on the one hand, amplify the positive effect of immigrant reception because it suggests the possibility of a more potent alliance in the future. On the other hand, learning that immigration is increasing may arouse feelings of competition with new immigrants among Latinos and Asians

already residing in the United States. In this latter situation, policies that welcome immigrants may be perceived as threatening and dampen the impact of welcoming reception on Latinos and Asians' attitudes toward immigrants.

Overview of Current Research

We investigated the independent and joint influence of immigration reception and rate of immigration in individuals' state of residence on their intergroup attitudes in two experimental studies. In Study 1, White American residents were recruited nationally. In Study 2, Asian American and Latino American college students were recruited from a large public university in California—a state with 10 million immigrants, about a quarter of the foreign born population in the United States (Johnson & Sanchez, 2018).

Study 1 (White Americans)

Study 1 tested the effect of exposing White Americans, under the guise of a study of news media, to newspaper headlines about immigration in their state of residence that included information about (a) proposed immigrant-reception policies and (b) rate of immigration. The headline about the policy proposal portrayed the state as supporting a policy that was either welcoming or unwelcoming of immigrants. This manipulation conveys information about state-wide orientations—descriptive norms—toward immigrants and immigration. The headline about rate of immigration provided information about whether the number of immigrants settling in the state is on the rise or stable.

Method

Participants. Two-hundred thirty three White Americans, who indicated that they were U. S. citizens, were recruited from a national participant database maintained by the Yale School of Management (57% women; mean age = 41.99 years). The sample size was estimated using G*Power software based on a moderate effect size, $f = .20$, with power = .90.¹

Procedure. To reduce demand characteristics, participants were recruited into a study purportedly about reactions to news headlines and views about related issues. Participants who gave their informed consent were presented with five

¹The power analysis recommended a sample size of 265. We were able to collect data from 261 participants; 28 of whom indicated their ethnicity as "other" rather than "White" and they were eliminated from the analyses.

newspaper headlines (presentation order randomized)—three fillers unrelated to immigration (“Global warming linked to hybrid auto production,” “Missing sailing relic discovered on the floor of the Long Island Sound,” and “Penalties stiffen for drivers who text while driving”) and two that contained the experimental manipulations. In line with the cover story, participants were asked questions about their impressions of each headline (e.g., “Have you seen this headline?”; “How much public interest in the story was generated by the headline?”). Participants then completed a postexperimental questionnaire and were debriefed and thanked.

Experimental design. Each participant was assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (unwelcoming/welcoming reception) \times 2 (increase by 25%/constant rate of immigration) between subject design.

The immigrant reception manipulation was embedded in the news headline below:

[Participants’ home state] *residents rally in favor of proposed policy discouraging [encouraging] local immigration.*

The rate of immigration was manipulated in the news headline below:

Immigrant population in [participant’s home state] expected to increase by 25% [remain constant] over the next two years.

Perceptions of Immigrants and Other Social Groups. We assessed attitudes toward a series of social groups using a feeling thermometer measure that ranged from 1 (*least positive feelings*) to 10 (*most positive feelings*). Participants were asked to rate seven groups: Americans, Whites, legal immigrants, Latinos, Middle Easterners, Asians, and Blacks (order randomized).

Results

We employed 2 \times 2 analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to test the effects of information about immigrant reception and rate of immigration on participants’ perceptions of immigrants and other social groups. As Figure 1a shows, there were no differences across reception conditions in Whites’ feelings toward four of the seven groups: Americans ($p = .406$), Whites ($p = .345$), Asians ($p = .473$), and Blacks ($p = .357$). However, Whites indicated that they felt significantly more positive toward the other three groups in the welcoming compared to the unwelcoming condition: legal immigrants, $M = 6.97$ ($SD = 2.05$) versus $M = 6.38$ ($SD = 1.46$), $F(1,229) = 6.77$, $p = .010$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$; Latinos, $M = 6.32$ ($SD = 2.00$) versus $M = 5.79$ ($SD = 1.66$), $F(1,229) = 5.11$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .022$; and Middle Easterners, $M = 5.26$ ($SD = 2.23$) versus $M = 4.49$ ($SD = 2.08$), $F(1,229) = 7.39$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$.

