Dædalus

Immigration, Nativism & Race in the United States

Douglas S. Massey, guest editor

with Zoltan Hajnal · Michael Hout
Christopher Maggio · Christopher Sebastian Parker
Ellis P. Monk, Jr. · Cecilia Menjívar
César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández
Mary C. Waters · Philip Kasinitz
Roberto G. Gonzales · Stephen P. Ruszczyk
Stephanie L. Canizales · Jody Agius Vallejo
Yajaira Ceciliano-Navarro · Tanya Maria Golash-Boza
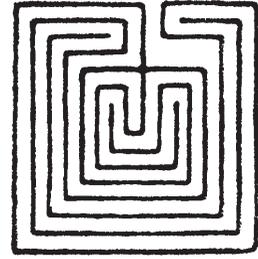Jennifer Lee · Richard Alba

J. Keppler

LOOKING BACKWARD.

They Would Close to the New-Comer the Bridge that Carried Them and their Fathers Over.

Dædalus

Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Inside front cover: Looking Backward. They Would Close to the New-Comer the Bridge That Carried Them and Their Fathers Over (1893) by Joseph Ferdinand Keppler (1838–1894). Chromolithograph, first published in *Puck* magazine. Held at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum at The Ohio State University.

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Design for the hedge maze is by Johan Vredeman de Vries, from *Hortorum viridariorumque elegantes & multiplices formae : ad architectonicae artis normam affabre delineatae* (Cologne, 1615).

Dædalus was founded in 1955 and established as a quarterly in 1958. The journal's namesake was renowned in ancient Greece as an inventor, scientist, and unriddler of riddles. Its emblem, a maze seen from above, symbolizes the aspiration of its founders to "lift each of us above his cell in the labyrinth of learning in order that he may see the entire structure as if from above, where each separate part loses its comfortable separateness."

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences, like its journal, brings together distinguished individuals from every field of human endeavor. It was chartered in 1780 as a forum "to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honour, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people." Now in its third century, the Academy, with its more than five thousand members, continues to provide intellectual leadership to meet the critical challenges facing our world.

The Bipartisan Origins of
White Nationalism

Douglas S. Massey

Dysfunctional immigration and border policies implemented in recent decades have accelerated growth of the Latino population and racialized its members around the trope of illegality. Since the 1960s, Republicans have cultivated White fears and resentments toward African Americans, and over time these efforts broadened to target Hispanics as well. Until 2016, this cultivation relied on a dog whistle politics of racially coded symbolic language, but with the election of Donald Trump as president, White nationalist sentiments became explicit and White nationalism emerged as an ideological pillar of the Republican Party. This volume confirms this political transformation, describing its features and documenting its consequences. In this essay, I describe the unwise U.S. immigration and border policies that were steadily promulgated and expanded over the decades by Democrats as well as Republicans, inevitably leading to the current racist and nativist moment. I close by offering a way forward by granting legal status to those who currently lack it, while simultaneously dismantling the nation's formidable machinery of immigration and border enforcement.

I n 2016, Donald Trump was elected president of the United States on a wave of White nationalist sentiment that he deliberately fomented and would relentlessly cultivate during his time in office. As the essays in this issue of *Dædalus* make clear, America's current racist and xenophobic moment was a long time coming. It did not begin with Trump. It followed decades in which one of the nation's two major political parties deliberately incited White racial fears and resentments for purposes of political gain. Beginning with Richard Nixon's "Southern strategy" in 1968 and continuing through Ronald Reagan's evocation of the "welfare queen" stereotype in 1980, George H. W. Bush's airing of the Willie Horton ad in 1988, and George W. Bush's 2001 appointment of a neo-Confederate as Attorney General, Republicans developed and deployed a "dog whistle" politics of symbolic appeals to racial fears and biases.[1] Trump simply threw away the whistle.

Although Republican fearmongering and race-baiting initially focused on African Americans, over time it broadened to include the nation's growing Hispanic

population. In the process, the Mexican-U.S. border was militarized and transformed into a potent symbol of ethnoracial exclusion.[2] The framing of the border as a line of defense against alien invaders dates to 1976, when the commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (a former Marine Corps general and Nixon appointee) published an article in *Reader's Digest* alleging that a "silent invasion of illegal aliens" was threatening the nation and that a budget increase for his agency was "desperately needed to help us bring the illegal alien threat under control."[3] With the election of Jimmy Carter later that year, however, Chapman's plea remained unfulfilled until 1986, when Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act.

The great irony is that the resulting militarization of the border did not curtail the unauthorized entry of Mexicans. Instead it ended circular migration, reducing the rate of return migration back to Mexico while leaving in-migration unaffected, thereby increasing the net volume of unauthorized migration and accelerating rather than reducing undocumented population growth to hasten the "browning" of the nation so feared by nativists.[4] From 1988 to 2008, the estimated size of the undocumented population rose from two million to twelve million persons and the nation's Hispanic population rose from 13.1 percent to 15.4 percent of the total. The Hispanic share today stands at 18.3 percent, with 34.4 percent being foreign born and 36.5 percent of those born abroad being undocumented.[5]

The net inflow of undocumented migrants was greatest during the 1990s. It began to slow after 2000 and came to an abrupt halt with the onset of the Great Recession in late 2007.[6] Although the recession may have been the proximate cause of the sudden end of undocumented migration from Mexico, the underlying cause was a sharp decline in Mexican fertility after 1970, which brought about the rapid aging of the Mexican population. Labor migration is highly age dependent. Rates of departure rise in the late teens, peak around age twenty-two or twenty-three, and then decline rapidly to low levels by age thirty and above. Between 1975 and 2020, the median age in Mexico rose from seventeen to twenty-nine and the rate of undocumented out-migration consequently fell to record low levels.[7] While 1.6 million Mexicans were apprehended along the border in 2000, by 2017, the number had fallen to just 128,000, despite the fact that the number of Border Patrol agents trying to catch them had risen from 9,000 to 19,000.[8]

Since the Great Recession, undocumented migration from Mexico has been net negative, and the estimated number of undocumented Mexicans living in the United States declined by 23 percent between 2010 and 2018.[9] Indeed, when Trump declared his candidacy in 2016 and promised to build his two-thousand-mile border wall, undocumented Mexican migration had been effectively over for nearly a decade. With few Mexicans arriving at the border, once in office, he focused his fearmongering on Central Americans. Although migrants had been exiting El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras since the U.S. interventions of

the 1980s, their modest numbers historically were obscured by the much larger number of Mexicans arriving at the border. By 2019, however, the Mexicans were largely gone and Central Americans accounted for 71 percent of all those apprehended at the border.[10]

Despite the continued arrival of migrants from Central America, unauthorized border crossings are no longer the principal source of undocumented population growth. Whereas the undocumented Central American population did grow by around 19 percent between 2010 and 2018, the corresponding rate was 22 percent for undocumented Chinese, 69 percent for undocumented Indians, and 164 percent for undocumented Venezuelans. Migrants from these countries enter the United States by overstaying visas rather than surreptitiously crossing the border. Together, their arrival, along with Central Americans, partially offset the loss of Mexicans from the undocumented population; but the total number of unauthorized U.S. residents nonetheless fell by 10 percent between 2010 and 2018.[11]

Although undocumented migration from Central America continues and legal immigration from Latin America has by no means ended, Hispanic population growth is now driven primarily by an excess of births over deaths rather than net in-migration. The total fertility rate for Hispanic Americans today is 2.01 (children per woman) compared with 1.67 for White Americans and 1.82 for Black Americans.[12] Even though all three rates are below replacement level fertility (roughly 2.1), Hispanics are nonetheless increasing their share of the population because they are a much younger population with a larger share of women of childbearing age, thus amplifying the effect of the small fertility differential.

Whereas Hispanics constituted just 4.7 percent of the U.S. population in 1970, by 2019, their share had reached 18.3 percent, with 12.7 percent for Blacks and 5.7 percent for Asians. The share of non-Hispanic Whites, meanwhile, had fallen to around 60 percent.[13] The rising share of Hispanics in the electorate helped to provide Barack Obama with winning margins in two elections, with 67 percent voting for him in 2008 and 71 percent in 2012.[14] Together, the rapid growth of the Hispanic population and the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States were critical in sparking the White nationalist reaction that elected Donald Trump in 2016.[15] But as already noted, Trump was building on a long Republican history of exploiting race as a wedge issue.

In his contribution to this volume, "Immigration & the Origins of White Backlash," Zoltan Hajnal marshals abundant evidence to demonstrate that Trump's mobilization of reactionary sentiment in 2016 was simply an extension of a long-term Republican project of fomenting White racial fears and resentments. He explains how Republicans steadily increased their share of the White vote by scapegoating immigrants and promising to curtail undocumented migration. Since 1990, votes in Congress have increasingly displayed a stark division between Re-

publicans who favor restrictive laws and punitive measures against immigrants, and Democrats who favor more open immigration policies and defend immigrant rights. Hajnal concludes that "a backlash to immigration is helping drive this most significant development in American party politics in the twenty-first century."

Hajnal's view is supported by Michael Hout and Christopher Maggio's analysis in their essay, "Immigration, Race & Political Polarization," of data collected from White likely voters by the General Social Survey. Whereas, in 1994, substantial majorities of Whites in both political parties favored restrictions on immigration, by 2018, the share supporting restriction had fallen to 21 percent among Democrats but remained at 62 percent among Republicans. The partisan division in White attitudes toward immigrants is paralleled by a similar division in attitudes toward African Americans. Using an index of anti-Black resentment they developed, Hout and Maggio show that between 1994 and 2018, White resentment toward Blacks fell sharply among Democrats while it barely budged among Republicans, opening up a huge 46 percent gap between the two parties. Drawing on data from the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey, they show that Whites who favored restricting immigration and expressed racial resentment toward Blacks were far more likely to vote for Trump than Whites who did not hold these views.

The foregoing analyses suggest that anti-Black resentments and anti-immigrant attitudes have increasingly become intertwined over time, a conclusion sustained by Christopher Parker in his contribution "Status Threat: Moving the Right Further to the Right?" He argues that the election of Barack Obama against the backdrop of a browning America created a powerful threat to White status, fueling a bitter politics that is not just conservative, but reactionary. The Republican base today seeks not simply to *preserve* the social structures and practices that historically ensured White privilege; they wish to *restore* an imagined past in which Black and brown people knew and accepted their subordinate place in the social order. In a well-controlled analysis, Parker's index of status threat strongly predicts White support not only for immigration restriction, but opposition to Trump's impeachment and support for his reelection, holding constant the effects of racism, authoritarianism, social dominance, ideological conservatism, and exposure to Fox News.

The emergence of reactionary racial resentment against Blacks and Hispanics as a fundamental pillar of support for the Republican Party is perhaps unsurprising given the long history of skin color stratification in the United States. As President Lyndon Johnson once observed, "If you can convince the lowest White man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you."[16] As Ellis Monk argues in his contribution "The Unceasing Significance of Colorism:

Skin Tone Stratification in the United States," immigration has changed the racial complexion of American society in recent decades and processes of skin color stratification have broadened to incorporate dark-skinned Hispanics and Asians as well as Blacks, leading him to conclude "that the integration of new members of American society is also hampered and stratified by skin tone…so much so that it seems quite fair to label it a *pigmentocracy*."

A distinctive feature of the racialization of Hispanics is the conflation of skin color with illegality. As Cecilia Menjívar points out in "The Racialization of 'Illegality,'" it is the close association between suspected illegality and perceived Latin American origins that fuels the treatment of Latinos as racialized "others" in U.S. society. Laws passed in 1996 and 2001 increasingly focused the weight of anti-immigrant enforcement efforts not just along the border, but throughout the nation's interior. In the wake of this legislation, deportations from the U.S. interior surged and Hispanics were disproportionately swept into the maw of a "formidable machinery" of apprehension, detention, and removal.[17] Although the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the USA PATRIOT Act were enacted in the name of the war on terror, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has overwhelmingly targeted brown-skinned people who "look Hispanic," thereby contributing to their racialization. Of the 3.7 million persons deported between 2008 and 2018, 96 percent were Latin American.[18]

For most of U.S. history, unauthorized entry, residence, and labor in the United States were violations of civil rather than criminal law. Until quite recently, even immigrants convicted of crimes were not routinely deported once they had completed their sentences. In his essay "Criminalizing Migration," César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández documents the steady criminalization of immigration in the United States, a process known as "crimmigration." Whereas in 1986 Congress enacted legislation to *request* that local law enforcement officers report immigrants arrested for drug crimes to immigration authorities, in 1988, it created a new legal category of "aggravated felony" and *required* immigration authorities to take custody of *any noncitizen* convicted of such an offense, including legal resident aliens.

Although aggravated felonies originally included only homicide, arms dealing, and drug trafficking, over the years the category expanded to encompass twenty-one separate offenses, including nonviolent acts common among undocumented migrants such as the use of false documents and entering without authorization after an earlier removal. Whereas criminal deportations averaged just 605 per year from 1960 through 1985, from 1986 to 2018, the yearly average rose to 83,418.[19]

Although crimmigration has consequences for all immigrants to the United States, the burden falls most heavily on Latinos, creating powerful barriers to immigrant integration along the lines of race and legal status. In their contribution

"Race, Legal Status & Social Mobility," Mary Waters and Philip Kasinitz note that although a lack of legal status hinders the economic integration of immigrants, it does not stop them from integrating *socially*. Immigrants and their children are learning English and converging with U.S. natives on most social outcomes, even as they struggle economically. According to Waters and Kasinitz, "when considering blocked mobility among immigrants and their descendants, race, while heavily correlated to legal status in the largest current immigrant groups, does not appear to be the most important factor."

In their essay "The Legal Status Divide among the Children of Immigrants," Roberto Gonzales and Stephen Ruszczyk depict what life is like for unauthorized migrants brought into the country as children who grew up in the United States speaking English, attending public schools, and not realizing they were undocumented. Upon entering adolescence, they gradually came to realize that their life chances were narrowly circumscribed by a legal status they did not choose and could not control. The authors argue that a lack of documentation has become what sociologists call a "master status" that overrides the influence of a person's individual traits and characteristics in determining key life outcomes. Adolescence among undocumented teens is thus dominated by the fraught "process of learning to be illegal," compelling them to scale back their dreams and ambitions for success in the only country they know.

Always difficult, life without documents became even more challenging under President Trump. In their contribution "Latinos & Racism in the Trump Era," Stephanie Canizales and Jody Agius Vallejo argue that "Trump's racist and dehumanizing rhetoric and policy actions have increased Latinos' experiences of discrimination and institutionalized legal violence … while fomenting racial terrorism directed at Latinos and other groups." They report that counties hosting rallies for Trump in 2016 experienced a 226 percent surge in hate crimes and that the number of anti-Latino hate crimes rose by 21 percent in 2018 alone.

In addition to experiencing a surge of private acts of prejudice and discrimination, Hispanics have increasingly been brutalized by President Trump's public policies, which have accelerated the arrest, detention, and removal of immigrants from the U.S. interior. The burden of deportation falls hardest on long-term undocumented residents, most of whom now have U.S.-born citizen children. Based on 111 interviews with adult immigrants who had experienced the deportation or detention of a family member, Yajaira Ceciliano-Navarro and Tanya Golash-Boza document the devastation inflicted upon families by mass deportation in their essay "'Trauma Makes You Grow Up Quicker': The Financial & Emotional Burdens of Deportation & Incarceration." All too often, the family member detained is the principal breadwinner, which causes a cascading financial crisis of lost income, rising debt, and housing instability among already poor families. Accompanying these financial challenges are profound psychological traumas, with respondents

reporting intense feelings of emptiness, loss, shame, embarrassment, anger, and frustration.

Although Asians are commonly seen as America's "model minority," in her contribution "Asian Americans, Affirmative Action & the Rise in Anti-Asian Hate," Jennifer Lee points out that their elevated socioeconomic standing does not shield them from racism and xenophobia. In the current political climate, the model minority stereotype of high competence but low warmth places them awkwardly between disadvantaged minorities who stand to gain from affirmative action and non-Hispanic Whites who see it as a threat. In this position, they are potentially exposed to resentment from both sides. A surge in anti-Asian incidents in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic only serves to underscore the precariousness of their position. Even before the pandemic, anti-Asian hate crimes under Trump rose 31 percent between 2016 and 2018.

The essays in this volume clearly show that Republicans led the way in framing Latino immigrants as a grave threat to the nation while simultaneously fueling the fires of anti-Black resentment. Nonetheless, the current moment of open racism and xenophobia could not have happened without Democratic acquiescence. Although Democrats have long stated their support for immigrant rights and endorsed immigration reform in principle, in practice they served as handmaids in launching and funding the U.S. government's war on immigrants.[20] Anti-immigrant enforcement first accelerated under Ronald Reagan, but it was continued and expanded by every subsequent president, Democratic and Republican, each of whom found it politically convenient to portray Latino immigrants as a grave threat to the nation.

Ronald Reagan framed unauthorized immigration as a question of "national security" and explicitly linked it to his prosecution of the Cold War in Central America, telling Americans that "terrorists and subversives are just two days driving time from [the border crossing at] Harlingen, Texas,"[21] and they could be expected to yield "a tidal wave of refugees – and this time they'll be 'feet people' and not boat people – swarming into our country seeking safe haven from communist repression to the south."[22] Communist provocateurs, he alleged, would then "feed on the anger and frustration of recent Central and South American immigrants who will not realize their own version of the American dream."[23]

Reagan went on to push for and sign the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which increased the number of Border Patrol agents by 50 percent and created new penalties for smuggling, harboring, and transporting unauthorized migrants. Republican control of the White House continued with the election of George H. W. Bush, and in 1990, he signed into law the last major change in U.S. immigration law. Its provisions were manifold, but in signing the bill, Bush stated that "immigration reform began in 1986 with an effort to close the 'back door' on

immigration. Now, as we open the 'front door' to increased legal immigration, I am pleased that this Act also provides needed enforcement authority."

The "front door" to which Bush referred was an increase in the global cap on numerically limited visas from 270,000 to 675,000, an expansionary provision that enabled Democrats to support the bill, even though closing the "back door" entailed the hiring of one thousand additional Border Patrol agents. The legislation also increased the penalties for immigration violations and authorized new measures to expedite removals from the United States. As in 1986, Democrats were willing to accept harsher police actions against immigrants in return for liberalization in other areas of immigration policy.

The new enforcement measures failed to stop the inflow of unauthorized migrants across the Mexican-U.S. border, of course, and in 1993, El Paso became the second-busiest sector after San Diego. Its 286,000 apprehensions amounted to forty-eight arrests for every one hundred residents, who had begun to complain bitterly about the migrants traipsing through their yards and neighborhoods. Sensing an opportunity, the local Border Patrol Chief Silvestre Reyes on his own initiative launched Operation Blockade, an all-out mobilization of enforcement resources along the city's border with Juarez, Mexico. The operation reduced apprehensions by 72 percent over the next year and Reyes became a very popular figure locally.[24] In 1996, he parlayed his popularity into election to Congress as a Democrat.

Fellow Democrat Bill Clinton took note of the apparent success of Operation Blockade and used it as a blueprint for enhancing enforcement operations along the entire border. The new policy, described in the Border Patrol report *Border Patrol Strategic Plan: 1994 and Beyond*, articulated a national strategy that "builds on El Paso's success through an infusion of permanent resources designed to stabilize their enforcement initiative and extend it." The new strategy was christened "prevention through deterrence" and its goal was to bring "a decisive number of enforcement resources to bear in each major entry corridor," "increase the number of agents on the line, and make effective use of technology, [thereby] raising the risk of apprehension high enough to be an effective deterrent."[25]

To publicize the new strategy, Attorney General Janet Reno organized a news conference along the border in San Diego, where she was joined by California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein to announce the debut of Operation Gatekeeper, another all-out militarization effort designed to "restore the rule of law to the California/Baja California Border."[26] Running for reelection in 1996, Bill Clinton boasted that "our comprehensive strategy to restore the rule of law to illegal immigration enforcement has done more in three years than was done in thirty years before."[27]

As in El Paso, apprehensions fell precipitously in San Diego over the ensuing year. Nonetheless, total border apprehensions continued to rise, peaking at 1.6

million in 2000. Undocumented migrants did not stop attempting to cross the border; they just staged their attempts at different locations, using routes through the Sonoran Desert into Arizona. The new routes entailed traversing a rugged, sparsely settled terrain characterized by extreme environmental conditions that threatened life and limb.

Elevating the risks of unauthorized border crossing was an explicit goal of the new policy. In the words of the *Strategic Plan*, "the prediction is that with traditional entry and smuggling routes disrupted, illegal traffic will be deterred, or forced over more hostile terrain, less suited for crossing and more suited for enforcement."[28] But the migrants were not deterred and, tragically, bodies piled up along the border. Prior to Operation Gatekeeper, the death toll among undocumented border crossers averaged ninety-nine per year. In the ensuing years, the toll rose to an average of 330 per year, yielding a body count of 8,239 through 2019.[29]

In the ensuing years, Clinton's policy of prevention through deterrence was taken up and expanded by each successive U.S. president, whatever their party affiliation. In 2006, George W. Bush declared "we're a nation of laws, and we must enforce our laws" and called for doubling the Border Patrol and deploying six thousand National Guard troops to the border.[30] In his 2013 State of the Union Address, Barack Obama asserted that "real reform means strong border security, and we can build on the progress my administration has already made – putting more boots on the southern border than at any time in our history."[31]

The bipartisan nature of support for the militarization of the Mexican-U.S. border is clearly evident in official statistics documenting the nation's rising enforcement effort. Figure 1 shows the number of Border Patrol officers by presidential administration. Through the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, the number drifted slowly upward to level off at just below 2,500 agents during the early Reagan years. However, between 1984 and 1986, the number rose by 50 percent and remained stable until the last year of George H. W. Bush's presidency, when it rose by a modest 12 percent. The trend line then moves sharply upward with President Bill Clinton. Upon his taking office in 2003, the Border Patrol had slightly fewer than 4,000 officers. When he left office, the force stood at 9,200 officers, an increase of 132 percent.