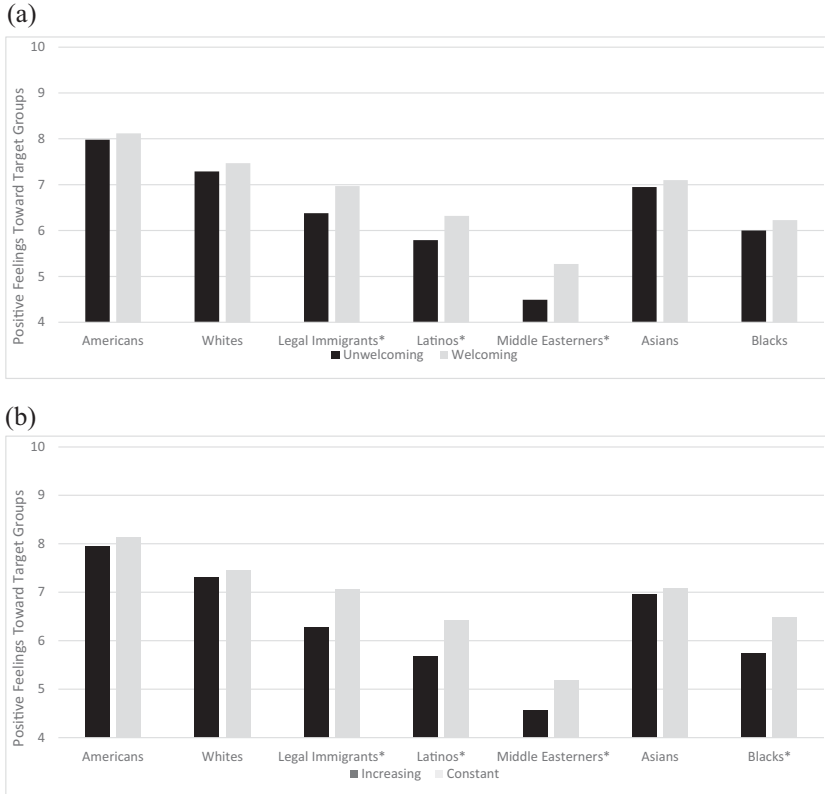


Fig. 1. Effect of (a) immigrant reception and (b) rate of immigration on feelings toward target groups among Whites.

Note. Asterisk (*) in (a) indicates that the means across unwelcoming and welcoming conditions are statistically significant at $p < .05$ for the target group and in (b) indicates that the means across rapid increase and constant conditions are statistically significant at $p < .05$ for the target group.

As Figure 1b shows, there were no main effects in response to headlines about rate of immigration into the state when the targets were Americans ($p = .327$), Whites ($p = .478$), or Asians ($p = .546$). However, we observed significant main effects for rate of immigration when the targets were legal immigrants, $F(1,229) = 12.13, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .050$; Latinos, $F(1,229) = 9.93, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .042$; and Middle Easterners, $F(1,229) = 4.76, p = .030, \eta_p^2 = .020$ (see Figure 1b). When rate of immigration is constant, Whites rated these three groups more positively than when rate of immigration is increasing: legal immigrants, $M = 7.07$ ($SD = 1.64$) versus $M = 6.28$ ($SD = 1.89$); Latinos, $M = 6.42$ ($SD = 1.88$) versus $M = 5.69$ ($SD = 1.76$), and Middle Easterners, $M = 5.19$ ($SD = 2.34$) versus

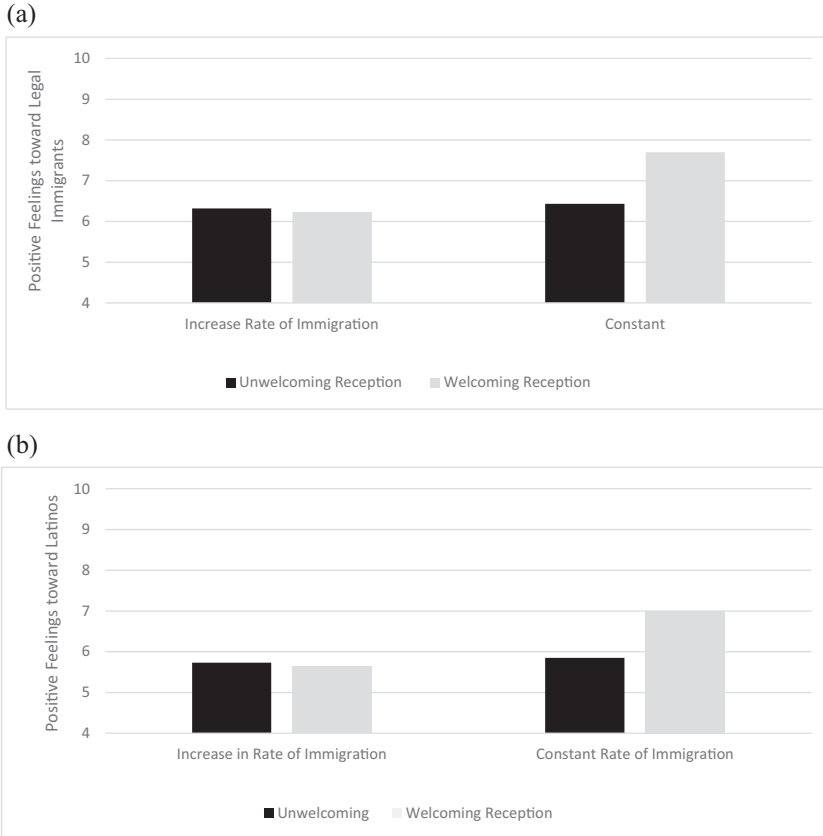


Fig. 2. Effect of immigrant reception and rate of immigration on feelings toward (a) legal immigrants and (b) Latinos among Whites.

$M = 4.57$ ($SD = 2.01$). There was also a significant effect of rate of immigration on feelings toward Blacks, with Whites rating this group more positively when immigration is constant than when it is increasing, $M = 6.48$ ($SD = 2.05$) versus $M = 5.74$ ($SD = 1.85$), $F(1,229) = 8.51$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .036$.

In addition to main effects, there were also significant interactions between immigrant reception and rate of immigration on evaluations of two target groups: legal immigrants, $F(1,229) = 8.92$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .037$ and Latinos, $F(1, 229) = 7.03$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .030$.

As Figure 2a shows, when rate of immigration was constant, Whites evaluated legal immigrants more favorably when reception was welcoming versus unwelcoming, $M = 7.70$ ($SD = 1.38$) versus $M = 6.43$ ($SD = 1.67$),

$F(1,229) = 15.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .149$. In contrast, when immigration was presented as increasing, there was no effect for whether reception was welcoming or not, $M = 6.23$ ($SD = 2.32$) versus $M = 6.32$ ($SD = 2.24$), $p = .780$. The interaction effect was similar for Whites' responses to Latinos (Figure 2b). When the rate of immigration was constant, Whites rated Latinos more favorably when the reception was welcoming versus unwelcoming, $M = 7.00$ ($SD = 1.71$) versus $M = 5.85$ ($SD = 1.90$), $F(1,229) = 11.72, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .094$. However, when the rate of immigration was presented as increasing, there was no effect for whether the reception was welcoming or not, $M = 5.64$ ($SD = 2.03$) versus $M = 5.73$ ($SD = 1.41$), $p = .778$. In contrast to the findings regarding ratings of legal immigrants and Latinos, there were no significant interactions for Whites' ratings of Americans ($p = .304$), Whites ($p = .999$), Middle Easterners ($p = .740$), Asians ($p = .150$), and Blacks ($p = .326$).