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, border enforcement was further intensified in the name of the war on terror. During George W. Bush's presidency, the Border Patrol grew from 9,200 to 17,500 officers, with the curve becoming almost vertical between 2005 and 2008. Upon assuming office in 2009, Barack Obama announced another surge in border enforcement in an effort to placate Republicans in hopes of pushing them toward comprehensive immigration reform. The resulting augmentation brought the Border Patrol to an all-time high of around 21,400 agents in 2011. Apparently realizing the futility of trying to lead

Figure 1
Number of Border Patrol Agents by Presidential Administration
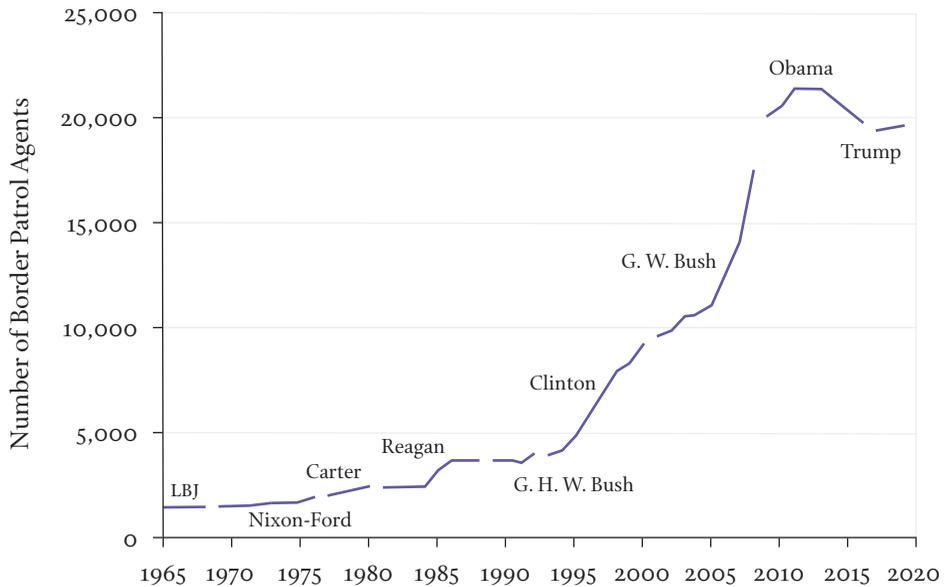
Source: Mexican Migration Project database, Supplementary Files, "NATLYEAR" File.

Republicans toward a compromise on immigration reform, Obama later scaled back the corps to just under twenty thousand officers in 2016, where it has roughly remained ever since.

Rather than adding more personnel to border enforcement, President Trump chose to divert resources to build a "big, beautiful wall" along the border. As a result, although staffing of the Border Patrol leveled off, the agency's budget did not. Figure 2 shows the trend in the size of the Border Patrol's budget by presidential administration. As can be seen, through the second Bush administration, the trend parallels that shown in Figure 1. Thereafter, however, the budget shoots rapidly upward through both the Obama and Trump administrations, reaching a record $4.7 billion in 2019.

In addition to militarizing the border, beginning in the mid-1990s, successive administrations dramatically increased the budget for immigrant detention and removal from the nation's interior, again in the name of the war on terror. In response to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, in 1996, a bipartisan majority in Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which authorized the expedited removal of non-

Figure 2
Border Patrol Budget by Presidential Administration
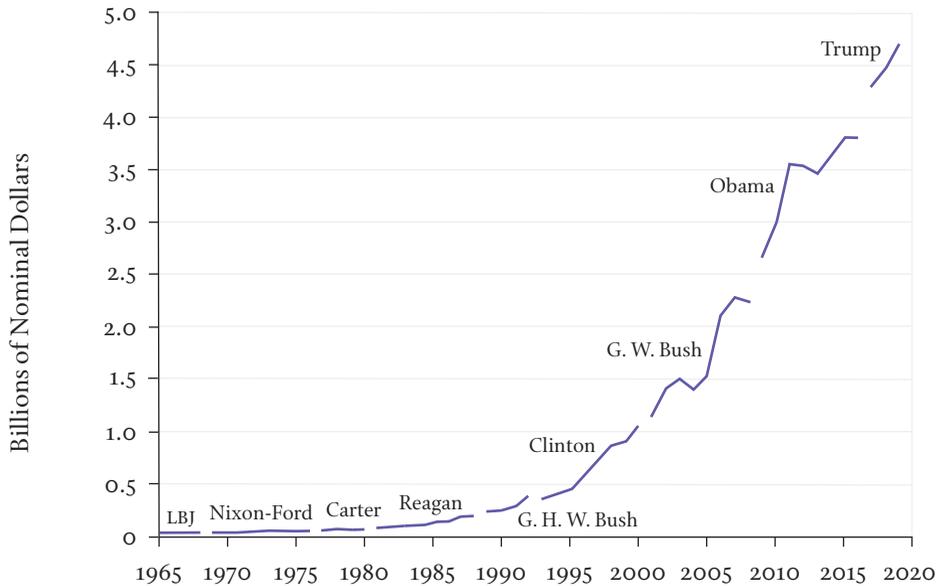
Source: Mexican Migration Project database, Supplementary Files, "NATLYEAR" File.

citizens. In the same year, Congress also passed and Clinton signed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which increased the budget for deportation and narrowed the criteria for claiming asylum. After September 11, 2001, Congress overwhelmingly and virtually without debate passed and President Bush signed the USA PATRIOT Act, creating the Department of Homeland Security and further increasing funds for the surveillance and deportation of foreigners and authorizing the deportation of noncitizens without due process.

As shown in Figure 3, these legislative acts dramatically increased the budget for interior enforcement and removal. From 1965 through 2002, this budget is proxied by the annual budget of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for nonborder operations. From 2003 onward, the budget for interior enforcement is more precisely indicated by funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a new agency created by the PATRIOT Act. As can be seen, the trend line rises slowly during the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, but toward the end of the Reagan administration, the budget experiences a notable bump upward and continues to rise at an elevated pace through the first Bush administration.

Figure 3
Interior Enforcement Budget by Presidential Administration
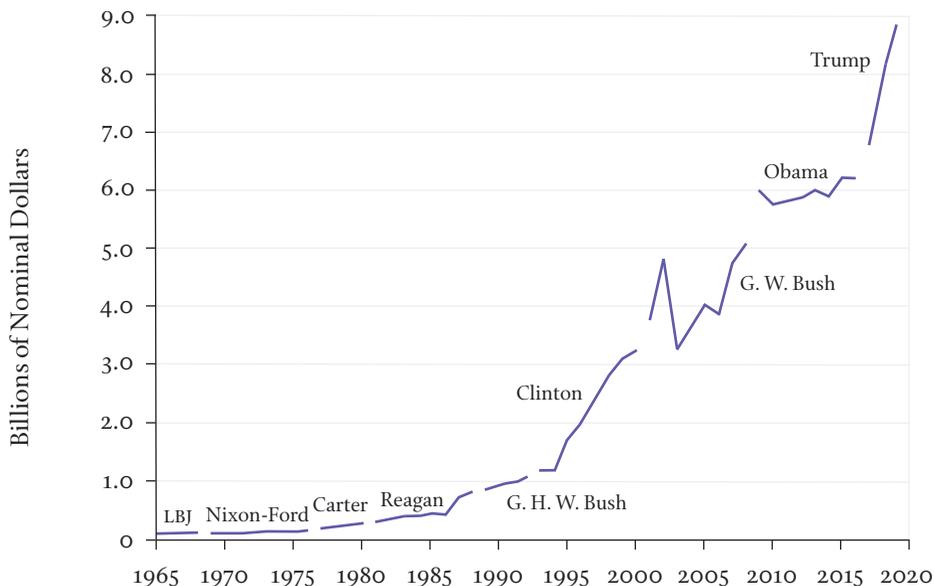
Source : Mexican Migration Project database, Supplementary Files, "NATLYEAR" File.

After sagging during the first two years of the Clinton administration, the curve rises dramatically for the next six years and then accelerates further during the first two years of the second Bush administration, pushing the budget upwards from $1.2 billion in 1994 to $4.8 billion in 2002. The abrupt drop in the curve between 2002 and 2003 is an artifact of the shift in indicators. Thereafter, however, the upward trajectory resumes at an even faster pace, with the ICE budget rising from $3.3 billion in 2003 to $5.1 billion in 2008. During the first year of the Obama administration, the ICE budget momentary tops out at nearly $6 billion before dropping slightly and then rising unevenly to $6.2 billion in Obama's final year. During the first year under President Trump, the budget shot up to $6.8 billion and then continued to rise almost vertically to $8.8 billion in 2019.

Obama's scaling back of the budget between 2008 and 2015 is not reflected in the number of migrants removed from the country, which is depicted in Figure 4. Prior to 1996, annual deportations from within the United States were in the tens of thousands with no strong trend upward. From 1995 to 2000, the annual number removed rose from 51,000 to 288,500 under Clinton and then jumped to 360,000 under President George W. Bush before reaching its all-time high of 432,000 in

Figure 4
Number of Deportations by Presidential Administration
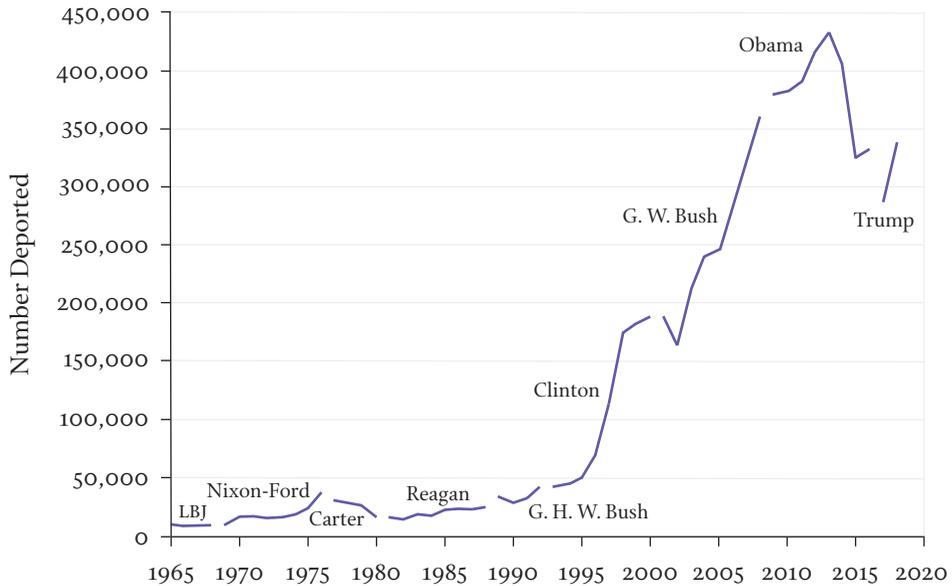
Source: Office of Immigration Statistics, *2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020).

2013 under Obama. Across three administrations, the total deported rose from 870,000 under Clinton, to 2 million under Bush, to 3.1 million under Obama, earning him the sardonic moniker "Deporter in Chief."

Although deportations fell sharply during Obama's second term, removals increased once again under Trump. What set Trump apart from his predecessors, however, was not his detention of settled migrants captured within the United States, but his use of the immigrant detention system to house migrants apprehended along the border. As the huge inflow of undocumented Mexican migrant workers was replaced by a much smaller inflow of Central American families seeking asylum, Trump refused to hear their claims for asylum at ports of entry along the border and turned them back, compelling them to cross the border without authorization and then to lodge a claim for defensive asylum upon being captured.

The number of persons annually funneled through the immigrant detention system is shown in Figure 5. As deportations accelerated under Clinton, Bush, and Obama, logically so did the annual number of detentions until Obama elected to scale back deportations in his second term. From just 23,000 detentions in

Figure 5
Annual Detentions by Presidential Administration
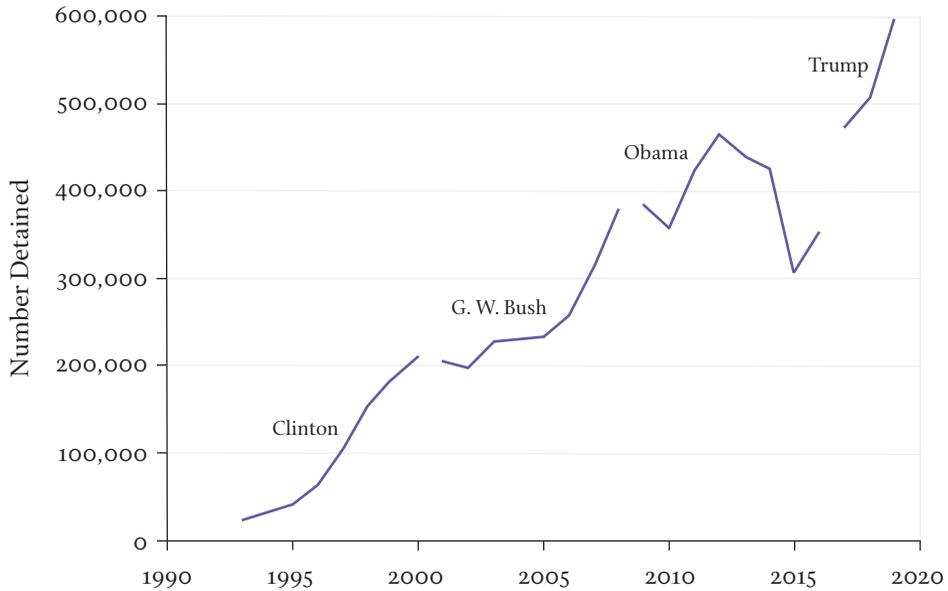
Source: J. Rachel Reyes, "Immigration Detention: Recent Trends and Scholarship" (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2019), http://cmsny.org/publications/virtualbrief -detention/.

1993, the number rose to 210,000 at the end of the Clinton administration and 379,000 at the end of the Bush administration. Under Obama, detentions peaked at 464,000 in 2012 and then declined sharply as he scaled back deportation efforts. Although Figure 4 shows that the number of deportations under Trump in 2018 was roughly equal to that prevailing at the end of the Obama administration, total detentions under Trump skyrocketed to almost 600,000 as the detention system filled up with Central American women and children seeking refuge rather than Mexicans moving to jobs in the United States.

The essays in this issue of *Dædalus* make it clear that White racial resentment lies at the core of support for the Republican Party today, and that the party's animus toward Black Americans, actively cultivated since the 1960s, has now broadened to include Hispanics. The rising political agency of African Americans and a changing racial demography together created a powerful status threat to conservative White Americans. As Democratic attitudes moved

decisively away from racist, nativist sentiments, the Republican base doubled down to embrace a reactionary politics of White identity grounded in fear.

Both the racialization of Latinos around the trope of illegality and the extraordinary growth of the Hispanic population were made possible by dysfunctional immigration and border policies implemented in equal measure under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Rather than challenging the narrative of a cross-border alien invasion, Democrats in Congress and the White House co-opted it in the futile hope of pushing Republicans toward support for immigration reform. It was Bill Clinton who promulgated the strategy of "prevention through deterrence" that militarized the Mexican-U.S. border; and it was Clinton who unleashed the formidable regime of mass deportation upon the nation. Barack Obama subsequently increased the number of deportations and Border Patrol officers to all-time record highs.

At this writing, Joe Biden is days away from being inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. His victory was not accompanied by the hoped-for "blue wave," however. Some 48 percent of the electorate still voted for Trump despite his calamitous performance in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the election, the president has assiduously worked to discredit the election as stolen and Biden's presidency as illegitimate. The Republican Party has become increasingly undemocratic and authoritarian, deploying a cynical hardball politics of misinformation, court packing, and voter suppression in order to perpetuate White minority rule in a rapidly diversifying nation.

Upset victories in the Georgia runoff elections have just ensured Democratic control of both chambers of Congress, offering the party a chance to make amends for its part in propagating the nation's war on immigrants. Democrats need to abandon the fiction that a militarized Southern border somehow contributes to the nation's security and that the mass deportation of Hispanics in some way protects Americans from harm. The truth is that America's over-the-top immigration enforcement machine is a costly symbolic charade that wastes taxpayer dollars, needlessly takes lives, and rips gaping holes in the nation's social fabric.

Two reports prepared by the National Academy of Sciences conclude that immigrants are a net benefit to the U.S. economy and that they are integrating well and rapidly into U.S. society – if they are unhindered by a lack of legal status.[32] To realize the full social and economic potential of immigrants who are already in our midst, the legal barriers to full participation must be removed. To achieve this end, the United States must 1) grant immediate legal permanent residence to the young people who registered under the program of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and others who entered the country as minors; 2) bestow legal permanent residence upon those currently in Temporary Protected Status, who often have been living and working legally in the United States for decades; 3) create a path to legal residence for undocumented residents who entered as adults but have

no criminal record aside from immigration violations and misdemeanor infractions; and 4) recognize our moral obligation to Central Americans fleeing deleterious circumstances that stem directly from U.S. intervention in the region during the 1980s by processing their asylum claims rather than detaining them.

Although most of the essays in this volume are rather bleak in their assessment of policies and practices leading up to the 2016 election of a White nationalist administration, the collection's final contribution by Richard Alba, "The Surge of Young Americans from Minority-White Mixed Families & Its Significance for the Future," paints a far more optimistic future. Rather than seeing a tension-ridden "majority-minority" society of non-Hispanic Whites competing with a majority of racially distinct others, his careful assessment of the demographic evidence suggests a future of integration, adaptation, and peaceful accommodation in which intergroup boundaries blur rather than harden. What is necessary for the full realization of this vision is the full legalization of the roughly eleven million people who now peacefully live among us without legal permanent residence.

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Immigration & the Origins of
White Backlash

Zoltan Hajnal

The success of Donald Trump's anti-immigrant campaign surprised many. But I show that it was actually a continuation of a long-standing Republican strategy that has targeted immigrants and minorities for over five decades. It is not only a long-term strategy but also a widely successful one. Analysis of the vote over time shows clearly that White Americans with anti-immigrant views have been shifting steadily toward the Republican Party for decades. The end result is a nation divided by race and outcomes that often favor Whites over immigrants and minorities.

"They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

With these now infamous lines about Mexican immigrants, President Trump appeared to set in motion his meteoric rise in the 2016 presidential campaign. Before giving that speech, Trump was floundering. Polls placed him near the bottom of the sixteen-candidate Republican field. But just a month later – after almost nonstop coverage of his immigration remarks – Trump had skyrocketed to first place in the polls. In the primary, Trump won over Republican voters who wanted to deport unauthorized immigrants, and he lost decisively among those who favored a pathway to citizenship. Indeed, immigration appeared to fuel his candidacy all the way through the general election. Three-quarters of Trump voters felt that illegal immigrants were "mostly a drain" on American society. Only 11 percent of Clinton supporters agreed.[1]

Trump's focus on immigration and the tight link between immigration views and the vote in 2016 raise a series of important questions. First, where did the immigration threat strategy come from? Was Trump's strategy unique and the course of 2016 exceptional, as many media accounts seem to suggest, or was 2016 simply an extension – albeit a more explicit and more extreme one – of a longer-term Republican project? Second, is there evidence that an immigrant threat narrative has actually propelled voters into the welcoming hands of the Republican Party? Although the close correlation between how Americans think about immi-

gration and how they voted in 2016 suggests that immigration matters, and perhaps even that it is central to the partisan politics of this nation, we know that correlation is not causation. Finally, what are some of the major consequences of the increasingly central role of immigration in American politics?

Although many pundits and prognosticators were surprised by Donald Trump's tactics and his triumphs, it was all quite predictable. Trump's use of the immigrant threat narrative is a tried and true strategy. Well before Donald Trump arrived on the presidential scene, Marisa Abrajano and I wrote a book documenting the long-standing Republican tactic of scapegoating immigrants. In *White Backlash*, we argue that Republican elites had been able to garner more and more of the White vote by blaming immigrants for much of what ails America and by promising to stem the tide of immigration.[2]

The evidence of that long-term Republican strategy is extensive. It begins most conspicuously in California in 1994 when Pete Wilson, the Republican governor, campaigned on Proposition 187 to help counter his low approval ratings and sagging poll numbers. The proposition, which was nicknamed the "save our state" measure, sought to bar all undocumented immigrants from receiving public services. Campaign ads featuring grainy footage of immigrant hordes crossing the border, while a narrator intoned "They keep coming. . ." would become a model for subsequent Republican campaigns.

When Wilson won reelection using that strategy, Republicans around the country slowly took heed. In the ensuing decades, elites in both parties have expressed a variety of views on immigration, but the growing distance between the two parties on immigration is clear. Much of the early activity occurred at the state level with Republican-led state legislatures around the country passing thousands of laws that explicitly limited immigrants' rights or services.[3] Perhaps the best-known example of these anti-immigrant laws is Arizona's SB1070, passed in 2010, which allowed police officers to target individuals suspected of being undocumented, prohibited unauthorized immigrants from applying for work, required individuals to carry their alien registration cards, and permitted warrantless arrest in cases involving probable cause of a deportable offense.

Many local Republican officials also clearly moved to the right on immigration. That movement was epitomized by Joe Arpaio, the former Republican Sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona, who proudly proclaimed that "Nothing is going to stop me from cracking down on illegal immigration." By 2008, the issue was receiving more prominent attention at the national level and even Mitt Romney, a member of the more moderate wing of the Republican Party, was including self-deportation and opposition to the Dream Act as part of his presidential platform. As one of his ads announced, "As President, I'll oppose amnesty, cut funding for sanctuary cities, and secure our borders."

These increasingly divergent stances on immigration are borne out by votes in Congress. As political science researchers Gary Miller and Norman Schofield have demonstrated, Republican support for immigrants' rights was reasonably strong during the Reagan era and, as late as 1990, immigration-related legislation generated little noticeable partisan division. In fact, Ronald Reagan signed a law that granted amnesty to almost three million undocumented immigrants. But since that time, votes in Congress have revealed an increasingly stark contrast, with Republican legislators repeatedly supporting tougher laws against immigrants and Democrats favoring more admission and greater immigrants' rights.[4]

Political scientist Tom Wong has found that between 2006 and 2012, Republican House and Senate members favored restrictive policies 98.4 percent of the time, while Democrats supported those measures only 66.4 percent of the time.[5] On any number of different immigration-related issues – erecting border fences, English as the official language, amnesty, government workers reporting undocumented immigrants, and so-called anchor babies (the U.S.-born children of immigrants) – Republicans and Democrats are increasingly on opposite sides of the immigration debate.

The strategy may have reached its apex in 2018 with Donald Trump's explicit comments about Mexican immigrants – "These aren't people. These are animals" – but decades of Republican campaigns have developed and proliferated the strategy; Trump is only continuing it. Despite the ubiquitous talk of Trump being extraordinary, the truth is, the patterns in 2016 mirror decades of American campaigns and elections.

All of this reprises a very old and quintessentially American story on immigration. America may be a nation of immigrants, but it has not always welcomed immigrants with open arms. Immigration has often sparked widespread fear and mobilization, especially when the number of new arrivals has been large, or when the makeup of new Americans has differed from the native born in obvious racial or ethnic ways.[6] Indeed, the history of the nation can be told through a series of challenging immigrant-nativist confrontations. The rising tide of German and French migrants at the end of the eighteenth century sparked one of the first large-scale nativist movements. Numerous episodes followed: anti-Irish discrimination in the 1850s, a populist backlash against Chinese immigrants in the 1880s, prevalent anti-Southern and Eastern European sentiment in the early twentieth century, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and a backlash against Muslim Americans following September 11.[7]

Critically, with each wave of immigration to American shores, savvy politicians have attempted to use anxiety about immigration to garner votes. As a result, many of these nativist episodes were shaped by and had a real impact on the partisan politics of the day. The electoral advantage of immigration often accrued to the party – new or old – that most vociferously opposed immigration. In the

1850s, for example, a nativist backlash against Irish Catholic immigrants helped spur the Know Nothings and the American Party to electoral success.[8]

Ultimately, neither concerns about immigrants nor political parties seeking to gain from those concerns are new. Trump and the Republican Party of today are just one example of a recurring, longer-term phenomenon. It is, of course, also important to note that this is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Trump's rise is analogous to the rise of the extreme right in Europe and mirrors the success of the UK Independence Party in Britain, the Freedom Party in Austria, and the National Front in France, among many others.

But the Trump phenomenon and the larger Republican campaign are not just about immigration. The anti-immigrant story is only part of the White backlash story. Race, more broadly speaking, has been part of the Republican playbook for quite some time.[9] A little over five decades ago, the Republican Party implemented its infamous Southern Strategy. Personified by George Wallace's segregationist rhetoric, the Republican strategy was to dismiss Black demands for justice as requests for ever-greater government handouts and to highlight the failings of the Black community in order to attract racially conservative White Southerners who had up to that point faithfully supported the Democratic Party. Through Goldwater, Nixon, Reagan, and onto George H. W. Bush, the campaign tactics were sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle. While Wallace would proclaim "Segregation now, segregation forever," a conservative political action committee supporting George H. W. Bush more delicately ran an ad about Willie Horton, an African American felon, to stoke fear of Black crime. Almost always there was a hint of race in the air and at least an implicit denigration of African Americans.

For White Southerners, it was all too attractive. White Southerners who overwhelmingly sided with the Democratic Party in 1960 overwhelmingly voted for Republican candidates in 1990. And it was not just White Southerners. Since 1990, racial views and partisanship have only become more intertwined at the national level. For much of this recent period, racial resentment has been one of the strongest predictors of party affiliation.[10] Barack Obama's presidency only increased the importance of racial views. As political scientist Michael Tesler has so aptly demonstrated, how people think about health care and a host of other ostensibly nonracial issues is now highly correlated with their racial views.[11]

All of this has fed back into the Trump phenomenon. Research during the 2016 primary campaign showed that White independents and Republicans whose racial identity was important to them were more than thirty points more likely to support Trump than those who did not think their racial identity was important.[12] Another study found that racial resentment, more than populism or authoritarianism, determined who supported Trump and who did not in the general election.[13] In short, Trump's rise is neither surprising nor unusual. It is a logical outgrowth of decades of a Republican strategy on immigration and race.

Superficially, at least, the strategy seems to be incredibly successful. Study after study has now demonstrated a close relationship between how Americans think about immigration and how they vote. My own research shows that this relationship was already firmly in place in 2008 when Barack Obama ran for president for the first time. Americans with the most positive views of undocumented immigrants tended at that time not to vote Republican for president or Congress. Only 18 percent did so for president and only 23 percent did so for Congress. By contrast, a clear majority of those with negative views of undocumented immigrants favored Republican candidates in 2008: 68 percent in congressional elections and 77 percent in the presidential election.

And the relationship only becomes tighter over time. In 2016, as I have already noted, 76 percent of Americans who thought the government should identify and deport undocumented immigrants supported Trump, whereas 77 percent of those who disagreed voted for Clinton.[14] Further analysis shows that views on immigration were equally closely linked to the congressional vote, the gubernatorial vote, and the state legislative vote that year.[15] By the 2018 midterms, there was an almost perfect correlation between immigration and the vote. Almost everyone (91 percent) who opposed granting legal status to people brought into the country as children voted for Republican candidates for Congress, while almost everyone (92 percent) who supported granting legal status to the same immigrants voted Democratic.[16]

But before making causal claims about that relationship, we need to consider the possibility that the link between views on immigration and partisan choice is spurious: a by-product of a connection with one or more other factors such as attitudes on war, the economy, terrorism, gay rights, or race. Any number of the issues on which the two parties have squared off could be driving the link between immigration and party.

One empirical strategy to interrogate the independent effect of immigration on the vote is to control for other factors that might impact it. For that analysis, Michael Rivera and I considered a wide range of positions on other issues, such as attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities, perceptions of the economy, partisanship, ideological position, demographic characteristics, and just about everything else we think matters in presidential or congressional elections.[17] Performing that analysis on the 2008 presidential election, we found that even after taking into account all of these different factors, how White Americans think about immigrants is still strongly related to how they vote. In the 2008 presidential contest, Whites with negative views of immigrants were – all else equal – 24 percent more likely to vote for John McCain than for Barack Obama. Views on immigration mattered to a striking degree, eclipsing other issues in an election taking place against the backdrop of one of the nation's sharpest recessions, ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with the nation's first Black presidential nominee on

the ballot. The relationship between immigration and partisanship is not just a spurious one.

That analysis revealed one other important aspect of America's views on immigration, and in particular how those attitudes are and are not related to views on race. The 2008 data show that, in many ways, race and immigration are connected. How Americans feel about Blacks and how Americans feel about immigrants are related. Those who are anxious about immigration also often resent demands made by African Americans. I suspect that a lot of these feelings toward both groups have the same roots. Indeed, studies have shown that both attitudes on race and attitudes on immigration are closely linked to deep-seated psychological predispositions such as authoritarianism, intolerance, and ethnocentrism.[18]

However, immigration and race represent distinct dimensions, as the data make clear. Attitudes on race and immigration are correlated, but the correlation is not all that strong. In this particular case, the correlation between racial resentment and anti-immigrant attitudes is just 0.28, meaning that relatively little of one attitude can be explained by the other. Even more important, the fact that immigration predicts the vote even *after* taking into account racial views indicates that immigration has an impact beyond race.[19] Further, the fact that we found that the size of the anti-immigration effects is roughly on par with the effects of racial attitudes suggests that immigration represents not only a distinct dimension of American politics but an important one as well.

But before one can be absolutely confident that attitudes on immigration are *actually driving* party identification and the vote, one more test is needed to rule out the possibility that party identification is itself the main driver of change. Individual Americans could be taking cues from partisan leaders, adjusting their stances on immigration to match those of a party that they know, trust, and believe in. Party identification, then, could be driving immigration attitudes, rather than the reverse.

We can examine this issue of "what causes what" by analyzing the same individual's views at different points over time. The key test is whether an individual American's position on immigration at one point in time shapes future changes in that individual's partisanship. That is, can we accurately predict who will shift to the Republican Party in the future based only on how those people think about immigration today? For these causality tests, we focused on panel data from the American National Election Study, which repeatedly asked the same respondents for their views and partisanship. Based on these tests, it is clear that how an individual thinks about immigration at one point in time predicts how their partisanship will change in the future. To be sure, the effect is not large. Over the course of a single year (in one case from 2008 to 2009), those with more negative views on immigration shift about one-quarter of a point more to the right on a seven-point party identification scale.[20] But if these small shifts accumulate over time, they

could help to account for large-scale partisan changes. Others have likewise found that attitudes on immigration help to predict which Americans would ultimately shift their votes from Obama in 2012 to Trump in 2016.[21]

We also find that views on immigration predict future shifts in partisanship at the aggregate or national level. Analyzing national patterns in aggregate White partisanship – the relative share of Democrats and Republicans in the White population – over the last two decades, we found that aggregate views on immigration at one point in time predict changes in aggregate White partisanship in subsequent periods.[22] The size of the effect is again far from massive, but it is meaningful. A standard deviation shift in support for immigration is associated with a little less than one-tenth of a point shift on the five-point partisanship scale.

There are other signs as well. When we look at the media, we see yet more evidence of the power of immigration. Specifically, we find that increases in negative coverage of Latino immigration by the media are correlated with shifts in aggregate White partisanship toward the Republican Party. Analyzing three decades of *New York Times* coverage of immigration, we find that the tone of that coverage is overwhelmingly negative: there were four times as many negative news stories on immigration as there were positive news stories. Even more important, we find that the more negative stories focused on Latino immigrants in one quarter, the more Whites identified with the Republican Party in the next quarter. In this case, the effects were substantial. In the analysis, shifts in media frames on immigration had just as much impact on future partisanship as perceptions of the state of the economy and presidential performance.

Over time, all of this is likely to add up to major changes in the partisan leanings of the nation – or at least of the White population. As Figure 1 shows, during this period of Republican anti-immigrant tactics, there has been a slow, sometimes uneven, but also very clear movement of Whites toward the Republican Party and its candidates. In 1990, before Republican candidates had embarked on the immigrant threat narrative, White voters were almost evenly divided in their support of Democratic and Republican congressional candidates, and there was almost no correlation between attitudes on immigration and White partisanship. In 2016, after years of Republican campaigning against immigrants, views on immigration were tightly linked to the vote and Whites had become decidedly Republican in their congressional choices. In 2016, only 38 percent of White voters favored Democratic candidates in congressional contests. In 2020, the number was only 41 percent. Trump simply represents the apex of a long-term anti-immigrant backlash strategy.

There is little doubt that many factors are contributing to the defection of White America from the Democratic Party. But one can make a plausible case that a backlash to immigration is helping drive this most significant development in American party politics in the twenty-first century. The striking feature of the empirical patterns here is not that immigration matters. U.S. history amply demon-

Declining White Support for House Democrats

strates that many White Americans have felt threatened by different racial/ethnic groups at various times. The arresting feature is, instead, just how wide-ranging those effects remain today. In a political era in which many claim that the significance of race has faded, immigrant-related views impact the political orientation of many members of the White population. Party identification – the most influential variable in U.S. politics – is at least in part a function of the way individual White Americans see immigrants. So, too, is the vote in national contests for president and Congress. In short, the immigration backlash is real and it is powerful.

T he successful efforts of the Republican Party and in particular Donald Trump to bring the issue of immigration to the center of American politics have had major consequences for immigrants, for our polity, and for our nation as a whole.

The most obvious consequence of the increasing centrality of immigration in our politics is the lack of progress on immigration policy. In spite of the fact that large segments of the American public hold fairly positive views of immigrants, and the fact that a majority of Americans seem to be sympathetic to at least subsets of the immigrant population (such as Dreamers), there has been almost no movement forward on immigration policy in the last few decades. Prior to Donald Trump's presidency, the federal government basically experienced a multidecade

stalemate on immigration, passing few or no major policy initiatives. In fact, one could argue that the Republican focus on the costs of immigration and the heightened anxiety that the immigrant threat narrative has produced has led to significant regression in terms of immigration policy. In particular, the Trump administration repealed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program,[23] eliminated Temporary Protected Status for tens of thousands of Central Americans, severely limited the number of refugees allowed into the country, increased the number of apprehensions at the border (particularly by targeting families), widened the scope of deportations, spent considerable funds to extend the border wall with Mexico, prevented asylum seekers from entering the country, and, at one point, banned almost all legal immigration to the United States.

Critically, shifts in policy have not only occurred at the federal level. As I already noted, in the last two decades, state legislatures have passed over three thousand laws that dealt explicitly with immigration or immigrants. Moreover, the clear majority of these substantively significant laws have served to limit rather than expand immigrants' rights or interests.[24] During this period, states have done everything from reducing or eliminating immigrants' access to public services in education, health, and welfare, to allowing the police to target individuals suspected of being undocumented. Unfortunately, for immigrants themselves, the states with the largest Latino populations have been the most active and the most aggressive. Texas, a state with one of the highest shares of Latino and undocumented residents, passed seven anti-immigrant laws between 2007 and 2009, including measures to detect and deter undocumented immigrant use of state Medicaid, to reduce eligibility for the state's Children's Health Insurance Program, and to require private companies that work with the state to demonstrate that they do not employ unauthorized workers.

But Texas is not alone. Arizona, a state in which Latinos make up 30 percent of the population, passed twelve anti-immigrant measures over that same time period. Arizona's 2010 efforts included the passage of the well-known SB1070, one of the strictest anti-immigrant measures ever passed. Over the same time frame, Colorado, likewise, ushered eleven anti-immigrant bills into law, including one requiring that employers be notified of the prohibition against hiring an unauthorized alien, and another that tied unemployment insurance benefits to citizenship.

Further analysis in *White Backlash* indicates that the backlash is not confined to measures that *explicitly* mention immigrants or immigration. The immigrant threat narrative has been so pervasive that it has crept into debates about policy issues that are ostensibly not about immigration. Public discussions related to welfare, health, education, criminal justice, taxes, and many other subjects have been infused with images and stories of the undocumented and the heavy economic, cultural, and criminal costs that these immigrants put on American society.

The net result is that state policy across a host of different arenas has become intricately connected to the immigrant population. In particular, how states raise and spend their money is closely linked to the size of the immigrant population. Table 1 demonstrates this relationship at its simplest level. I compare basic state policy in heavily Latino states to policy in states with smaller Latino populations. I focus on the size of the Latino population because I believe that the broader Latino population is the most visible shortcut for the immigrant population in the minds of many White Americans.[25] Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that when White Americans think about immigration, the image they have in their head is an undocumented Latino.[26]

As Table 1 reveals, larger concentrations of Latinos tend to be associated with state-level policies that are more regressive, more punitive, and less generous. Redistributive spending – money for health care and education – is lower in states where the beneficiaries of the policies are more likely to be Latinos.[27] In the case of health care funding, the gap is sizeable. Medicaid spending drops 32 percent in heavily Latino states. The pattern is the opposite for punitive criminal justice spending. In states where Latinos represent a large share of the population and could be the target of tougher laws and harsher sentences, spending on prisons is substantially higher. Again, the absolute difference in the share of the budget going to prisons is small, but the gap represents a 21 percent increase in the share of the budget going to prisons. Critically, these relationships persist in regressions after controlling for a range of other factors that could be driving spending patterns. As the Latino population grows, Americans become less willing to invest in public services like education, health, and welfare, and are more willing to fund prisons. In other words, when the policy is more apt to impact Latinos, benefits decline and punishment increases.[28] All of this indicates that America's increasingly diverse population is generating a real, wide-ranging backlash. It also means that as immigration has become more central to our politics, immigrants have been the ones who lose most.

Another obvious outgrowth of the Republican Party's heavy focus on immigration is electoral success. The immigrant threat narrative may not win extra votes in every election or in every context, but the Republican Party's shift to the right on immigration has almost certainly contributed to their largely winning the electoral battle against Democrats. Since the mid-1990s, when Republicans began their immigrant threat narrative campaign, the Republican Party has gone from being essentially shut out of government to having a relatively dominant position. In the mid-1990s, Democrats controlled the presidency, House, Senate, and the majority of state governments. As I write at the end of 2020, Republicans control the presidency and the Senate, they have solidified a conservative majority in the Supreme Court and recast the federal and appeals court judiciary,

Table 1

Government Policy in Heavily Latino States Is More Regressive
(Share of All State Spending)

	States with a Small Latino Population	States with a Large Latino Population	Proportional Difference in Spending
Spending			
Health Care	3.7%	2.5%	−32%
Corrections	3.9%	4.7%	+21%
Education	25.8%	24.8%	−4%
Taxation			
Sales Tax	27.5%	36.4%	+32%
Property Tax	5.8%	1.3%	−78%

Source: Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances, U.S. Census.

they occupy the majority of the governor's mansions, they control a majority of state legislatures, and they are the majority party in a majority of states. Many different factors have contributed to this decades-long partisan shift, but the willingness of Republican leaders increasingly and vocally to embrace an anti-immigrant narrative has rewarded the Party with a larger and larger slice of the White vote and widespread electoral victories from the local to the national level. Donald Trump, perhaps more than anyone else, knows this. As he told *The New York Times* Editorial Board: "I just say, 'We will build the wall!' and they go nuts."

Whether the immigrant backlash strategy will continue to produce political victories in the future, as the racial and ethnic minority population continues to grow, is another question altogether. But it is worth noting that there are still many White Democrats with relatively racially conservative or anti-immigrant views. And when informed that the United States is poised to become a majority-minority nation in the middle part of this century, experiments show that White views tend to shift even further to the right.[29] Given that White Americans still represent over 70 percent of all voters, and still more White voters could defect from the Democratic Party, Republicans could potentially reap the benefits of an anti-immigrant narrative long into the future.

A less obvious but equally important consequence of the immigrant threat campaign being waged by the Republican Party is an increasingly racially divided

electorate. Just as many Whites have been attracted by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Republican Party, many racial and ethnic minorities have been repelled. Over the last few decades, more and more racial and ethnic minorities have entered the country, more and more have become engaged in the political arena, and perhaps most important, they have spoken with an increasingly clear political voice. In particular, the last three decades have witnessed a dramatic shift in Asian American partisanship. In the early 1990s, the Republican Party held a slight edge among Asian Americans, but by 2018, the number of Asian Americans who identify as Democrats outnumbers the number of Asian American Republicans two-to-one.[30] Movement among the Latino is less obvious, but what is clear is that both Latinx and African American voters remain firmly entrenched in the Democratic Party. Two-thirds or more of the Latinx vote typically sides with the Democratic Party. For African Americans, the figure is generally closer to 85 percent.

All of this is readily apparent in Figure 2, which illustrates the changing racial composition of the two major parties over time. The White share of Democratic Party votes has declined sharply since the 1960s. As the population has become more diverse, and as more minorities have shifted to the Democratic Party, the Democratic base has become more diverse. Today, a little fewer than half of Democratic voters are non-White. By contrast, Republicans have remained steadfastly White despite the increasing diversity of the nation. Almost all of the votes that Republican candidates receive now come from White voters. Nearly 90 percent of the vote that McCain won in 2008, that Romney won in 2012, and that Trump garnered in 2016 and 2020 came from White Americans. The Republican Party is for almost all intents and purposes a White party. Politics in America is not perfectly correlated with race, but it seems to be deeply and increasingly intertwined with it.

The end result is that American democracy is now divided more by race than any other demographic factor. The centrality of race for the vote was evident in 2016 and is illustrated in Figure 3, which provides a snapshot of the roles of race, class, religion, and other factors in American democracy. Specifically, the figure shows the gap between different kinds of groups in the likelihood of voting for the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton. The gap between Whites who gave only 37 percent of their votes to the Democratic candidate and African Americans who gave 89 percent of their votes to the same candidate was a whopping 51 points. That is more like a racial chasm than a racial gap. The gap between Whites and Asian Americans was a robust 42 points; between Whites and Latinos it was a substantial 38 points.