Discussion

Study 1 assessed Whites' attitudes toward a number of social groups in response to information that their state was considering a policy that is either welcoming or unwelcoming toward immigrants and whether the rate of immigration in their state is constant or increasing. When led to believe that legislators in their state of residence are advocating for policies that welcome immigrants, Whites responded more positively toward legal immigrants and Latinos. Similarly, when participants were told that the rate of immigration in their state is constant, Whites responded more positively toward legal immigrants and Latinos. The parallel effects for immigrants and Latinos are not surprising given evidence of the strong association Americans hold of immigrants with Latinos (Perez, 2016). Even among the U.S. born, Latinos are likely to be impacted by immigration policies because of personal connections to immigrants and that they, themselves, may be mistaken for and treated as immigrants by law enforcement (Serrano-Careaga & Huo, 2018).

In addition, our findings reveal that while Whites evaluate legal immigrants and Latinos more positively when the state norm is to welcome rather than deter immigrants, this effect is limited to when the rate of immigration is stable. In contrast, when told that immigration is increasing, the positive effect of welcoming reception dissipates. Thus, while welcoming reception may lead to more positive attitudes toward legal immigrants and Latinos, the influence of these policies may not extend to communities that are facing the challenges associated with a rapid influx of newcomers. These findings are consistent with past research demonstrating that those who view intergroup relations in a competitive, zero-sum way are not as affected by the influence of positive information about the effects of immigration (Esses et al., 2001).

Notably, neither immigrant reception nor rate of immigration affected views toward another ethnic group that, like Latinos, comprises of significant proportion of immigrants—Asians. While a group smaller in number than Latinos, Asians represent the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017). Consistent with the notion that Asians in the United States are commonly viewed as the “model minority” (Lee & Zhou, 2015), our findings reveal that Asians were one of the most favorably evaluated groups, behind only Americans and Whites. The finding that local reception led to changes in views about Latinos but not Asians suggest again that concerns about the effects of immigration focus more strongly on Latinos.

Also of interest is that while the effects of our manipulations did not generalize to Asians, they did extend to Middle Easterners. Although Middle Easterners represent only a small percentage of U.S. immigrants, they are a highly salient social group. Given the context of the 9–11 attack and the continued U.S. military efforts in predominately Muslim nations in the Middle East, White Americans may view Middle Easterners as a potentially threatening immigrant group (Yglesias, 2018)—a view that was implicated in President Trump’s attempts to institute a “Muslim ban” limiting immigration, and even travel, to the United States. Among the groups that participants rated in Study 1, Middle Easterners were evaluated the most negatively overall.

Because Blacks are not generally associated with immigration to the United States, we did not expect to obtain effects on evaluations of Blacks as a function of our experimental manipulations. However, we found that our manipulation of the rate of immigration (but not of the reception of immigrants) affected Whites’ evaluations of Blacks. While we did not anticipate this effect, this result is consistent with findings showing that presenting Whites with information that they will soon no longer be the numerical majority group in the United States increased prejudice toward Blacks, as well as Latinos (but unlike our findings, also toward Asians; Craig & Richeson, 2014). Rate of immigration may have elicited feelings of group-based threat (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Danbold & Huo, 2015; Knowles & Tropp, 2018) leading to more negative attitudes toward not only immigrants but also other disadvantaged social groups. In contrast, immigrant reception is less likely to elicit perceptions of threat posed by Blacks, a minority group not generally associated with immigration in the United States.