Those racial gaps far outweighed any of the class divides that the exit polls recorded in 2016. The gap by income (seven points), education (four points), and union membership (five points) all fall far short of the racial divides. Critically, it is important to note that the effects of different measures of class work in different directions in 2016. Wealthier Americans are more likely than poorer Americans

Figure 2

The Changing Racial Composition of the Democratic and Republican Parties: Non-White Share of the Presidential Vote by Party and Year
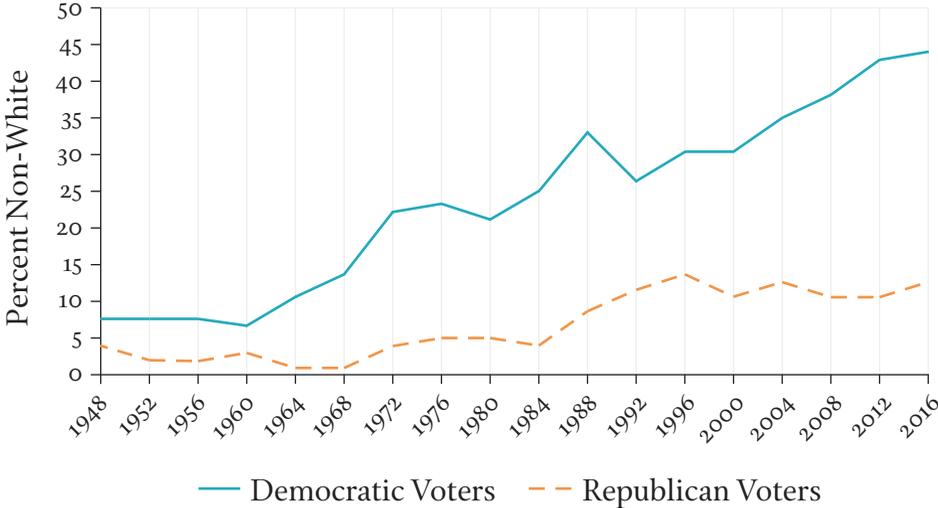
Source: American National Election Study, Cumulative File.

Figure 3

Race, Class, Religion, and Other Demographic Divides in the 2016 Presidential Contest
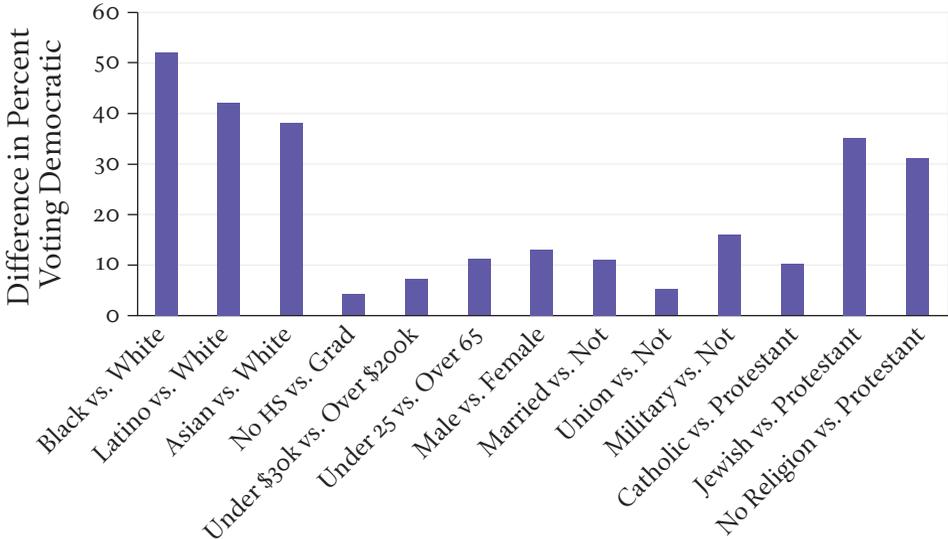
Source: National Exit Poll.

to vote Republican – a pattern that aligns with traditional class-based theories of American politics. But Americans with postgraduate degrees are actually less likely than Americans with a high school diploma to favor the Republican candidate. In other words, increased class status is sometimes associated with the political left, and sometimes associated with the political right; this pattern repeats across elections and time, not just in 2016. If I try to add all of the effects of class together by comparing the votes of wealthy, well-educated, full-time workers to the votes of lower-income, unemployed, high school dropouts, I find that class plays almost no net role in the vote.[31] Because some class-based factors pushed toward Trump, and others led toward Clinton, the net effect of being high class was only four points. Not only does race have a larger impact than class when it comes to Americans' political diversity, it also has a much clearer and more consistent impact. Of course, as the media has repeatedly highlighted, there are growing class divisions *within* the White population, but that does not negate the fact that race more than class shapes the overall electorate.

The 2016 racial divides also dwarf divisions by gender (thirteen points), age (eleven points), marital status (eleven points), or military status (sixteen points). The only factor that begins to rival race is religion. The gaps between Protestants and atheists (thirty-one points) and between Protestants and Jews (twenty-five points) are both quite substantial, but fall somewhat below all of the White–non-White divides.

The electoral story in 2016 is one in which race was central; but the story in 2016 is also not unique. The numbers for 2020, which are still coming in, reveal a strikingly similar story. Looking across an array of other recent elections, I found remarkably similar electoral patterns from the national to the local level. In most electoral contests, American politics today pits the White majority against the bulk of the racial and ethnic minority population.

Politics is bound to create division, but when those divisions so closely mirror racial and ethnic identity, the situation is troubling. With race and party so closely matching each other, it is perhaps not surprising that hostility between Democrats and Republicans is increasing. Today, Americans tend to view fellow partisans as patriotic, well-informed, and altruistic, while they tend to attribute the opposite characteristics to members of the opposite party. Experiments reveal that partisan division has become so heated that Democrats and Republicans now regularly and openly discriminate against each other.[32] When our political dividing lines begin to look a lot like a racial census, larger concerns about inequality, conflict, and discrimination emerge, and we are in danger of being driven apart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ENDNOTES

[1] The Democracy Fund Voter Study Group, 2016 VOTER Survey Full Data Set, June 2016, https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2016-elections/data.

[2] See Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan Hajnal, *White Backlash : Immigration, Race, and American Politics* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2015).

[3] See Michael Rivera, *The Determinants of State Immigration Policy* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2015).

[4] See Gary Miller and Norman Schofield, "The Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions in the U.S.," *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (3) (2008) : 433–450.

[5] See Tom Wong, *The Politics of Immigration : Partisanship, Demographic Change, and American National Identity* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2017).

[6] See Peter Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society : Immigration and Nativism in America* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2011).

[7] See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land : Patterns of American Nativism : 1860 – 1925,* 2nd ed. (New York : Atheneum, 1985).

[8] See Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery : The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1992).

[9] See Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction : The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York : W. W. Norton and Company, 1991). See also Edward Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution : Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1989).

[10] Nicholas A. Valentino and David O. Sears, "Old Times There Are Not Forgotten : Race and Partisan Realignment in the Contemporary South," *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (9) (2005).

[11] See Michael Tesler, "The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care : How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Race and Racial Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (3) (2012) : 690–704.

[12] See Michael Tesler and John Sides, "How Political Science Helps Explain the Rise of Trump : The Role of White Identity and Grievances," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2016.

[13] See Adam Enders and Steven Small, "Racial Prejudice Not Populism or Authoritarianism Predicts Support for Trump over Clinton," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 2016.

[14] A range of different surveys from the American National Election Study to the Cooperative Congressional Election Study across different election years and different levels of

office, from the national to the state level, all show a tight relationship between immigration views and the vote. See Abrajano and Hajnal, *White Backlash*.

15 Author's analysis of the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, https://cces .gov.harvard.edu/.

16 Author's analysis of the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, https://cces .gov.harvard.edu/.

17 See Zoltan Hajnal and Michael Rivera, "Immigration, Latinos, and White Partisan Politics : The New Democratic Defection," *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (4) (2014) : 773–789.

18 See Donald Kinder and Wendy Kam, *Us Against Them : Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2012).

19 Immigration has mattered beyond race in more recent elections as well. See Marc Hoogeh and Ruth Dassonneville, "Explaining the Trump Vote : The Effect of Racial Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments," *PS : Political Science and Politics* 51 (3) (2018) : 528–535. They find, for example, that immigration attitudes rivaled racial considerations in explaining the vote in 2016.

20 The effect of immigration views on party identification is also apparent in two earlier panel studies from 2000–2004 and 1992–1993.

21 See John Sides, *Race, Religion, and Immigration in 2016* (Washington, D.C. : The Democracy Fund Voter Study Group, 2017).

22 That analysis combines data from the two different data sets that most regularly ask about attitudes on immigration (The Gallup Poll) and partisanship (The CBS News/ *New York Times* Poll). For attitudes on immigration, we focused on answers to the question : "Should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased ?"

23 The Supreme Court has since struck down Trump's repeal of DACA. See *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California* 591 US _ (2020).

24 See Rivera, *The Determinants of State Immigration Policy*.

25 Interestingly, whereas the size of the Latino population has a consistent, robust effect on policy, alternate analysis reveals relatively few connections between the size of the undocumented population or the size of the foreign-born population and state policy.

26 See Ted Brader, Elizabeth Suhay, and Nicholas Valentino, "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration ? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat," *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (4) (2008) : 959–978.

27 Matthew C. Fellowes and Gretchen Rowe found similar patterns for welfare in "Politics and the New American Welfare States," *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (2) (2004) : 362–373.

28 There is, however, some good news for the Latinx and immigrant population. Our research in *White Backlash* also finds that once the Latino population share crosses a certain threshold, policy begins to shift back to the left. California's recent shift toward more welcoming immigration policy (including everything from offering undocumented immigrants in-state tuition, drivers' licenses, and the opportunity to practice law to multibillion dollar increases in education funding and significantly more lenient criminal justice policies) provides a clear illustration of this phenomenon. A state that was once the leader in anti-immigrant policy-making has transformed itself into a lead-

er in providing creative, forward-thinking policies on immigration, largely thanks to its growing immigrant population and its recent shift to majority-minority status.

[29] Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, "On the Precipice of a 'Majority-Minority' America : Perceived Status Threat From the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans' Political Ideology," *Psychological Science* 25 (6) (2014).

[30] See Zoltan Hajnal, *Dangerously Divided : How Race and Class Shape Winning and Losing in American Politics* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[31] To do this analysis and to combine these categories, I used data from the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

[32] See Shanto Iyengar and Sean Westwood, "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines : New Evidence on Group Polarization," *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3) (2015) : 690–707.

Immigration, Race & Political Polarization

Michael Hout & Christopher Maggio

Americans' views of immigration are substantially more positive than political discourse since 2010 might suggest. And they are becoming more positive. So too are Whites' views of Blacks, as racial resentment declined from 2010 to 2018. Views of immigration and race became more correlated over the last twenty years. And both are more correlated with political party preference now than at any time on record. While Republicans' views of immigration and their racial resentment have changed very little since 2010, Democrats' views of immigration have become far more positive and their racial resentment has declined substantially. The consequences of these trends were borne out dramatically in the 2016 presidential election. In combination, the two attitudes predict well who voted for Trump and who voted for Clinton. These trends and correlations make clear that xenophobic Americans are not ascendant, they are desperate. The dynamics of race, immigration, and polarization tilt in favor of both more immigration and a more progressive view of racial disparities.

The 2016 U.S. presidential primaries and general election left the unmistakable impression on many people that Americans were reverting to xenophobic, anti-immigrant sentiments of the kind not seen since the 1920s. In office, President Trump immediately began acting out those sentiments. In his first week in office, the new president issued executive orders directing Border Patrol officers to detain people at the Southern border of the United States and banning entry from seven countries.[1] Two weeks later, he initiated the infamous practice of separating children from their parents, sometimes for months.[2]

Each action met with prompt and often organized opposition. Protests in the streets and motions in the courts halted or delayed the Trump administration's immigration policies. Polls showed that ordinary people disapproved of the president's actions. On inauguration day, 41 percent of Americans disapproved of Trump's performance as president (already high by historical standards); after a month in office, the disapproval rate was 51 percent.[3]

Which represented American public opinion on immigration: the president's policies or the demonstrations against them? To answer that, we turn to high-quality surveys of representative samples of Americans. Since 1994, the General Social

Survey has asked American adults if they think immigration to the United States should be increased, decreased, or remain the same.[4] Figure 1 shows the percentages of all residents, likely voters, and White likely voters saying immigration should be reduced or increased, by year.[5] Social scientists have asked about immigration in ways both subtle and blunt, but this simple, direct approach works as well as any and better than most for quantifying positive and negative sentiments.[6]

Americans' support for immigration grew from 1994 to 2018 as more residents, voters, and White voters said they thought immigration should be increased, while fewer said the government should reduce immigration. Reducing immigration was, by far, the most popular view in the 1990s; two-thirds of adults thought that was what the government should do. By 2018, roughly one-third (35 percent) held that view; 42 percent thought immigration should remain the same, while 22 percent supported an increase in immigration. The gap between "reduced" and "increased," once fifty-eight percentage points, narrowed to thirteen percentage points in 2018.

Likely voters – and White likely voters in particular – could conceivably differ substantially from nonvoters.[7] The dashed lines in the figure make clear, though, that support for increasing immigration included likely voters and even White likely voters. The changes did not depend on subpopulation; the trend lines for voters and White voters are very close to the trend lines for all residents. To avoid clutter, we do not show the redundant third alternative, "remain the same," in the graph. The percentage saying "remain the same" rose from 28 percent to 39 percent between 1994 and 2010 and changed only slightly after 2010. Of the three options, the preference for increased immigration has been rising since 2012, while the preference to "remain the same" leveled off and the preference for reduced immigration waned.

American public opinion is notoriously partisan. Republicans and Democrats differ on many issues; liberals and conservatives differ on even more.[8] Immigration is no exception. As Figure 2 shows, in 1994, White Republican likely voters were significantly more likely than Democrats to say that immigration should be reduced.[9] In the intervening years, what was a gap grew into a chasm. Among Republicans, the percentage saying immigration should be reduced decreased from 76 percent in 1994 to 62 percent in 2000, a significant fourteen-point drop in just six years; it has not changed significantly since then, though, still standing at 62 percent in 2018. White Democrats became less and less likely to endorse reducing immigration, accelerating downward just as Republicans leveled off; by 2018, only 21 percent of White Democrats said immigration should be reduced. From 1994 to 2010, Democrats and independents held very similar views; as Democrats accelerated their shift from opposition to support for immigration in recent years, independents changed more slowly.

We began with a question of whether the public supported President Trump on immigration in the first two years of his administration. The partisan gap in Figure 2 implies "it's complicated." Republicans supported reducing immigra-

Figure 1
Percentage of Respondents Saying Immigration Should Be Reduced or Increased by Year and Subpopulation, 1994 – 2018
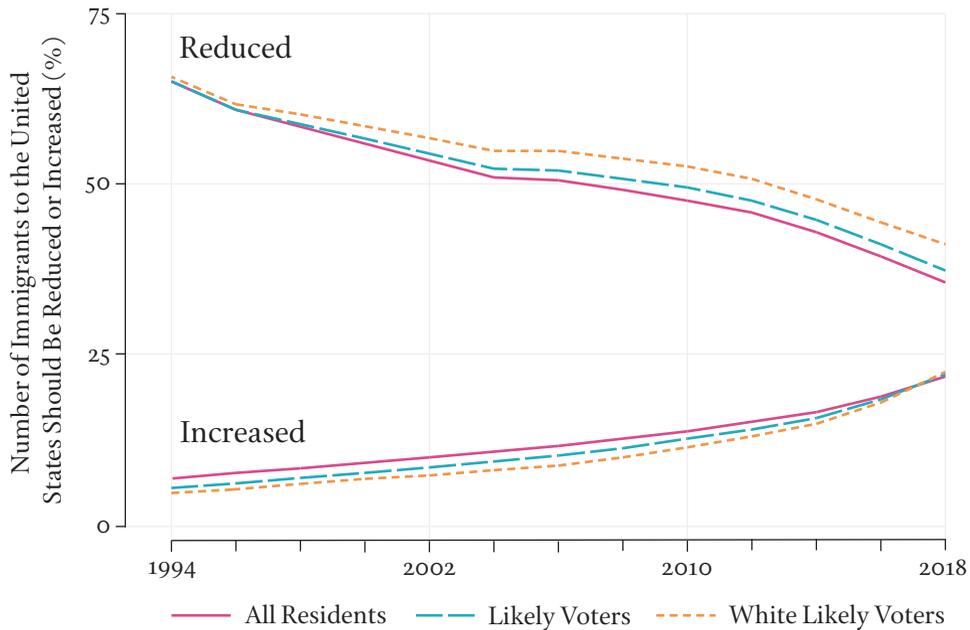
Note : We smoothed the raw data to reduce the influence of annual sampling variations on interpretations. Source : Authors' calculations from the General Social Surveys, 1994–2018.

tion as much in 2018 as they did in 2000, so the Trump administration anticipated correctly that their Republican base would approve when they tried to reduce immigration. Protests erupted because the overwhelming majority of Democrats, including almost four out of five White Democrats, either wanted to continue immigration at current levels or see it increased. On many other contentious issues, Republicans moved right over time, while Democrats stood still or moved right more slowly,[10] creating partisan sorting or polarization. In the case of immigration, the polarization developed when Republicans stood still and Democrats moved left.

White racial resentment has been another feature of the Trump movement. Three major ethnographies of White Americans' political perspectives *before* the 2016 election identified the politics of resentment as the key to politics in the Obama years. And Trump's success in the election

Figure 2
Preference for Reducing Immigration by Year and Political Party:
White Likely Voters, 1994 – 2018

Note: We smoothed the raw data to reduce the influence of annual sampling variations on interpretations. Source: Authors' calculations from the General Social Surveys, 1994–2018.

owed a debt to resentment, even though scholars debate the relative contributions of race, economics, and sexuality to the outcome of the 2016 election.[11]

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land* describes how Louisiana Tea Party activists complained to her that opportunity in America had become a line that stretched on and on.[12] People like them were stuck in place, they said, because "line cutters" – Blacks and immigrants – were cutting into the line ahead of them. They resented the special treatment.

Political scientist Katherine J. Cramer's ethnography of Scott Walker supporters in Wisconsin, *The Politics of Resentment*, found even stronger resentments.[13] There the axis was described to her as rural-urban, but it was patently clear that "urban" was a euphemism for Black. Walker's small-town base also resented the cosmopolitan elites in Madison and Milwaukee who promoted the cause of the urban poor at the expense of their struggling rural communities. In an appendix, Cramer debunked many of her subjects' claims about state appropriations. But people spread the false analysis of the state budget because they believed it had to be true.

For their book on *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, sociologist Theda Skocpol and governance scholar Vanessa Williamson followed Northern and Midwestern Tea Party members, attending meetings and rallies and conducting open-ended interviews with individuals and groups.[14] They found the same racially tinged resentment, in their case in the "take our country back" rhetoric they heard in meetings and at rallies. Without saying out loud that they were taking the country back from Blacks and immigrants, Tea Partiers made clear that they were White people taking something back from non-Whites in the strong language they used to describe President Obama and other Democrats.

Racial resentment has also been a staple of quantitative political research.[15] Among the many ways researchers measured racial attitudes over the years, items that probed racial resentments have special efficacy.[16] Several versions of the scale can be found in the literature;[17] we use an adaptation based on items asked in the General Social Survey. The key item in all of these scales is:

> Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.

Some scholars have questioned whether this item blends race with ideology, psychology, or other confounders. If so, it would complicate interpretation. Recent research by social psychologist Alicia Simmons and social scientist Lawrence Bobo used follow-up questions to better understand Americans' responses to these questions.[18] Their careful parsing of answers to the questions that make up the scale resolve the most important ambiguities in the language of the questions and make clear that conservative and liberal Americans hear the questions similarly and answer in ways that reflect their views on whether Blacks experience racial discrimination today and whether offsetting it should be a priority for public policy.