Study 2 (Latino Americans and Asian Americans)

Study 2 employed the same experimental design and paradigm as Study 1. However, the participants were Latino and Asian Americans. In Study 1, we found that a welcoming reception led to more positive attitudes toward immigrants among Whites presumably through the policy’s communication of norms about how immigrants should be treated. In contrast, for ethnic minority groups associated with

immigration in the United States, especially Latinos, an unwelcoming reception, may elicit more positive attitudes toward immigrants compared with a welcoming reception through activating a sense of shared identity with immigrants as potential targets of discrimination (Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2016). As with Study 1, we tested whether the effect of state immigrant reception would be moderated by rate of immigration into the state. Similar to Whites' reactions to rapid increase of immigrants, Latino and Asians' response to welcoming (versus unwelcoming) reception may be dampened by perceptions of a rapid influx of immigrants into the state. In addition, we explored whether the independent and joint effects of these two factors would be more evident among Latinos, who are widely perceived as more closely tied to immigration concerns in the United States than are Asians. Because of the complexities of intraminority relations, in Study 2, we focus on Latinos and Asians' attitudes toward immigrants—legal and undocumented, and not toward other social groups.

Method

Participants. Two-hundred eight-six Latino American and 383 Asian American students from a large public university in the West Coast were recruited into the study (71% women; mean age = 20.58 years). Eighty two percent were U.S. born. Participants who completed the study were credited with \$5.00 to their student account. As with Study 1, we estimated a sample size of 265 for each ethnic group using G*Power software for moderate effect size, $f = .20$, with power = .90. Participants were recruited via an email message from the university registrar's office followed by one reminder email. Sample size was checked daily, and the online study was held open until the target sample size was met or exceeded for each ethnic group.

Procedure and experimental design. As in Study 1, participants were recruited into a study ostensibly about reactions to news headlines. Embedded between the filler headlines were headlines that contained the experimental manipulations of immigrant reception (unwelcoming or welcoming) and rate of immigration (increasing or constant) in their state.

Perceptions of legal and undocumented immigrants. Using a feeling thermometer we assessed attitudes toward two immigrant groups—legal immigrants and undocumented immigrants (1 = *least positive feeling*; 10 = *most positive feelings*).

Results

Again, ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effect of our manipulations on perceptions of legal and undocumented immigrants first for Latinos and then for Asians.

Latinos.

Perceptions of legal immigrants. When assessing Latinos' feelings toward legal immigrants, the main effect for immigrant reception was not significant, $F(1,206) = .007, p = .932, \eta_p^2 = .000$. The main effect for rate of immigration was marginally significant, $F(1,206) = 3.90, p = .050, \eta_p^2 = .019$. However, there was a significant interaction between immigrant reception and rate of immigration, $F(1, 206) = 6.91, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .032$. As Figure 3a shows, there was a marginally significant effect of reception when rate of immigration was constant, $F(1,206) = 3.46, p = .064, \eta_p^2 = .017$, such that Latinos reported more positive feelings toward legal immigrants when reception was unwelcoming ($M = 8.49, SD = 1.64$) than when it was welcoming ($M = 7.83, SD = 2.08$). There was also a marginally significant effect of reception when immigration was on the rise but in the opposite direction, $F(1,206) = 3.45, p = .065, \eta_p^2 = .016$, such that Latinos reported less positive feelings toward immigrants when reception was unwelcoming ($M = 7.29, SD = 2.02$) than when it was welcoming ($M = 8.00, SD = 1.74$).

Perceptions of undocumented immigrants. We next conducted analysis on Latinos' attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. The pattern of findings generally parallels that of attitudes toward legal immigrants. The main effect for immigrant reception was not significant, $F(1,206) = 2.45, p = .118, \eta_p^2 = .012$. However, there was a significant main effect for rate of immigration, $F(1,206) = 5.62, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .027$. Importantly, there was a significant interaction between reception and rate of immigration, $F(1,206) = 14.10, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .064$. As Figure 3b shows, there was a significant effect of reception when rate of immigration was constant, $F(1,206) = 15.17, p < .000, \eta_p^2 = .069$, such that Latinos reported more positive feelings toward undocumented immigrants when reception was unwelcoming ($M = 8.32, SD = 1.58$) than when it was welcoming ($M = 6.68, SD = 2.77$). The effect of reception when immigration was on the rise, while not significant, $F(1,206) = 2.24, p = .136, \eta_p^2 = .011$, was similar to the findings for evaluations of legal immigrants under the same conditions with less positive feelings toward undocumented immigrants when reception was unwelcoming than when it was welcoming.

Asians. We conducted similar analysis on whether the experimental manipulations affected Asians' attitudes toward legal and undocumented immigrants. In neither case were we able to replicate the interaction between immigrant

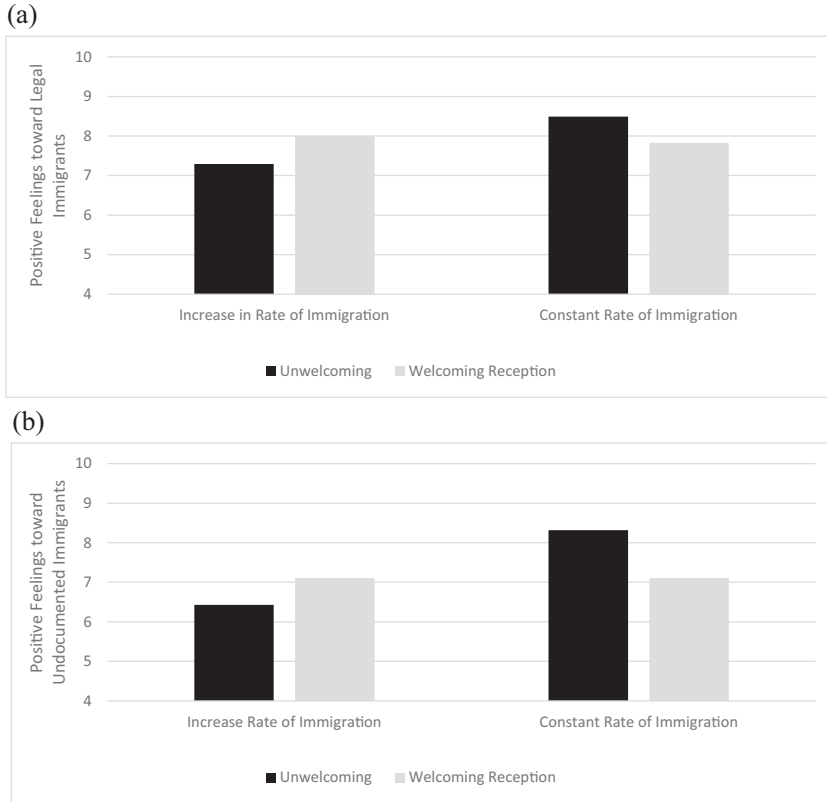


Fig. 3. Effect of immigrant reception and rate of immigration on feelings toward (a) legal immigrants and (b) undocumented immigrants among Latinos.

reception and rate of immigration observed for Latinos. Moreover, the only main effect approaching significance was for rate of immigration on attitudes toward legal immigrants, $F(1,285) = 3.65$, $p = .057$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$, such that Asians in the constant rate condition reported more positive feelings toward legal immigrants ($M = 7.40$, $SD = 2.01$) than did those in the immigration increase condition ($M = 6.97$, $SD = 1.73$).

Discussion

Study 2's findings shed light on how Latinos and Asians in the United States respond to contextual information about immigration in their state of residence. Similar to the findings with Whites in Study 1, we found that Latinos are also

sensitive to proposals for how immigrants should be received and that this effect is moderated by rate of immigration. However, the pattern of the effect is the opposite of what was found in Study 1. Study 2 findings show that when the rate of immigration is stable, Latinos reported more positive attitudes when the reception is unwelcoming than when it is welcoming. While we did not assess Latinos' perceptions of their relationship or common identity with immigrants, the findings for Latinos are consistent with work showing that perceiving a shared experience as the target of discrimination leads to more positive attitudes toward other disadvantaged groups (Cortland et al., 2017).

From legal and practical standpoints, Asians, along with Latinos, should be affected by information and discussion about immigration. However, we did not find evidence in support of this line of thinking. Instead, contextual information about immigration did not affect our Asian participants' feelings toward immigrants (legal or undocumented). It is notable that our study included a slightly larger sample of Asians than of Latinos.