To create a racial resentment scale, we combined this key item with two others. We gave respondents one point on racial resentment if they agreed somewhat or two points if they agreed strongly with this statement; we subtracted one point if they disagreed somewhat with the statement or two points if they disagreed strongly. We then added another point if they said racial differences in income and poverty come about because "Blacks just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty," and subtracted a point if they identified racial discrimination as a source of Black-White differences. The resulting scale had a rather nonintuitive range from − 3 to +3, so we used a simple linear transformation to put it on a scale that hypothetically runs from zero to one hundred – think of it as analogous to converting degrees Fahrenheit into degrees centigrade.[19] Figure 3 shows the results for White likely voters, the subpopulation most at risk of racial resentment.[20]

Figure 3
Racial Resentment by Year and Political Party :
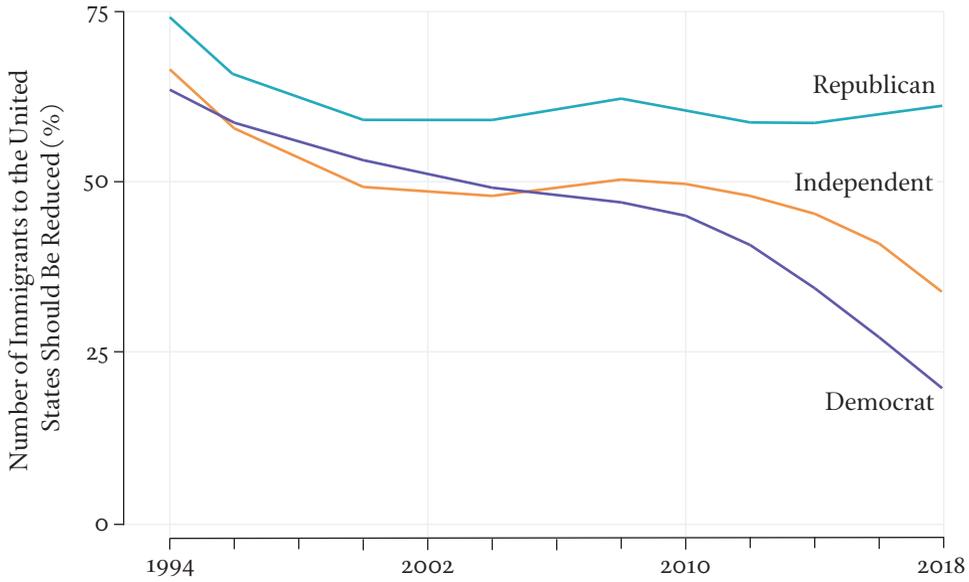White Likely Voters, 1994 – 2018
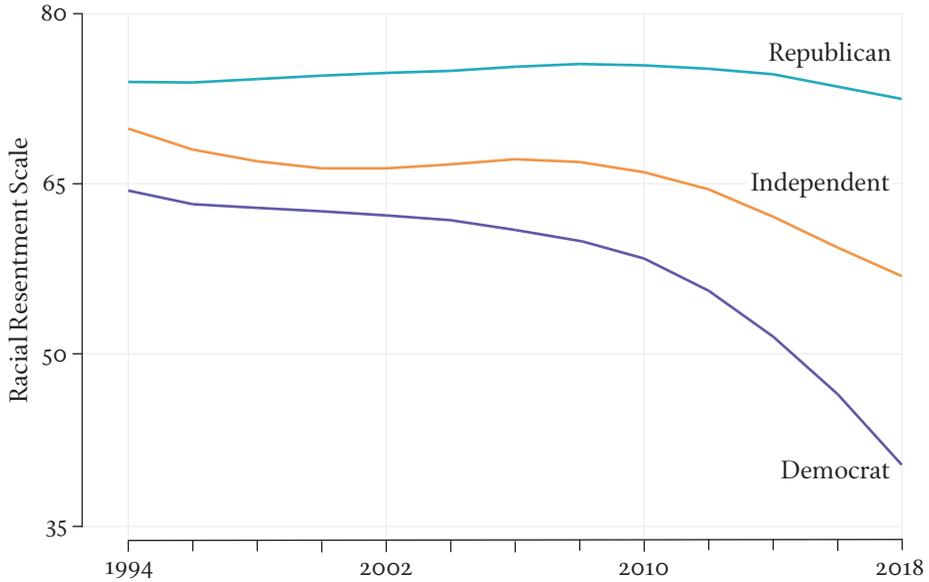
Note : We smoothed the raw data to reduce the influence of annual sampling variations on interpretations. Source : Authors' calculations from the General Social Surveys, 1994–2018.

Whites' racial resentment in 1994 was very high : seventy-four among Republicans and sixty-four among Democrats, with independents in between. As with immigration attitudes (see Figure 2), little happened for ten to twelve years, then Democrats began a period of rapid change. By 2018, White Democrats' score on racial resentment had dropped to forty, while White Republicans' score held steady (the change of less than a point was not statistically significant).

These quantitative results confirm the political edge to racial resentment found in the qualitative studies,[21] but fail to confirm that racial resentment swelled on the right. America's major parties grew further apart on racial issues because, through the Obama and Trump presidencies, White Democrats gave up their racial resentment.

The racial resentment scale has three elements : the beliefs that Blacks should not get "special favors," that Blacks lack the will to climb out of poverty, and that discrimination is not important for the Black-White gap. We checked to see if any one of these elements drove the trend among White Democrats while the other two hovered unchanged. The item-by-item trends (not shown) were steepest for

the core resentment element (no "special favors"), less so for the individualistic component ("lack will"), and least for discrimination. In short, the results in Figure 3 would look even more dramatic if we used a single item instead of the three-item scale. Further analysis showed that White liberals, a subpopulation that overlaps with White Democrats but not perfectly, reduced their racial resentment even more than White Democrats did.[22]

Our data were collected over many years, but the samples did not carry over from year to year. In short, we are inferring changes in people's attitudes from the difference between them and people like them who were interviewed in previous years. We cannot rule out the possibility that some of the patterns we have discussed reflect a party-switching dynamic whereby racially resentful Democrats quit identifying with the Democrats and took their resentments with them to the independent or Republican column. But though we cannot rule out that possibility, we regard it as unlikely. First, there were more Democrats, not fewer, over time. Second, we can show that Democrats who were too young to vote in the 1990s hold significantly less racial resentment than Democrats who were already in the electorate in the 1990s. That new-voter dynamic is consistent with our interpretation of the trends.

To this point, we have shown substantial partisan rifts in White voters' views of immigration and racial resentment. Both became larger recently and the underlying dynamic of each has been a shift to the left among White Democrats. Race has been a component of every immigration debate in American history, of course.[23] The open question is the extent to which White Americans link them in their minds today.

A correlation coefficient is an old and popular statistic that compares *co*variation between two scores with the variation in the two scores separately. In theory, a correlation coefficient can take any value from 1, the maximum, to −1, the minimum: 1 means that if one of the variables changes, the other changes perfectly proportionately in the same direction; 0 means that one is perfectly independent of the other; and −1 means that if one variable changes, the other changes perfectly proportionately in the opposite direction. We calculated the correlation coefficient between peoples' immigration preference and their racial resentment for each General Social Survey year that included both measures. The results appear in Figure 4.[24]

The correlation between immigration preferences and racial resentment was significant in every year. The steady correlation of 0.30 throughout the 1990s and early 2000s was impressively strong by the standards of opinion data of this sort. The rise from 0.30 to 0.50 by 2018 indicates an uncommonly strong relationship. Uncertainty in the data makes it hard to say whether the upward trend started as early as 2006 or as late as 2012. The smoothed trend line supports the idea of small increases followed by an acceleration. The relatively low data point in 2012 hints

Figure 4
Correlation between Immigration Preferences and Racial Resentment by
Year : Non-Hispanic Whites, 1994 – 2018
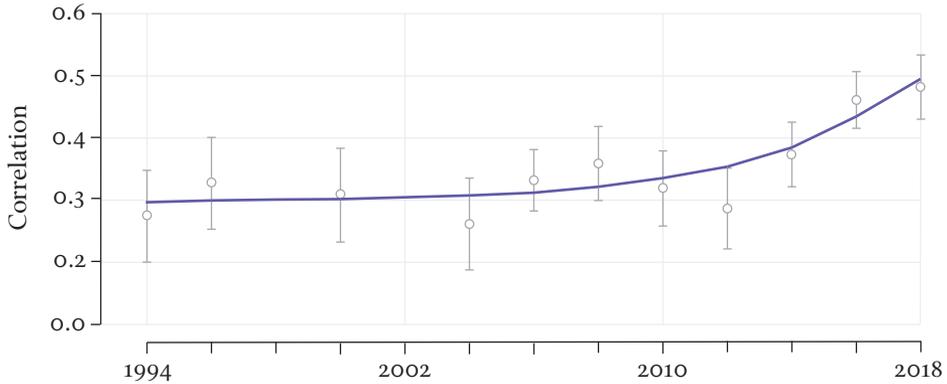
Note : Circles show raw data. Vertical lines show 95 percent confidence intervals around the
raw data. The solid line shows the smoothed trend. Source : Authors' calculations from the
General Social Surveys, 1994–2018.

that maybe change came later and more dramatically. Either way, the increase be-
tween 2010 and 2018 is statistically significant by any standard.

Thus, every measure we have indicates that Whites' views of immigration
are closely tied to their views of race. Given the large partisan differences in each
opinion (see Figures 2 and 3), the growing correlation might be just another man-
ifestation of partisan sorting. Further analysis (not shown) makes clear that the
connection goes beyond partisan sorting. Statistical adjustments for the common
dependence on political party identification reduced the net correlation between
immigration and racial resentment to 0.40, indicating that partisan sorting ac-
counted for half the increase.[25] In recent years, the correlation between immigra-
tion preferences and racial resentment has been stronger for Democrats than for
Republicans. Thus, the trend is driven by Democrats connecting support for im-
migration with discrimination and exclusion of Blacks more than by Republicans
connecting non-White immigrants with their own racial resentments.

The partisan sorting of immigration and racial attitudes implies that peo-
ple's votes will align with their views on these issues. But we cannot say
from evidence already in hand how strongly aligned votes were with at-
titudes or if the alignment is spurious : that is, whether the alignment goes away
when we statistically control for other factors that are known to be important pre-

dictors of how people vote. So we built a comprehensive multivariate model of vote choice in the 2016 general election and the Republican primaries that year. The variables in the model are listed in the caption of Figure 5; details of our analysis are available in our accompanying SocArXiv paper. As in the preceding analyses, we focus attention on non-Latinx Whites. We switch data sets for this part of the analysis. Up to this point, we have shown results from the General Social Survey. Here we show results from the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES) because it has far more cases and includes cases from every state. The CCES data also have multiple measures of a conservative approach to race. We use that richness and reflect the switch by referring to conservative racial attitudes when referring to results from the CCES data.

People who favored reducing immigration were significantly more likely to vote for Donald Trump in 2016 – in the general election and even more so in the Republican primaries – than were people who favored increasing immigration (see Figure 5). In the general election, 45 percent of Whites at the seventy-fifth percentile of opposition to immigration voted for Trump (remember this marginal percentage removes other factors, including conservative racial attitude, by statistical adjustment); just 36 percent of otherwise identical Whites at the twenty-fifth percentile did, a marginal difference of nine percentage points. The marginal difference in the primaries was twelve percentage points.

Just as strong was the tendency for those who expressed conservative racial views to vote for Trump in the general election; the marginal difference between Whites at the seventy-fifth and twenty-fifth percentiles of racial attitudes was also nine percentage points. The racial-conservatism gradient was less steep in the Republican primaries, mainly because the few White Republicans at the twenty-fifth percentile of the racial attitudes scale had a relatively high probability of voting for Trump for other reasons; the marginal difference was seven percentage points.

The combination of opposing immigration and taking a conservative position on race is a potent expression of the nativist perspective. It is reasonable to ask if the two views compound each other or if having one view or the other is sufficient. We tested that idea statistically by adding an "interaction" between these two factors to our model. In most tests, the interaction was statistically significant but *negative*. Thus, one or the other sufficed. Either opposing immigration or conservative racial attitudes were sufficient to drive a White voter to Trump. If either view was already strongly conservative, an increase in the other added less to Trump support than if the first view was moderate.

These relationships held when we limited the sample to the swing states.[26] This is the third replication of a basic pattern that implies that Trump's candidacy exerted a strong appeal based on immigration and racial resentment, beyond the usual appeal these factors had for Republican candidates in previous elections or for Republican Party identification. First, in 2016 and 2018, the correlation be-

Figure 5
Marginal Changes in the Percentage Voting for Donald Trump in 2016 at the Twenty-Fifth and Seventy-Fifth Percentiles of Opposition to Immigration and Conservative Racial Attitudes in the Republican Primary and the General Election : White Voters, 2016
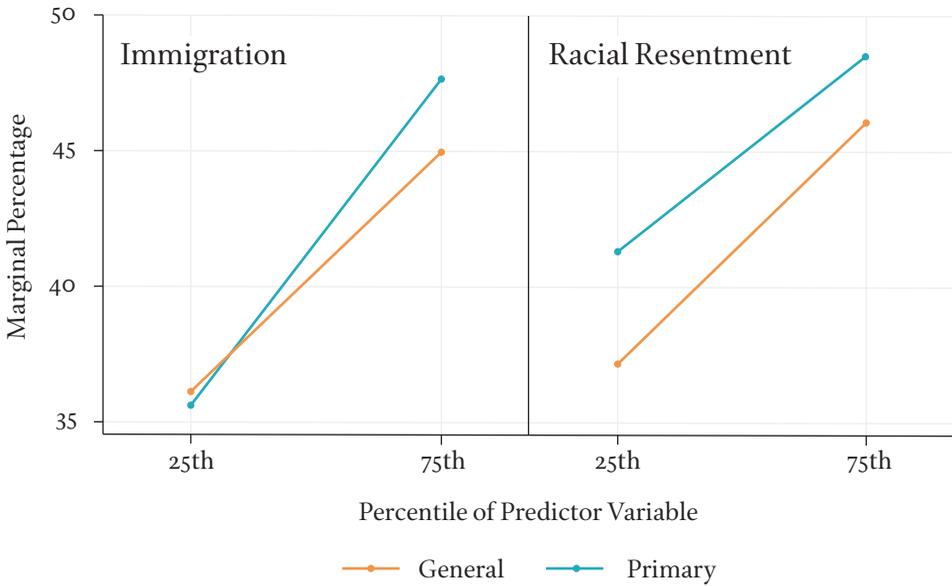
Note : Marginal percentages isolate the association expected between opposition to immigration (left panel) and conservative racial attitudes (right panel) and voting for Trump after controlling for other variables in the model. The model included : 2012 vote (personal and county-level), gender, year of birth, children under eighteen, marital status, immigration generation, education (nonlinear), income (nonlinear), employment status, union membership, county-level percent non-Hispanic White (2010–2014), county-level logged population density (2010–2014), time at current address, time in current city, state of residence, attitudes about household finances, attitudes about the national economy, and political ideology (liberal-conservative). Source : Authors' calculations from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2016.

tween opposition to immigration and racial resentment was higher than before and almost as strong with controls for party as without ($r = 0.5$ without controlling for party and $r = 0.4$ after controlling for party). Second, marginal differences were as big in the primaries (where all candidates are Republicans) as in the general election (opposition to immigration actually had a somewhat higher marginal difference in the primary results than in the general election, but it was the other way around for racial resentment). Third, the marginal differences in 2016 were as big in swing states as in the nation at large. Together these findings convinced us

that opposition to immigration and racial resentment tap into something about Donald Trump's specific appeal, beyond usual Republican support.

For additional clues about Trump's candidacy, we separated the items in the CCES racial resentment scale and refit our voting model with one racial resentment indicator at a time.[27] Generally speaking, the separate racial items predicted Trump voting at a statistically significant level.[28] We note two exceptions. First, people who often felt fearful of other races were almost as likely to vote for Trump versus Clinton in the general election as people who seldom felt fearful, but were more likely to vote for Trump versus all candidates and all options including non-voters, as well as in the primaries. Second, in the Republican primaries, Trump voters were actually less likely to say that racism is rare, highlighting the more complicated task of distinguishing Trump support from more general Republican orthodoxy in certain respects.

Immigration and race are as entwined now as they have been throughout American history. Their tangle is the organizing principle of this issue of *Dædalus*. Other contributors to this issue have been charged with explicating the history and current manifestations of how immigration and race move together. Our part has been to document how immigration and race shape current politics.

The hallmark of this era is polarization, a combination of strong views, nearly even divide, and an unwillingness to compromise. It is not exactly a pair of opposed silos that agree completely within and disagree completely with the other side. Political scientists have thoroughly debunked that one.[29] The mass public is just too hard to constrain.[30] American polarization is more subtle. It reflects "partisan sorting" in which views that despite being weakly correlated with one another are nonetheless each correlated with party identification and liberal-conservative ideology.[31] Informed by this literature, we approached the politics of immigration and racial resentment expecting to see patterns similar to what data on, say, abortion and taxes reveal. Republicans tend to oppose both abortion and taxes; Democrats tend to support both abortion rights and spending for social programs. But the correlation between attitudes toward abortion and taxes (approximately 0.1) is weak compared with how each variable correlates with political party identification (0.2 for abortion and 0.4 for opposing social spending). This is what scholars mean by weak constraint but partisan sorting among issues.[32]

In fact, the General Social Survey data reveal more constraint between immigration and racial resentment than between other contentious issues. Among White likely voters, opposing immigration had a correlation with racial resentment of 0.3 in the late 1990s and 0.5 in 2018 (see Figure 4). Meanwhile, the patterns in Figures 2 and 3 translate to correlations of 0.15 in the 1990s and 0.5 in 2018. In short, opposition to immigration and racial resentment showed more constraint than partisan sorting until relatively recently. How can we account for the unusual overlap?

As other essays in this volume make clear, immigration has always been racially inflected. Whites from Spain, England, and France encroaching on, displacing, and colonizing indigenous peoples; Irish, Italians, Jews, Chinese, and others being excluded as "alien races"; Congress imposing quotas in 1924 that set the clock back to 1880. These actions all racialized immigration in different ways.[33]

More proximately, the survey question that anchors the racial resentment scale ties it to immigration by explicitly (and incorrectly) stipulating that White groups "worked their way up without special favors." Of course, a naive reading of that question might suggest that in referring positively to immigration, the item encourages a correlation with *supporting* immigration. But that is not how nativism works.[34] The sentiment in the question invokes what the late sociologist Stanley Lieberson called "the great *non sequitur*":[35]

> It is a serious mistake to under-estimate how far the new Europeans have come in the nation and how hard it was, but it is equally erroneous to assume that the obstacles were as great as those faced by blacks or that the starting place was the same.[36]

But the item was not designed to tap into the survey respondent's ability to reason from evidence. When they penned the question, political scientist Donald Kinder and psychologist David Sears were thinking about "deep-seated feelings of social morality and propriety and in early-learned fears and stereotypes."[37]

It is how contemporary race scholars have come to understand the persistence of racism into the twenty-first century.

> Although racial affairs cannot be properly understood without a structural perspective on racism, I no longer regard racial domination as just a matter of presumably objective practices and mechanisms driven by the socioeconomic material interests of actors. Racial actors, both dominant and subordinate, simply cannot transact their lives without racialized emotions.[38]

But deep roots do not imply stasis. In fact, our research uncovered substantial change in a racially progressive direction. We began by noting Americans in general, likely voters, and even White likely voters were becoming *more open* to immigration in recent years. The anti-immigration agenda of the Trump administration is not responding to the public will; it pushes back against it. The administration was not totally without public support, of course. While most Americans were moving left on immigration, Republicans held their position on the right (not that they moved further right, but held their position on the right). In the presidential primaries of 2016, Republicans who opposed immigration supported Trump. And he has delivered much of what they hoped for. Their sense of urgency and penchant for strong language and false claims stem from both their minority status and their sense of being "strangers."[39]

The evidence also shows that racial resentment is waning, with an identical partisan inflection. Republicans expressed significantly more racial resentment than Democrats did in the 1990s. But after Obama's election – or perhaps Michael Brown's murder in Ferguson, Missouri – Democrats, and White Democrats, in particular, expressed less and less racial resentment (see Figure 3).

Partisan sorting on immigration and racial resentment is usually interpreted as working to the advantage of Republican candidates. Most social scientists have read the rising predictive power of racial resentment as confirmation that Trump succeeded by giving up on the "dog whistles" of the past and expressing his constituents' resentments in stark terms. But that conflates the election outcome with the direction of the underlying trends in public opinion. Racial resentment is more predictive because Democrats have staked out a left side of the issue. In the last twenty years, White Democrats dropped from a score of sixty-two on the racial resentment scale (which ranges from zero to one hundred) to forty-one : twenty-one points in twenty years. In the same time period, Republicans dropped just two points. That is the partisan sort that gives racial resentment its predictive power. As White Democrats let go of their racial resentment, racial attitudes come to predict voting outcomes better. For Democrats, racial disparities are no longer about their fellow citizens' personal failings; they are about ending discrimination, even if it means direct racially targeted acknowledgment and remediation.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The White House, "Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements," EO 13767, January 25, 2017; and The White House, "Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," EO 13769, March 6, 2017.

[2] The White House, "Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking," EO 13773, February 9, 2017.

[3] Nate Silver, "How Unpopular Is Donald Trump as President?" FiveThirtyEight, updated December 23, 2020, https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/?cid=rrpromo.

[4] See the General Social Survey, NORC at the University of Chicago, https://www.gss.norc.org. Question wording evolved over time. We combined all three versions for this figure and the others in this essay. For readers interested in the technical details of our analysis, we posted a longer, more technical version of our paper on SocArXiv; it includes the Stata code as a supplement: https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/p7q2w/.

[5] The most recent data are from 2018; the GSS skips odd-numbered years, and the 2020 GSS did not occur in time to be included in this essay.

[6] Jens Hainmueller and Daniel J. Hopkins, "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration," *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (1) (2014): 225–249, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818.

[7] We define "likely voters" as people who told the GSS that they voted. They constitute about 70 percent of all GSS respondents, compared with 50 percent turnout in most U.S. presidential elections between 1992 and 2016. So either some nonvoters erroneously claim to have voted or GSS nonrespondents were mostly nonvoters. We cannot resolve that uncertainty here, so we refer to this group as "likely voters." When we say "Whites," we mean non-Hispanic Whites.

[8] Delia Baldassarri and Barum Park, "Was There a Culture War? Partisan Polarization and Secular Trends in U.S. Public Opinion," *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming); Claude S. Fischer and Greggor Mattson, "Is America Fragmenting?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (1) (2009): 435–455, http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-115909; and Donald R. Kinder and Nathan P. Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[9] When we say "significantly" we mean statistically significant at the conventional $p < 0.05$ level.

[10] Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).

[11] Lawrence D. Bobo, "Racism in Trump's America: Reflections on Culture, Sociology, and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election," *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (S1) (2017): S85–S104.