General Discussion

The current work sought to examine how local immigration policies and conditions affect residents' views of immigrants and other social groups. Findings from the two studies demonstrate that when presented with information about immigrant reception policies and rate of immigration in their state of residence, Whites, Latinos, and Asians respond in distinct ways. Among Whites, when rate of immigration is stable, a welcoming reception in the state elicits a more positive response toward immigrants and toward the ethnic group most closely associated with immigrants in the United States, Latinos. In contrast, among Latinos, when rate of immigration is stable, an unwelcoming reception leads to more favorable attitudes toward immigrants (legal and undocumented) than a welcoming reception. These distinct patterns of findings for Whites and Latinos suggest that while both groups are sensitive to local conditions relevant to immigrants and immigration, how they react to the information reflects their group's respective standing in the U.S. nationally.

Whites, currently the majority ethnic group and the social-politically dominant group, may perceive state policies to welcome immigrants as communicating norms suggesting that they too should embrace immigrants. In contrast, Latinos are especially vigilant of information indicating that their state of residence does not welcome immigrants. For this group, unwelcoming immigrant reception may serve as an alert that they, too, are vulnerable to social biases. Thus, in contrast to Whites who report more positive attitudes toward immigrants when their state is welcoming of immigrants, Latinos report more positive attitudes when their state is unwelcoming. Notably, these effects occur only in the context of information that the rate of immigration into the state has

stabilized. When the rate of immigration is presented as increasing, Whites reported overall less positive feelings toward immigrants regardless of immigrant reception. Latinos also reported less positive feelings toward immigrants when rate of immigration is increasing especially when local reception is unwelcoming. Much of the work showing that increases in immigration are associated with greater support for restrictive immigration policies (e.g., Enos, 2017; Hopkins, 2010) has focused primarily on the responses of Whites. Our finding that Latinos also respond to rate of immigration suggests that the threat posed by new waves of immigrants is experienced by groups beyond the majority group (Whites; Craig & Richeson, 2014; Danbold & Huo, 2015; Knowles & Tropp, 2018).

The finding that Latinos' attitudes toward immigrants vary depending on local reception of immigrants and rate of immigration in a way that is distinct from Whites' responses is provocative. Our current work was not designed to reveal the underlying mechanism, but these findings point to the need to further unpack Latinos' response to information about immigration in their home state. One possibility is that the experimental conditions may have exerted their effects through priming different social identities (i.e., American identity and ethnic identity). Learning of the state's unwelcoming stance toward immigrants may have activated Latinos' ethnic identity, and their subsequent embrace of immigrants may be an effort to signal ethnic affiliation and allegiance. In contrast, when the rate of immigration was presented as rapidly increasing, which may arouse status threat among those already residing in the United States, Latinos' American identity may instead have been activated and elicited attitudes toward immigrants in line with the dominant norms of the state (welcoming or unwelcoming).

The different findings between the two ethnic minority groups in Study 2—Latinos and Asians—highlight important nuances in responses to immigration issues. Individuals from Latin America and from Asia together account for the large majority of immigrants currently in the United States. Yet, our results related to these two groups diverge. Latinos are affected by contextual information about immigration, which shapes their own attitudes toward immigrants and also Whites' attitudes toward Latinos. In contrast, information related to immigration did not affect Whites' attitudes toward Asians. This information also did not influence Asians' views of immigrants. A valuable line of inquiry in future research would be to systematically explore why Asians, a group with high immigrant representation, appear to be buffered from the impact of immigration conditions both as perceivers of immigrants and as the target of Whites' evaluations of their ethnic group. One possible explanation for these findings is that Asians, like Whites and Latinos, view the current discourse of immigration as linked most closely to migrants from Latin America. This explanation can be directly tested in future work by systematically varying the social groups (Latinos and Asians) targeted by specific immigration policies. If an immigration policy disproportionately affects

the Asian community in the United States (e.g., family reunification and foreign student visas) rather than left unspecified, Asians may respond more strongly to the policy and whether the policy sends a message of welcome.