[12] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

[13] Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[14] Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[15] Michael Tesler, *Post-Racial or Most-Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[16] Lawrence D. Bobo, Camille Z. Charles, Maria Krysan, and Alicia D. Simmons, "The Real Record on Racial Attitudes," *Social Trends in American Life: Findings from the General Social Survey since 1972*, ed. Peter V. Marsden (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 38–83.

[17] Tesler, *Post-Racial or Most-Racial?*

[18] Alicia D. Simmons and Lawrence D. Bobo, "Understanding 'No Special Favors': A Quantitative and Qualitative Mapping of the Meaning of Responses to the Racial Resentment Scale," *DuBois Review* 15 (2) (2018): 323–352.

[19] *New score* = $\frac{9}{6}$ *Old Score* + 50.

[20] The GSS racial resentment scale is an adaptation of more commonly used forms of the scale found in the American National Election Studies (ANES). The ANES data show the same patterns for 1992–2016 as we see in Figure 3 for 1994–2018 (without the very low 2018 data point for Democrats). The Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) has a distinct measure we use in the current study.

[21] Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*; Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*; and Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*.

[22] We classify people by political party instead of by political ideology because Donald R. Kinder, one of the first political scientists to write about racial resentment, does not trust Americans to answer the political ideology question accurately. Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears. "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40 (1981): 414–431; and Kinder and Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal nor Conservative*.

[23] Richard Alba, *Ethnic America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990); Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, 4th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); and Robert N. Bellah, *Broken Covenant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[24] In these computations we included all non-Hispanic White respondents, not just the likely voters, for two reasons. First, if views on either immigration or race affect the likelihood of voting, we could misstate the correlation by excluding nonvoters. Second, the questions were only asked of subsets of GSS respondents; excluding nonvoters left fewer than five hundred cases in some years, leading to imprecise estimates.

[25] Our statistical adjustment consisted of regressing immigration preferences and racial resentment scores (separately) on political party for each year, saving the residuals, and repeating the calculations in Figure 4 for those residuals. The patterns are so similar that the two trend lines would be hard to discern if we put them both on the chart. Thus, we concluded that the trend in Figure 4 is not attributable to partisan sorting.

[26] Nate Silver, "The Odds of an Electoral College-Popular Vote Split Are Increasing," FiveThirtyEight, October 31, 2016, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-odds-of-an-electoral-college-popular-vote-split-are-increasing/.

[27] Again, the details of this analysis are not shown here due to space constraints but are available in our SocArXiv paper.

[28] This is a standard expectation of classic measurement theory, which holds that more items imply less measurement error. Measurement errors in predictors bias estimates toward zero.

[29] Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams, *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

[30] Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," *Ideology and Its Discontents*, ed. David E. Apter (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1964), 206–261.

[31] Delia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman, "Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion," *American Journal of Sociology* 114 (2) (2008): 408, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4056259/; and Andrew Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[32] Baldassarri and Gelman, "Partisans without Constraint."

[33] Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *Century of Difference* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

[34] Bellah, *Broken Covenant*.

[35] Stanley Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

[36] Ibid., 383.

[37] Kinder and Sears, "Prejudice and Politics," 416.

[38] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Feeling Race: Theorizing the Racial Economy of Emotions," *American Sociological Review* 84 (1) (2019): 1–25.

[39] Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*.

Status Threat:
Moving the Right Further to the Right?

Christopher Sebastian Parker

Over the last few years, right-wing movements have proliferated among Western democracies. Although much of the growth has taken place across the "pond" in Europe, this phenomenon is not confined to that continent. As recent events make clear, the United States is another major case. In this essay, I offer a theory of the emergence of reactionary movements, fueled by status threat, using the United States as a case. To demonstrate the explanatory range of the theory (and measure), I focus on immigration, impeachment, and support for Donald Trump in the 2020 election. Examining self-identified Republicans only, I argue that status threat motivates the reactionary wing of the GOP in the United States. Drawing on data culled from a national sample, I find support for my expectation that, beyond ideology and racism, status threat furnishes a new explanation for reactionary preferences. I close with a discussion of the implications.

The rise of right-wing movements in Western democracies over the last several years is difficult to ignore. From Australia to Europe, right-wing movements have achieved a measure of political success.[1] The reactionary right has increased its vote share in Austria, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden.[2] Further, in at least thirteen European countries, these reactionary parties have taken part in governing coalitions.[3] But Europe is not the only locale in which the reactionary right's political presence is a factor. A more complete accounting of the political influence of the reactionary right in the last twenty years must also include the United States.

America's most recent move to the right began with the Tea Party's emergence during the Obama administration. After storming the American political scene in 2009, the "leaderless" movement was largely responsible for the GOP takeover of the House of Representatives in the 2010 election cycle.[4] The Tea Party sought to maintain the cultural integrity of what it viewed as the "legitimate" American majority.[5] While Donald Trump sometimes departed from Republican free-market orthodoxy, his use of Anglo cultural appeals is very similar to, and often even more overt than, the Tea Party's use of them.[6] Repeatedly referencing bygone periods when America would "win," Trump made restrictions on both legal and ille-

gal immigration central to his appeal, promising to protect the "forgotten people" from the depredations of gangs and terrorists supposedly flooding the country's borders.

For anyone with even a passing familiarity with the American political right, the Trump administration's positions are hardly commensurate with conservatism.[7] A more fitting descriptor is *reactionary*. At best, reactionaries, driven by status threat, seek to preserve existing social and economic arrangements; at their worst, they desire a return to the less egalitarian arrangements of the past, a style of politics typically associated with right-wing political movements.[8] Cleavages on the right between groups motivated by status threat and more establishment-style conservatives are traceable to at least the early 1960s, when conservatives began to part ways with the wing of the party preoccupied with maintaining White social prestige. It began with the rise of the John Birch Society (JBS) in the late 1950s, a reactionary group run by retired candy manufacturer turned conservative activist Robert Welch. Eventually, the father of postwar conservatism, William Buckley Jr., would eject Welch and the JBS from the conservative movement properly understood, but not before the latter turned its membership and money toward the nomination of Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964.[9] More recently, through its obsession with the Obama presidency, the Tea Party adhered to the status threat model, breaking away from the more establishment conservatism of the George W. Bush presidency.[10]

Conservatives, on the other hand, are not generally animated *primarily* by change-induced threat. Instead, they are willing to accept change so long as it means retaining social, economic, and political stability. Relative to those motivated by eliminating threats to status, conservatives typically reject racial profiling and suppressions of free speech, especially if such actions might result in violence. One way in which to view the observed differences between conservatives and people moved by status threat is that the former are more pragmatic, whereas the latter are more dogmatic. While conservatives prize order and stability above all else, people operating under status threat are more concerned with maintaining group prestige in a changing society.[11]

What explains the surge in reactionary politics in the United States? Many so-called experts have long claimed that economic threat is the source of reactionary politics. The logic connecting the emergence of right-wing movements and economic anxiety is rooted in concerns over economic competition from non-Whites during economic downturns.[12] The theory is that working-class Whites gravitate toward reactionary movements because those movements claim they will preserve or recover working-class jobs. Arguments emphasizing economic threat are often used to explain membership growth of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the 1920s, the Tea Party, Scott Walker's support in Wisconsin, and, of course, Donald Trump.[13] This explanation is plausible for those who are objectively working

class, but it fails to tell us anything useful about those who do quite well econom- ically, but remain attracted to reactionary movements.[14]

Other accounts of reactionary movements place difference of some kind at the center, but it is most frequently associated with racism.[15] Connecting racism to right-wing movements does not require much imagination and, as mentioned above, this relationship is well documented. Even so, racism may not be the sole source of intolerance when it comes to reactionary politics. Building on histori- an Richard Hofstadter who, in turn, built on sociologist Joseph Gusfield's semi- nal work on the Temperance Movement, political scientist Matt Barreto and I ar- gued that the Tea Party was motivated by perceived threats to its members' way of life.[16] Indeed, more recent work makes the same case. For instance, political sci- entist Diana Mutz has shown that more generalized intolerance – status threat – influenced support for Trump in 2016 even after accounting for race-specific intolerance.[17]

In this essay, I illustrate the ways in which status threat informs preferences on the right. In the American context, this suggests a focused analysis of the Repub- lican Party. In theory, in the presence of partisan polarization and partisan sort- ing, it should prove difficult to find daylight of any kind in the mass public among GOP partisans.[18] To make matters even more challenging, I examine immigration, Trump's impeachment, and political choice in the 2020 election, areas on which one should find unanimity on the right. Yet even in these domains, cleavages on the right exist. This may seem a surprise to some, but the results merely corrobo- rate recent work on the GOP that reveals a rift on the right, the latest installment of a long-running saga, at least fifty-five years in the making.[19]

This essay opens with a discussion of reactionary movements in the United States. The American reactionary right is motivated, in the main, by what its ad- herents perceive as rapid social change, change that challenges the foundations of American identity : White patriarchal dominance. (Such microlevel motives relat- ed to identities typically connect individuals to movements.)[20] Drawing on prior work, I then assess the predictive validity of the proposed model of reactionary pol- itics. I show that status threat goes a long way toward explaining everything from political choice (supporting Trump) to issues on immigration, all while accounting for the "usual suspects" such as social dominance, racism, and authoritarianism. I close with a few words on the meaning of these findings in light of two alternative explanations for the rise of the reactionary right : "populism" and nationalism.

I n our book *Change They Can't Believe In : The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in Contemporary America*, Matt Barreto and I argue that reactionary movements are motivated by anxiety associated with the perception that social change is happening too fast.[21] For example, in addition to the election of Barack Obama as the first non-White man to the White House (an enormous change in its own

right), the increasing visibility of gay rights, women's rights, and immigrant rights contributed in no small way to spurring – and sustaining – the Tea Party movement. In other words, these were social and cultural course corrections, changes away from a norm in which American identity coincides with White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism.[22] Indeed, demographically, Tea Party sympathizers tended to be older, White, male, Christian, native-born, and middle-class; a demographic group very similar to the aforementioned "prototypical" American.[23]

This is not the first time that demographic change spearheaded a reactionary movement in the United States. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Know Nothings, also known as the American Party, were concerned, among other things, with the growing presence of immigrants. They believed that immigrants' attachment to Catholicism was a political and moral threat, and perceived them as susceptible to criminality, posing a security threat to the country.[24] In the early twentieth century, the resurgent Ku Klux Klan and its supporters perceived a threat from Blacks, Jews, Catholics, labor unions, and the increasing independence of women.[25] Similarly, members and supporters of the JBS in the 1950s and 1960s believed the "American way" of life to be under siege, arguing that the expansion of the federal government threatened to subvert their freedom and transform the United States into a totalitarian regime.[26]

From the Know Nothing Party to Trump's GOP, these reactionary movements have much in common. For starters, in each case, the movements were a reaction to what its constituents perceived as a threat to the "American" way of life. Unlike establishment conservatives who see social change as something that must be tolerated, if not necessarily embraced, in exchange for order and stability, reactionaries consider social change subversive.[27] Further, in all four examples, the demographic group that feels most threatened is commensurate with that segment of society closest to the stereotype on which American national identity rests.[28]

My theory of reactionary politics, the foundation of which is status threat, is key to explaining the Trump revolution.[29] I have already outlined the ideal political community for American reactionaries. For them, this restrictive definition of "legitimate" American identity carries significant meaning. Theorists of symbolic politics argue that symbols link individual (and group) objectives and aspirations to the wider social and political world.[30] In my formulation of reactionary politics, the political community, among the more powerful political symbols, serves as the object of the affection for reactionaries – people motivated by status threat.[31] Further, political community as symbol often 1) inspires intense affection and 2) pushes people to protect and preserve its meaning at all costs.[32] Consequently, threats to "real Americans" (the political community for reactionaries) and their way of life inform their political preferences.

More than anything, the dominant group's belief that its values and way of life constitute the highest expression of human achievement serves as a source of

motivation when society is changing too fast. Moreover, as a means of explaining what they perceive as suddenly changing circumstances, they contend that an organized conspiracy of some kind is responsible. To use language commensurate with the task of connecting these observations with established theoretical concepts, status threat consists of three subdimensions : existential threat, ethnocentrism, and paranoid social cognition. We begin with existential threat.

American reactionaries, as I have suggested, believe their way of life is under threat.[33] Further, as I have already made clear, the Know Nothings, the Klan of the 1920s, and the Tea Party believed "real" America was in danger. In general, this is typically associated with a perceived shift in the status quo in which culturally dominant groups feel that their way of life is threatened by the rising influence of culturally subordinate groups.[34] However, this reasoning also extends to relationships between racial dominants and subordinates.[35] Among high-status groups, and especially among high identifiers within the groups, the preferred remedy to perceived threats is the imposition (or perpetuation) of social inequality.[36] This is something frequently observed with reactionary movements.[37]

Another component I believe associated with reactionary politics is the paranoia to which Hofstadter referred. Of course, this is not about clinical paranoia, but a paranoia of a more political nature. In this case, anxiety gives rise to what social psychologist Roderick Kramer once referred to as "paranoid social cognition," a condition in which people have a difficult time adjusting to rapidly changing circumstances.[38] To make sense of changing circumstances in which one's status is in flux, members of the in-group – if they are to maintain a sense of collective esteem – must identify an out-group responsible for the in-group's perceived decline. Part of this process includes generating stereotypes of the dominant out-group, including conspiracies.[39] Members of the in-group become increasingly anxious and, therefore, paranoid about the perceived decline of their position in society. Similar processes motivated the conspiratorial claims concocted by Know Nothings, the Klan, the JBS, and the Tea Party, and suggests why I include this trait as a component of status threat.[40]

The final ingredient is ethnocentrism. I stress ethnocentrism for two reasons. First, to the extent that ethnocentrism places the in-group at the center, one need look no further than the regularity with which American reactionaries have, over the years, referenced "the American way of life" and "real Americans."[41] Further, to make this global in scope, the group-based component of the reactionary right must include racism and nativism : racism to capture the centuries-old Black-White conflict, nativism for more recent arrivals.[42] Ethnocentrism fits the bill. According to sociologist William Sumner, ethnocentrism is about the superiority of the in-group, which results in out-group derogation. Unpacking this simple dichotomy suggests that ethnocentrism is actually more complex.[43] Among other factors, preference for one's group, belief in the in-group's cultural superiority

and purity, and the welfare of the in-group taking precedence over the welfare of other groups is capacious enough to accommodate the intergroup dynamics identified by racism and nativism. Further, it does so parsimoniously and is not limited by time.[44] In other words, ethnocentrism in the twenty-first century is very much like ethnocentrism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

I contend that existential threat, paranoid social cognition, and ethnocentrism, collectively, index status threat.[45] Of course, each subdimension, by itself, represents a distinct theoretical approach. However, as other scholars of intolerance have demonstrated, social science sometimes requires a more synthetic theoretical approach. For example, social dominance theory, right-wing authoritarianism, and racial resentment all weave at least two theories together into a single approach.[46]

Using a six-item scale in which two items tap each of the three dimensions, my colleagues and I tested this formulation, and the model fit the data.[47] Further, the model of status threat performed well in tests of convergent and discriminant validity. For instance, status threat enjoys a strong relationship with racial resentment, but is also shunned by those who place themselves on the "liberal" end of the ideological spectrum. On assessing the predictive validity of status threat, I investigated how it might fare predicting support for the Tea Party. This is key in that Barreto and I employed support for the Tea Party as a proxy for status threat.[48] To make things interesting, we controlled for partisanship, ideology, and racial resentment, all of which are closely related to support for the Tea Party. As it turns out, even after accounting for other related factors, status threat was bested – albeit narrowly – only by racial resentment in predicting support for the Tea Party.

Armed with this direct measure of status politics (status threat), I now turn to the task of assessing the extent to which it informs how residents of the political right – that is, Republican partisans – view immigration, Trump's conduct and potential consequences, and support for the incumbent president in the 2020 election. Immigration is a subject of inquiry for at least three reasons: 1) concerns about undocumented Latino immigrants are a principal reason why Whites switch to the Republican Party; 2) in 2016, concerns about immigration tended to push people to support Trump; and 3) prior to the coronavirus sweeping the nation, a Gallup poll showed that only terrorism/national security bested immigration as the most important issue among GOP partisans.[49] Trump's (first) impeachment represented another issue of interest given the robust support among rank-and-file Republicans (86 percent) who thought he should retain his office.[50] With an overall approval rating of 91 percent among Republicans, Trump was buoyed at the polls in 2020 by a party that closed ranks around their president, even after his mishandling of the coronavirus and ordering troops to invade American cities.[51]

Again, the central question is whether status threat is a source of division among Republicans. But what of alternative explanations? How is authoritari-

anism relevant to contemporary politics ?[52] We would expect authoritarians, as people who prefer conformity above all else, to reject immigrants (and immigration) at all costs and support all things Trump.[53] Similarly, social dominance orientation, a belief system organized around the perceived existence of dominant and subordinate social groups, also informed support for Trump in 2016.[54] Last but certainly not least, we must also account for racism.[55] Race and racism are at the center of contemporary politics.[56] If we are to have any confidence in the explanatory power of status threat, we must account for these alternative explanations.

Turning first to immigration, I used the following questions to gauge the public's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration :

1. Do you support or oppose an effort by the federal government to deport all undocumented immigrants and send them back to their home countries ?

2. Do you think it should be easier or harder for foreigners to immigrate to the United States legally than it is currently ?

3. Do you support or oppose providing a legal way for "illegal" immigrants already in the United States to become American citizens ?

I combined these items into an index as a means of exploring attitudes toward immigration.[57]

As the results suggest, there is less consensus on immigration in the GOP than one might think.[58] It seems as if the most status-threatened Republicans take a harder line on immigration than co-partisans who are more secure in their position in America. In fact, status threat is only bested by racism in its influence on immigration attitudes on the political right. No real surprise here, though, given the ways in which immigration is often racialized.[59] Hardcore, self-identified conservatives are, likewise, less than forgiving when it comes to immigration policy. Clearly, a steady diet of Fox News tends to push people away from toleration of immigration. The only demographic explanation that provides any leverage is age, with younger Republicans reporting more tolerant attitudes toward immigration relative to their older counterparts.

We turn our attention next to President Trump's conduct : allegedly soliciting foreign involvement in the American political process when he requested that Ukraine investigate his political rival, Joe Biden. Though he was ultimately impeached, the Republican conference in the Senate held fast (Mitt Romney as the lone exception), and Trump was not removed from office. To tap into Republican sentiment around this incident, I asked three questions :

1. Do you think it was appropriate or inappropriate for the president to request a foreign government open an investigation into one of his potential political opponents ?

Figure 1
Index of Republican Attitudes toward Immigration
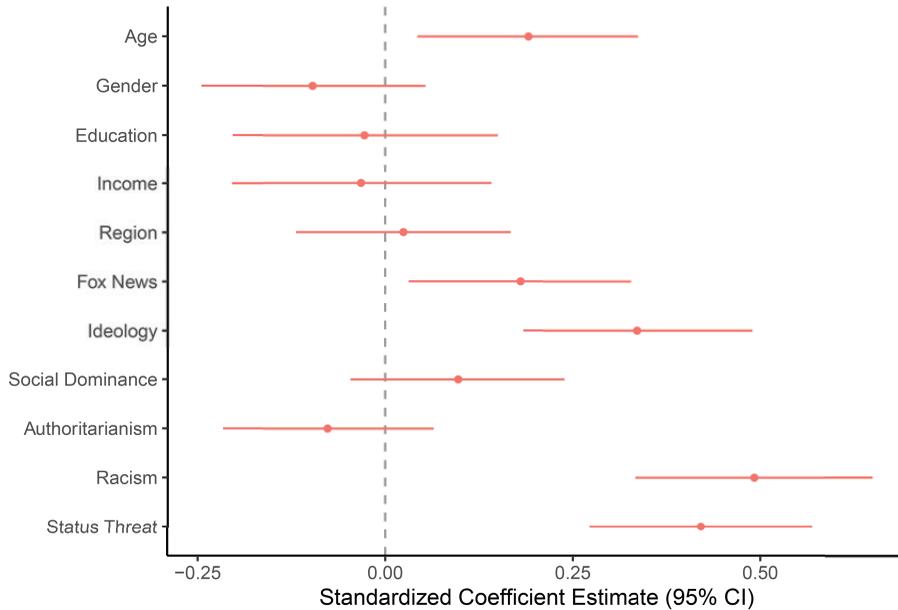
Source: The data on which Figures 1–6 and related analysis rest is an online study I conducted in the autumn of 2019. It consists of a national sample of adults stratified by self-identified partisanship, of which about one thousand Republicans and one thousand independents were recruited from an online panel.

2. Some people think President Trump should be impeached and removed; others think he shouldn't be impeached and removed. What do you think?