Policy Implications

An implication of our work is that, beyond national policies on immigration, local policies, such as at the state level, can also play a role in shaping people's views toward immigrants and ethnic groups closely associated with immigration. While the media heavily covers immigration nationally, there is much less attention given to trends in states and cities to establish programs and policies that directly impact perceptions of immigrants (see <https://www.welcomingamerica.org/>). Local measures that welcome immigrants, in particular, are often motivated by a desire to revive struggling economies but are also framed as humanitarian efforts that sustain the American Dream. Our findings suggest that this growing trend of subnational policies to welcome immigrants is particularly important when the number of immigrants entering the local community has stabilized. Under this condition, welcoming policies at the state and even city level may be able to nudge Whites toward embracing immigrants and other social groups more, and unwelcoming policies may prompt Latinos already residing in the United States to potentially form alliance with new immigrants.

The current work was conducted against the backdrop of a generally hostile climate, nationally, for immigrants in the United States. The potential of local policies to change intergroup attitudes should be more thoroughly assessed in future work that varies contextual information about immigration both at the local level and at the national level. Because they each can communicate norms and arouse feelings of threat, information at the national and state level about immigrant reception and rate of immigration can independently exert systematic influences on response to immigrants. However, what is particularly interesting is when approaches to immigration diverge at the national and state level. As we explained earlier, because people are more affected by norms relating to intergroup relations communicated by others with whom they are more closely associated (Paluck, 2011), how immigrants are received locally may elicit a stronger influence on attitudes toward immigrants among local residents. A fuller test of this hypothesis would require carrying out the existing studies, while systematically varying national discourse about immigration that reflect a message of either welcome or hostility toward immigrants. Such an approach would allow us to test how the effects of local conditions observed in the current work may hold or diminish when, in contrast to the current trend, national policies instead welcome immigrants.

Limitations

The key strength of our studies is the use of experimental methodology. This approach allows us to conclude that the tone of immigrant reception along with information about the rate of immigration systematically changes attitudes toward immigrants and selected ethnic groups in the United States. Moreover, our experimental cues were subtle yet led to predictable variations in responses among participants. Nonetheless, these strengths, viewed in another way, are also limitations of the study approach. The data produced with this methodology do not speak about whether the actual adoption of welcoming policies in local communities will produce behavioral changes consistent with the promotion of positive intergroup relations. Such research is needed and can, for example, draw from public records to examine whether behaviors such as rates of hate crime differ across communities that vary in immigrant reception and rate of immigration.

The nature of the samples in the two studies should be considered in interpreting our results. Comparisons between the responses of Whites to those of Latinos and Asians should be made with some caution, because, although conducted close in time using similar materials and procedures, the data were collected in technically separate studies with respondents with distinct demographic profiles. In addition, White participants in Study 1 were recruited from a convenience (opt-in, online) sample, and the Asians and Latino participants in Study 2 were college students who are likely to deviate in important ways from the corresponding general population of individuals from these ethnic groups. Future research would benefit by using nationally representative samples to test the replicability and generalizability of the findings reported.

Conclusion

The proliferation of responses to immigration in states and cities across the United States create opportunities for residents and leaders to support and enact local policies that can shape relations with immigrants in their communities independent of the current wave of nativist, anti-immigration movement nationally that includes the proposal and adoption of policies designed to deter immigration to the United States. Our findings suggest that when local leaders propose policies to welcome immigrants, they communicate important normative information that immigrants should be viewed favorably. Even when leaders propose local policies that are unwelcoming, they may, inadvertently, alert allies to immigrants such as U.S.-born Latinos about the importance of working together to combat policies that put both immigrants and ethnic groups associated with immigration at risk of biased treatment. Both outcomes, the result of local immigration policies, can contribute to creating more positive conditions for immigrants as they adapt to their new home.

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