3. Some people think President Trump abused the power of his office by urging the President of Ukraine to open an investigation of a potential opponent in the next election. Other people think that the House is just playing politics and oppose the impeachment inquiry. What about you? What do you think?[60]

The results for impeachment mirror those for immigration insofar as they reveal cracks among the Republican faithful. For instance, more educated Republicans and less conservative Republicans (the ideology trait) are more likely to have favored impeachment than less educated and more conservative GOP partisans, respectively. On the other hand, consumption of Fox News appears to have dampened the appetite for impeachment, encouraging disbelief or a more forgiving disposition toward Trump's alleged abuse of power. Again, status threat weighs in on

Figure 2
Index of Republican Support for Trump's First Impeachment
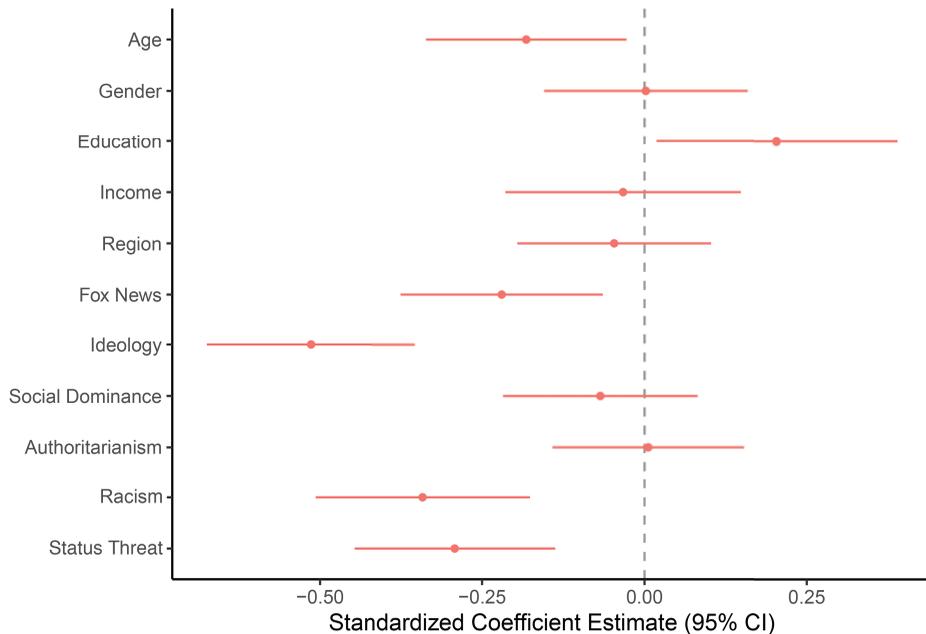
the preferences for Republicans : the more status threatened Republicans are, the more forgiving they are toward Trump's alleged transgressions, and the less they support impeachment and possible removal from office.

Finally, I address what motivated Republicans to support Trump or not in the 2020 election cycle. To gauge support for Trump in 2020, I asked : "How likely are you to vote to reelect President Trump in 2020 ?" As we observed with immigration and impeachment, there are considerable differences among co-partisans. For starters, the likelihood of voting for Trump varies with age, with older partisans more inclined to support the incumbent than younger ones. Watching Fox News also predicted support for Trump in 2020. Ideology also plays a role here : increasing self-declared conservatism increased support for Trump during the election. Having said this, racism is the most powerful predictor in the model, but not by much. Again, status threat makes a strong showing, albeit narrowly beaten out by racism in shaping the likelihood that Republicans in the public will vote for Trump in the most recent election.

Even a cursory examination of the results makes clear the explanatory power of status threat. To be sure, other factors emerged as consistent predictors, especially

Figure 3
Index of Republican Support for Trump in 2020 Election
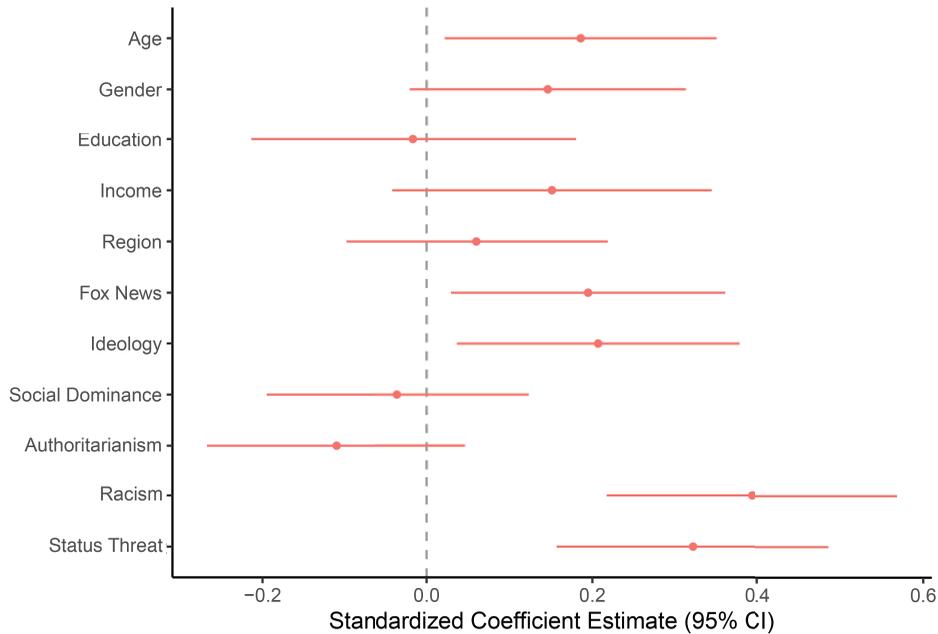
consumption of Fox News, ideology, and racism. Of these, ideology, in the guise of conservatism, is generally believed the chief threat to reactionary sentiments indexed by status threat.[61] As such, a focused comparison between ideology and status threat is more than appropriate. For theoretical purposes, I focus on the higher values, ones that compare the "conservative" end of the ideological self-placement item, and those who believe their status is more threatened than others. The results are depicted in Figures 4, 5, and 6. Relative to hardcore conservatives, those who feel the status of their group threatened are more committed in their support for Trump in 2020 and more resolute in their refusal to welcome "illegal immigrants" than Republicans who believe their status isn't so threatened. Even so, the differences are slight. A glance at the differences in the point estimates drives this home. When it comes to impeachment, no daylight exists between the groups. More than anything, in tandem with the findings in Figures 1–3, it is clear that status threat and conservatism each contributes to the ways in which Republicans in the mass public think about these issues. More to the point, the "status threatened" are motivated by anxiety associated with impending social and cultural displacement, while conservatives are more concerned with maintaining the status quo.

Figure 4
Status Threat/Ideology and Attitudes toward Immigration
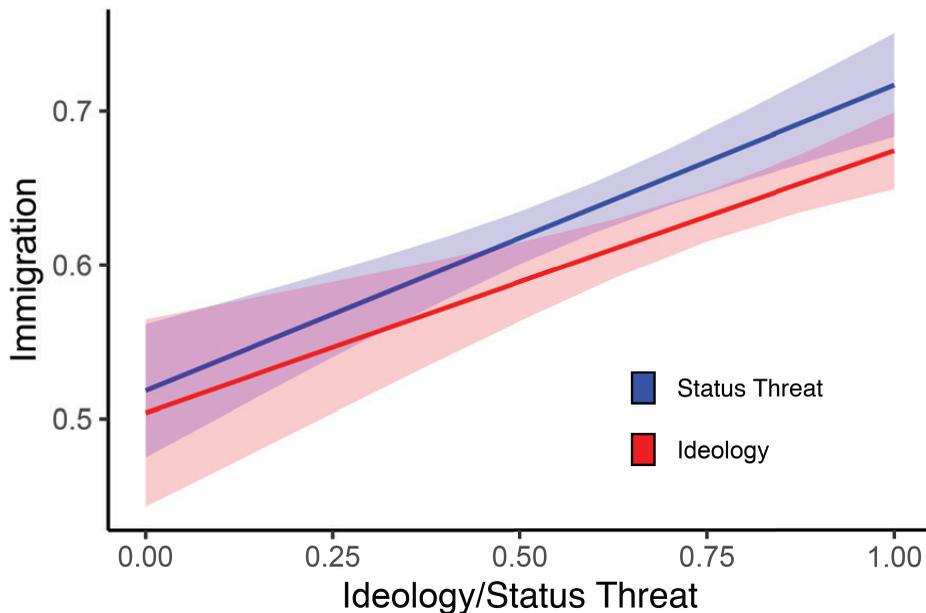
Figure 5
Status Threat/Ideology and Support for Trump's First Impeachment
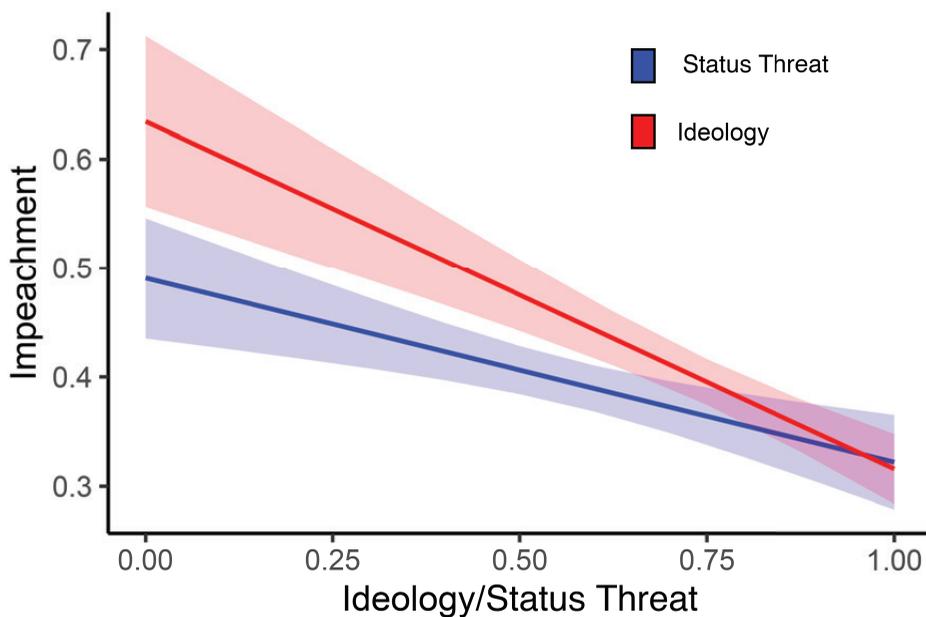
Figure 6
Status Threat/Ideology and Support for Trump in 2020 Election
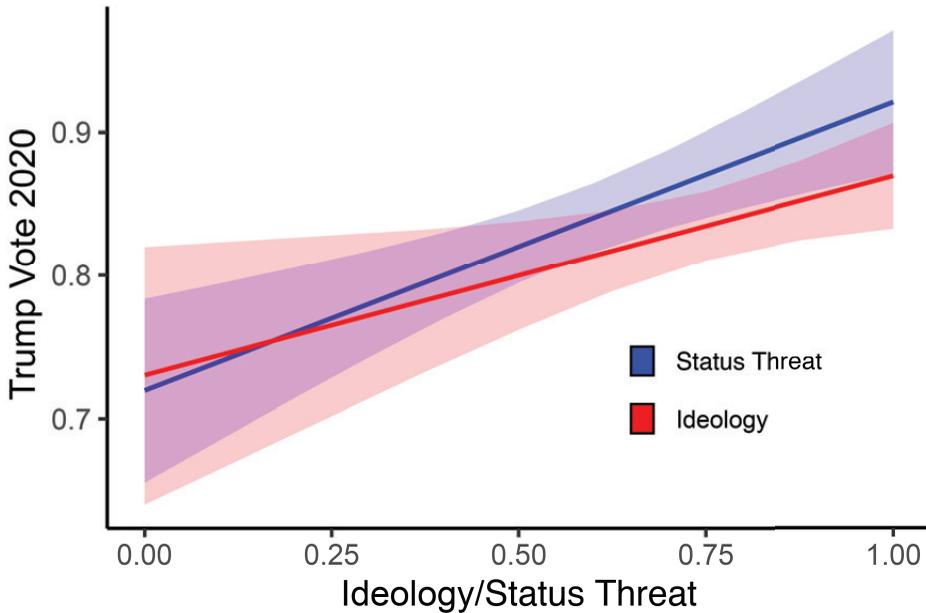
I was not caught by surprise by the inability of authoritarianism or social dominance orientation to gain traction. This has happened before.[62] As it turns out, status threat explains the impact of *both* on reactionary sentiment, at least as they are related to Trump-based preferences. For instance, once I remove status threat from the model, the impact of both on Trump-related references becomes evident. Still, it may well be the case that alternative measurements of authoritarianism such as right-wing authoritarianism and a longer version of the social dominance orientation scale would fare better. For now, however, it seems as if next to racism, status threat is well positioned to explain contemporary Republican preferences, at least as they pertain to Trump.

Further, these findings connect well to recent work that identifies an insurgent wing of the GOP and that pinpoints status threat as a source of the rift.[63] Finally, these results successfully interrogate the proposition that class has anything to do with reactionary politics.[64] Whether assayed by education or income, class has mostly no impact on contemporary reactionary politics, something that confirms prior work.[65] In sum, in a properly specified model in which symbolic threat is included, material threat fails to tell us much about reactionary politics.

Right-wing movements are enjoying a global resurgence. Nowhere is this more true than in the United States where, beginning with the Tea Party, the GOP permitted a reactionary movement to hijack a major party, with disastrous consequences. To some, the Trump presidency began to transform the United States into an authoritarian regime.[66] If this happened, it wouldn't be the first time in the United States. The role the Ku Klux Klan played in the solidification of Jim Crow and the threats carried out by the White Citizens Councils after *Brown v. Board of Education* represent other instances in which a reactionary movement, driven by status threat, challenged American democracy.[67] Given the dispositive role of race in American history, it's no surprise that racism looms large in reactionary movements and the ensuing politics.

Having said this, the discerning reader may wonder why I failed to include "populism" or nationalism as alternatives to status threat. This is a valid concern. On elaboration of the reasons for which I excluded them from the analysis, it will be clear why I've chosen to do so. I begin with populism.

Problems with the contemporary use of populism are manifold. I will discuss two here : the ontological and the empirical. Briefly, on the ontological front, some believe it a "thin" ideology ; others, given the failure of populism to meet the criteria typically associated with ideologies, are given to calling it a rhetorical style deployed by elites.[68] It stands to reason that *ontological* cloudiness on populism will lead to *empirical* issues, especially as they apply to microlevels of analysis, where some argue that populism is commensurate with an attitude.[69] It is assumed that people who support populist platforms are themselves populists : that is, people motivated by economic issues and intolerance. Assessing the latter is fairly straightforward, and it does predict support for populist parties : antipathy toward immigrants tends to increase support for parties touting populist platforms.[70] As it turns out, however, attempting to discriminate between populists and nonpopulists along class-based lines doesn't always work. When indexed by subjective and objective class position, support for populism across studies is at best inconsistent. In fact, a recent paper suggests that, beyond intolerance, there is no one thing capable of defining the populist voter.[71] Further, attempts to successfully measure populism at the mass level have proven difficult, including the American case.[72]

Nationalism, too, is a possible explanation for Trump's success. He even thinks himself a nationalist. Nationalism, in a classical sense, according to historical sociologist Anthony Smith, is an "ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, [a] unified identity of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation.'"[73] Further, nationalism is generally thought a largely political project through which elites seek to justify rule over certain territory, to be inhabited by a mostly homogenous population.[74] Elites make strategic decisions on whom to include in, and whom to exclude from,

the nation-building project. This is done for the purpose of binding together more or less similar groups who may have been in conflict in the past, or might clash in the future. The creation of a newly constructed "we" against a "they" reinforces a sense of solidarity that will serve as the basis for the nation-state, while stigmatizing the "other."

American nationalism, however, is a bit more complex. The same basic principles apply, like solidarity around a primordial identity. But the American variant includes at least one other component. American national identity, based as it is on liberal (enlightenment) principles, leans heavily on a set of values prescriptive of rights and duties that makes possible the concept of civic nationalism: belief in the American creed. Some, therefore, believe that American nationalism consists of racial and civic components.[75] Political scientist Rogers Smith agrees with the racial and civic perspectives, but adds a third: republicanism.[76] Other, data-driven perspectives include four dimensions of American nationalism.[77] In other words, the contours of *American* nationalism remain murky.

That said, if the results from the analysis are any indication, status threat may well lend insight on what motivates reactionary politics. Unlike earlier reports claiming that class or economic anxiety carries the day, material motives, for the most part, offer next to nothing in the way of leverage when it comes to explaining reactionary politics and the right-wing movements they fuel. This suggests that scholars may wish to examine symbolic motives as a means of elaborating on reactionary movements. After all, the proposition that Trump's victory was driven by working-class Whites is a myth: many of his followers are well-to-do, with two-thirds making more than the national median income.[78] If reactionary politics in the United States is truly driven by the anxiety accompanying the dominant group's belief that they're losing "their" country, and not by economic concerns, no amount of redistribution will temper their support for draconian immigration measures, nor their willingness to countenance the move away from democracy.[79] We need to look elsewhere, then, for the solution to the current predicament.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Sebastian Parker is Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington. He is the author of *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in Contemporary America* (with Matt A. Barreto, 2013) and *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle Against White Supremacy in the Postwar South* (2009). His next book is titled *The Great White Hope: Donald Trump, Race, and the Crisis of American Democracy*.

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32 Ibid.

33 Of course, this means that I reject a more conventional source of threat : ethnic competition. Here, the perceived zero-sum interethnic competition over jobs, housing, and welfare benefits, among other things, are believed to animate the reactionary right. However, this approach has been called into serious question. Further, work on American reactionary movements indicates that material insecurity has no bearing on whether people are attracted to them. What seems to drive people to sympathize with such movements and, in some instances, join is the perception that their way of life is under threat, something that transcends material threat. For the ways in which material goods are believed to motivate the reactionary right, see Hans-Georg Betz, "Introduction," in *The New Politics of the Right : Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, ed. Hans-George Betz and Stefan Immerfall (London : Palgrave MacMillan, 1998). For an interrogation of this proposition, see Jens Rydgren, "Immigration Sceptics, Xenophobes or Racists ? Radical Right-Wing Voting in Six West European Countries," *European Journal of Political Research* 47 (6) (2008) : 737–765. For the American perspective, see Forster and Epstein, *The Radical Right* ; Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* ; Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason* ; MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry* ; and Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*.

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51 Jeffrey M. Jones, "Trump's Job Approval Rating Steady at Lower Level," Gallup, July 6, 2020, https://news.gallup.com/poll/313454/trump-job-approval-rating-steady-lower -level.aspx.

52 Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York : Crown, 2018).

53 See, for example, Karen Stenner, *The Authoritarian Dynamic* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005).

54 Mutz, "Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains the 2016 Presidential Vote."

55 The four-item racial resentment scale is used to measure racism. However, this measure is not absent controversy. For the racial resentment scale, see Kinder and Sanders, *Divided by Color*. For an interrogation of the concept and its content, see David C. Wilson and Darren W. Davis, "Reexamining Racial Resentment : Conceptualization and Content," *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634 (1) (2011) : 117 – 113.

56 See, for example, Christopher Sebastian Parker, "Race and Politics in the Age of Obama," *Annual Review of Sociology* 42 (2016) : 217 – 230.

57 The reliability for the proposed index is "acceptable" at 0.67. For more on assessing scale reliability, see George Ursachi, Ioana Alexandra Horodnic, and Adriana Zait, "How Reliable Are Measurement Scales ? External Factors with Indirect Influence on Reliability Estimators," *Procedia Economics and Finance* 20 (2015) : 679 – 686.

58 In recognition of the fact that my scale includes an item that refers to immigration, and might therefore unduly bias the results associated with status threat in the model, I estimated the model after dropping the item from the scale. While the reliability of the scale was a bit lower (alpha=0.77), there were no substantive differences with the revised scale.

59 Ted Brader, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay, "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration ? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat," *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (4) (2008) : 959 – 978 ; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects* ; and Efrén O. Pérez, "Explicit Evidence on the Import of Implicit Attitudes : The IAT and Immigration Policy Judgments," *Political Behavior* 32 (4) (2010) : 517 – 545.

60 These items, when scaled, enjoy a respectable reliability at 0.72.

61 See, for example, Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* ; and Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*.

62 Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*.

63 Blum, *How the Tea Party Captured the GOP* ; and Blum and Parker, "Trump-ing Foreign Affairs."

64 Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*.

65 Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*.

66 Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*.

67 Christopher Sebastian Parker and Christopher C. Towler, "Race and Authoritarianism in American Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019) : 503 – 519 ; Leon F. Litwack. *Trouble in Mind : Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) ; and McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*.

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populists: that they tend to be among the lower classes. For accounts of the incapability of the electorate to think in ideological terms, see Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Its Discontents,* ed. David Apter (New York: The Free Press, 1964); and Donald R. Kinder and Nathan P. Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). On populism as a "thin" ideology, see Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). And on elites' cynical use of populist language, see Paul Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies* 64 (1) (2015): 88–104; and Bart Bonikowski and Noam Gidron, "The Populist Style in American Politics: Presidential Campaign Discourse, 1952–1996," *Social Forces* 94 (4) (2016): 1593–1621.

69 Agnes Akkerman, Cas Mudde, and Andrej Zaslove, "How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters," *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (9) (2014): 1324–1352; and Bram Spruyt, Gil Keppens, and Flip Van Droogerbroeck, "*Who* Supports Populism and *What* Attracts People to It?" *Political Research Quarterly* 69 (2) (2006): 335–346.

70 Anthony Mughan and Pamela Paxton, "Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Policy Preferences, and Populist Party Voting in Australia," *British Journal of Political Science* 36 (2) (2006): 341–358.

71 Matthijs Rooduijn, "What Unites the Voter Bases of Populist Parties? Comparing the Electorates of 15 Populist Parties," *European Political Science Review* 10 (3) (2018): 351–368.

72 Steven M. Van Hauwaert, Christian H. Schimpf, and Flavio Azevedo, "The Measurement of Populist Attitudes: Testing Cross-National Scales Using Item Response Theory," *Politics* 40 (1) (2020): 3–21; and Bruno Castanho Silva, Sebastian Jungkunz, Marc Helbing, and Levente Littvay, "An Empirical Comparison of Seven Populist Attitude Scales," *Political Research Quarterly* 73 (2) (2020): 409–429.

73 Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73.

74 Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

75 Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the 20th Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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77 Bart Bonikowski and Paul Di Maggio, "Varieties of Popular Nationalism," *American Sociological Review* 81 (5) (2016): 949–980; and Deborah J. Schildkraut, *Press "One" for English: Language Policy, Public Opinion, and American Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

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79 Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*, conclusion.

The Unceasing Significance of Colorism: Skin Tone Stratification in the United States

Ellis P. Monk, Jr.

For many decades now, social scientists have documented immense ethnoracial inequalities in the United States. Much of this work is rooted in comparing the life chances, trajectories, and outcomes of African Americans to White Americans. From health to wealth and nearly every measure of well-being, success, and thriving one can find, White Americans remain ahead of Black Americans. What this focus on ethnoracial inequality between "groups" obscures, however, is long-standing skin tone inequality within groups. In this essay, I trace the trajectory of colorism and skin tone stratification in the United States over the past century. Next, I highlight the contemporary persistence of skin tone stratification, not only among African Americans, but among Latinx and Asian Americans as well. I conclude by arguing that future research on colorism will be essential to understand comprehensively the significance of race/ethnicity in a demographically shifting United States (such as immigration and "multiraciality").

On a sweltering August day in 1963, barely twenty-four hours after the death of W. E. B. Du Bois, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech to a crowd of over 250,000 people participating in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, D.C. Against the backdrop of the towering statue of Abraham Lincoln, King lamented that one hundred years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, "the Negro [was] still not free." Indeed, denied forty acres and a mule upon their Emancipation, Black Americans witnessed the U.S. government give White Americans hundreds of millions of acres of land virtually for free via the Homestead Act and access to over $100 billion in New Deal programs through which the U.S. government subsidized education, housing, businesses, and much more, creating the White middle class.[1] By contrast, Black Americans were forced to endure decades of legally enforced racial terrorism in the form of Jim Crow after the collapse of Reconstruction. Yes, by any reasonable standard, a century after their Emancipation and despite relatively recent legal victories in the form of civil rights legisla-

tion, the Negro was still not free. Across numerous important indicators, the socioeconomic standing of African Americans grew increasingly worse amidst the prosperity of America's booming post–World War II economy, from median income to poverty rates to infant mortality.[2]

As sociologist Douglas Massey correctly observes, "The history of civil rights in the United States has always been one of two steps forward and one step back. Significant progress toward racial equality has been made and then partially reversed, only to be advanced again at a later date."[3] It was in this context – the incessant ebb and flow of victory, defeat, and backtracking – that King uttered the iconic line that expressed the unrealized hopes of so many millions of Americans: "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

The desired meaning here should be clear: King longed for a day when African Americans, as a group, would no longer be held back by systemic and systematic discrimination. Color, in this formulation, is simply a stand-in for their membership in a stigmatized ethnoracial category. King's rhetoric relies on a common linguistic substitution rooted in the alleged equivalence of belonging to a broad, aggregate ethnoracial category and a highly conspicuous *marker* used to ascribe individuals into this broad, superordinate ethnoracial category in everyday life: skin color. This slippage, however, was no bar to the efficacy of this famous line; again, the interchangeability of the terms race and color is so commonplace that the practice continues to this day without drawing much critical attention at all. As legal scholar Trina Jones explains, "The terms race and color have been used interchangeably throughout U.S. history . . . [E]xamples are plentiful, including common phrases like 'colored people' and 'colored folk,' W. E. B. Du Bois's use of 'the color line' and similar references to the 'color barrier.'"[4]

What I would like to emphasize here, however, is that there is significant variation in life chances, trajectories, and outcomes among African Americans (and other ethnoracial minorities) that is obscured by this common (linguistic and analytic) convention. "Though race and color are indeed related concepts, they are not synonymous. While racism may affect an individual regardless of the person's color, two individuals belonging to the same ethnoracial category may face differential treatment due to their varying skin tones."[5] After all, as the anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker noted nearly one hundred years ago, "Within the Negro group every possible shade of color between jet Black and creamy white exists; and variations occur even within the same shade."[6] And just as certain ethnoracial categories are associated with biases and stereotypes about warmth and competence, so are gradations of skin color.[7] Research shows that as darkness increases and Afrocentric appearance increases, so does the probability of being perceived as dangerous, incompetent, ugly, and much more.[8] To the extent that these biases are held by both Blacks and non-Blacks, the latter of whom may

have powerful roles as gatekeepers (educators, police, physicians, bankers, real estate agents, and so on), and persist across generations resulting in cumulative advantages and disadvantages associated with skin tone, skin tone stratification can quickly take on a deeply structural character. Put simply, African Americans are not only stratified with respect to their ethnoracial category membership, but also intracategorically by the hue of their skin – the result of a practice referred to as colorism.[9]

*C*olorism is generally defined as a discriminatory practice by which lighter skin tones, straight hair, and relatively more Eurocentric facial features are preferred over darker skin tones, kinky hair, and more stereotypically Afrocentric facial features.[10] As this common definition suggests, it captures more than skin tone alone to note the significance of racialized physical features in general, which is why it is also important to consider skin tone stratification itself as a central aspect of colorism writ large (furthermore, the darkness of skin tends to track alongside Afrocentric appearance as a whole).

Colorism in the United States dates back to slavery when lighter-skinned slaves were favored by slave owners and were predominantly given work as house slaves as opposed to field slaves. These Blacks tended to have direct kinship ties to Whites through the sexual violence by Whites that created this population of lighter-skinned Blacks in the first place. Working in the house as opposed to the fields dramatically increased the chance that lighter-skinned Blacks (or mulattos) would be literate and trained in a trade. Also, the vast majority of the free Black population was composed of lighter-skinned Blacks and mulattos. Despite the fact that after Emancipation, more opportunities opened up for Blacks of all hues, the substantial social, educational, and economic advantages of lighter-skinned Blacks undoubtedly gave these Blacks an immense head start in relation to all other Blacks.[11] In fact, there is evidence that lighter-skinned Black men, given greater access to nutrition and conditions favorable to their health, were markedly taller than other Black men.[12]

While it is often submerged and marginalized relative to inequality between Blacks and Whites (that is, "racial" inequality), scholars have long recognized the significance of color. As early as 1934, sociologist Charles S. Johnson observed, in his ethnographic study of a rural Alabama town, that darker-skinned Black women did not want to marry lighter-skinned Black or mulatto men because the darker-skinned Black women considered lighter-skinned Black and mulatto men untrustworthy and "poor providers for dark women."[13] In another ethnographic study, this one conducted by Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary Gardner, along with their assistant St. Clair Drake in Natchez, Mississippi, in 1941, the researchers noted that having light skin and "White" types of hair were definite sources of prestige among Blacks, and that while light skin color and "White"

"hair-form" did not guarantee Blacks an upper-class status, social mobility was far easier and proceeded at a faster pace for those of lighter hues.[14] Furthermore, the authors observed that upper- and middle-class Black men (of all skin shades) privileged light skin and sought to marry only the "fairest"-skinned Black women. Homogamy contributed to a substantial wealth gap between mulatto households and Black households well into the early twentieth century.[15]

The importance of skin color among Blacks persisted well into the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, even economist Gunnar Myrdal highlights the importance of skin color among Blacks in his landmark study *An American Dilemma*.[16] Researchers, for instance, found links between skin tone and occupational status such that light skin tone was highly associated with being a Black professional (such as a dentist, doctor, or businessman). Attorney Lawrence Otis Graham observed, in his exposé of Black elite social clubs (like the Jack n' Jill, the Smart Set, the Boulé), that brown paper bag tests and pencil tests (a test to assess the straightness of hair) were regular institutions at balls and cotillions well into the 1970s. Graham also notes the absolute dominance of Black elite social club membership by lighter-skinned Blacks, running from the creation of these social clubs to the present day.[17]

Even the "Black is Beautiful" movement did little to diminish the significance of skin tone among African Americans. Scholar Claud Anderson and psychologist R. L. Cromwell reported that among Black youth, "of all the questions in the study, the highest consensus was reached in the opinion that most Negroes feel Black to be beautiful (80.2% positive)," yet the authors also found strong associations between light brown skin being associated with

> the smartest girl, smartest boy, nicest person, cleanest person, one best liked to marry, one's future offspring, one's own preferred color, the best color to be, prettiest skin, handsomest Negro boy, prettiest Negro girls, and children the father likes best.

By contrast, dark brown skin was associated with

> the dumbest Negro, dirtiest Negro, person one would not like to marry, what one would like one's offspring not to have, what one would prefer not to be, Negroes with bad hair, person with the ugliest skin complexion, ugliest Negro boys, ugliest Negro girls, children whom the mother dislikes, and Negroes who have the hardest time making friends in school.[18]

Similar dynamics were even apparent among African American adults in beauty pageants during the Black is Beautiful era that still continued to value lighter phenotypes over all others.[19]

Keeping track of these enduring and pernicious attitudes around skin tone was lost amidst the groundswell of Black nationalist sentiments that rose to the fore among many Blacks disillusioned with what they saw as the unfulfilled promises of the civil rights era. Caught in the tidal wave of Black political activism, which

gave all the appearances of a unified, monadic Black community, social science began to focus more and more of its efforts on analyzing inequality between Blacks and Whites in the "post–civil rights era." And growing concerns over the extent to which Blacks had reached socioeconomic parity with Whites in the wake of the dismantling of Jim Crow made a good deal of sense, even though many missed the continuing significance of color among African Americans and the rapid rise of intraracial class divisions among Blacks in the post–civil rights era so famously detailed in sociologist William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race*. With the publication of the Moynihan Report, this shift gained even more steam and social scientists, journalists, and even the government flocked to study the plight of "inner-city Blacks" and "urban poverty."[20]

Still, the occlusion of color is not only a result of this shift in analytic attention toward quantitative analyses of ethnoracial inequalities between Blacks and Whites that has mostly continued to this very day, but it is also a function of how most social scientists and lay people define race itself. Indeed, the nearly exclusive focus on interracial dynamics and inequality is undoubtedly rooted in the unique, specific, and problematic racial common sense extant in the United States. This racial common sense maintains that there are clearly bounded, mostly homogenous, monadic ethnoracial groups. Instead of developing an analytic concept of race and ethnicity, the vast majority of U.S. scholarship on race simply borrows the folk concepts of race and ethnicity as they exist in the United States. This folk/quasi-academic framework maintains that race implies phenotypic difference, while ethnicity implies cultural difference. Ironically, this folk/academic conception of race and ethnicity is untenable precisely in the country where it was developed and is so unquestioningly utilized. Blacks, undoubtedly the focus of academic and popular analyses of racial inequality, have historically and contemporarily been considered Black *regardless* of their phenotype – that is, after all, the entire point of the "one-drop rule." Black is a *descent-based* ethnoracial category, where only "one drop" of Black blood is enough to consider one Black both legally (as the infamous case of Susie Phipps demonstrates) and in daily social interactions.

Thus, common definitions of race substitute an interactional marker used in ethnoracial classification and categorization – and only one of many of these markers – with race itself as a phenomenon. The overwhelming reliance upon census and census-style data on race means that the analysis of skin tone stratification is foreclosed in advance in most research. After all, census-style categories obscure the immense phenotypical heterogeneity that exist within them. Indeed, census and census-style categories, which are broad, superordinate nominal categories rooted in self-identification, essentially treat each self-identified member of the category as phenotypically the same. Thus, despite our penchant to see the

world telescoped through the lens of these nearly ubiquitous categories, the fact remains that these categories are only *partially* disclosive of how concepts of ethnoracial difference (such as Blackness and Whiteness) produce and reproduce inequality in the United States.

Fortunately, though rare, there are nationally representative data in specialized surveys with measures of skin tone, typically measured by interviewers using worded scales or palettes, that allow us to determine whether the impact of skin complexion on Blacks' educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and marital status has changed after the civil rights and Black power movements.[21] Sociologists Verna Keith and Cedric Herring have found that skin tone is a significant predictor of personal and family net income, educational attainment, occupation, parental socioeconomic status, region, urbanicity, or even marital status.[22] Darker-skinned Blacks are at a significant empirical disadvantage in comparison to lighter-skinned Blacks and even medium-tone Blacks.

There are, however, pressing questions about whether skin tone still matters in the twenty-first century. Have the empirical consequences of skin complexion diminished since 1980? One study found that the empirical consequences of skin complexion among Blacks (namely, skin tone's effect on socioeconomic status) had diminished by 1988.[23] Economist Arthur Goldsmith and colleagues, however, astutely note that by the third wave of the NSBA, the number of observations of light-skin Blacks had decreased to fifteen and thus dismiss this study's conclusions on methodological grounds.[24]

Accordingly, recent studies quite convincingly show the enduring significance of color from 1980 to the present day. For example, according to data drawn from the National Health Interview Survey (2005), White Americans between age twenty-five and forty-four have 10.2 months more education on average than African Americans of the same age range. By contrast, according to data drawn from the National Survey of American Life (2001 – 2003), the gap in educational attainment between the lightest- and darkest-skinned Black Americans between ages twenty-five and forty-four is 15.4 months.[25] In other words, there appears to be as much educational inequality within the Black population along the color continuum as there is between Whites and Blacks as a whole. There are also persistent gaps in earnings among African Americans. Economists have found, for example, that while Black workers with medium and dark complexions earned 26.5 and 34.5 percent less than Whites, respectively, the wage differential between Whites and Blacks with light skin color was small and insignificant.[26] Similarly, there is evidence that color stratifies occupational status among African Americans in the early twenty-first century as well.[27]

Beyond the labor market, there is also compelling evidence of skin tone stratification among African Americans in the criminal justice system. Social psy-

chologist Jennifer Eberhardt and colleagues infamously found that even after controlling for relevant factors, the more stereotypically Black a defendant was perceived to be – that is, darker skin tone and more Afrocentric facial features – the more likely that Black defendant was to be sentenced to death.[28] And across a number of important indicators of contact with and within the criminal justice system, studies report that African Americans with darker skin have significantly higher rates of being stopped and/or arrested by police and longer sentences compared with other African Americans.[29] Some studies even point out that these findings are robust to sibling comparisons and adjustments for educational attainment, earnings, and measures of delinquency.[30] In short, the preponderance of the evidence strongly suggests that the significance of colorism in shaping life chances, trajectories, and outcomes among African Americans continued mostly unabated from slavery to the early twenty-first century.

Evidence also suggests that the role of skin tone in the marital market among African Americans has persisted to the present day. While studies conflict over whether Black women prefer lighter-skinned Black men, *all* of the recent studies find that dark-skinned Black women are consistently passed over for marriage by middle- to high-status Black males.[31] In fact, studies show that darker-skinned Black women tend to marry spouses with a full year less education than lighter-skinned Black women.[32] Taken together, then, there is strong evidence that skin tone–based homogamy and a strong preference for lighter-skinned Black women among Black men has continued from slavery through the Black power movement to the present day.

Studies also reveal skin tone stratification in health among African Americans. On one hand, skin tone is significantly associated with perceived discrimination among African Americans, and given that perceived discrimination is a well-known risk factor for poorer mental and physical health, skin tone plays at least an indirect role in shaping health inequalities among African Americans.[33] On the other hand, however, there is also evidence of direct relationships between skin tone and health.[34] Sociologist Ryon Cobb and colleagues found, using data from a study conducted in Nashville, Tennessee, that disparities in allostatic load were largest between the darkest-skinned African Americans and Whites compared with what obtains between the lightest-skinned African Americans and Whites.[35] A recent study even found significant associations between skin tone and hypertension between siblings using a family fixed-effects approach that considered genetic pleiotropy, showing strong evidence of a robust relationship between darker skin and increased risk of hypertension among African Americans.[36] These studies add to prior research, which has also identified significant direct associations between skin tone (machine- or interviewer-rated), systolic blood pressure, hypertension, and cardiometabolic health.

Notably, however, we must also consider that the persistent significance of color is not simply a function of inequalities produced interpersonally in bias-ridden

interactions. Given centuries-long skin tone stratification, there is also an inter-generational structure to present-day skin tone stratification. Put simply, color's association with family background also plays a likely important role in affecting educational achievement, labor market outcomes, criminal justice outcomes, and even health. Capturing the role of intergenerational inequalities in producing and reproducing ethnoracial inequality has garnered significant attention among social scientists. Yet this work has remained underdeveloped, at least quantitatively, in research on skin tone stratification in large part due to a lack of longitudinal data on skin tone stratification.

Still, there are some ways of parsing the extent to which family background is associated with skin tone. Consider the following: Fragile Families, a data set designed to sample the most disadvantaged families, and the National Longitudinal Survey of College Freshmen (NLSF), a sample composed of relatively advantaged ethnoracial minorities, both include the same measure of skin color: the Massey-Martin Skin Color Scale, which represents skin colors on an eleven-point scale, ranging from zero to ten, in which zero represents the lightest possible skin tone and ten represents the darkest possible skin tone. While 18 percent of the African American respondents (that is, Black youth) in Fragile Families are "light-skinned" (1–4 on the Massey-Martin scale), in the NLSF, close to 45 percent of the African American respondents are "light-skinned." This massive difference in skin tone distributions (using the same measure) across the two data sets suggests that there may indeed be systematic differences in family background among ethnoracial minorities that are associated with skin color. In the NLSF data set, which focuses on relatively advantaged minorities, there are far more light-skinned respondents than in the Fragile Families data set, which focuses on explicitly disadvantaged minorities.

To be sure, many analyses of skin tone stratification find substantial inequalities in socioeconomic status, criminal justice outcomes, and more, even after controlling for family background. Still, a more comprehensive view of skin tone stratification consists of considering how a combination of cumulated intergenerational advantages and disadvantages along with intragenerational processes of categorization fraught with skin tone biases produce the inequalities we find at this particular point in time. Certainly, parsing the relative contributions is a worthy goal for researchers, but it is complicated by the dearth of longitudinal data on skin tone and the fact that across a number of generations, parents not only pass down endowments of wealth to their offspring, but also skin tone itself. Thus, individuals in this particular generation may be confronting similar processes of interactional bias and discrimination that their parents faced, in addition to enjoying the advantages or disadvantages related to the socioeconomic endowments passed on to them. Again, the intergenerational structure of skin tone stratification reveals itself as particularly important once one considers the role of con-

tinued skin tone–based homogamy in structuring these "colored" endowments across generations.

Skin tone stratification, however, is not unique to African Americans. For instance, Mexican Americans of lighter skin tones earn substantially more than even medium-tone Mexican Americans; one study reports an earning disparity between light- and medium-tone Mexican Americans of $4,065 per year.[37] Hourly wage differentials among native-born male and female Mexican Americans were large and robust with dark-skinned, native-born women experiencing a 20 percent wage penalty.[38] Also, similar to what obtains among African Americans, studies report differences in educational attainment among Hispanics and Latinx as well : light skin is associated with better academic outcomes even after adjusting for socioeconomic status, family structure, immigrant status, and more.[39] The same pattern holds with respect to the criminal justice system, too, where darker-skinned Hispanics and Latinx are significantly more likely to be stopped or arrested by police.[40] In keeping with the patterns found among African Americans and Hispanics and Latinx, some studies report evidence of skin tone stratification among Asian Americans.[41] Indeed, once again, skin tone is a key marker of social status in which darker tones are stigmatized; and researchers find robust relationships between skin tone and socioeconomic status : lighter skin among Asian Americans is associated with higher rates of completing a bachelor's degree or more.[42] In sum, there is reason to believe that skin tone may structure inequalities among Latinx and Asian Americans in the labor market, the education system, the criminal justice system, health, and much more just as it does among African Americans.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly then, evidence shows that immigrants of various backgrounds also experience skin tone stratification. While much evidence shows that most immigrants integrate well into U.S. society, skin tone discrimination and the stratification that results from this is a major barrier to their integration. Indeed, research suggests that stereotypical markers of Hispanic origin such as indigenous features and brown skin are associated with discriminatory treatment and exclusion,[43] which has serious consequences for their integration. Studies show that darker-skinned new immigrants have significantly worse labor market outcomes and lower amounts of wealth than lighter-skinned immigrants.[44] Similar dynamics are thought to obtain among Asian immigrants of darker skin tones, especially immigrants from Southeast Asia.[45]

Colorism may also serve as a barrier to the integration of Black immigrants. This is no minor issue. Since 1960, Black immigrants have gone from making up 1 percent of the African American population to around 10 percent today.[46] To the extent that these immigrants are darker skinned, they may face profound barriers at integrating into society, which may only be (partially) overcome by internecine processes of signaling their differences from native-born Blacks through accent

and other means in order to mitigate experiences of discrimination by important gatekeepers across society.[47] We must also keep in mind that not only do immigrants to the United States experience skin tone stratification, they may also be agents in perpetuating it. Thus, some new immigrants to the United States may face barriers due to skin tone biases, while other new immigrants bring their skin tone biases with them to the United States. And to the extent that these immigrants integrate into the higher echelons of U.S. society and become gatekeepers, they, too, may perpetuate skin tone stratification in the United States, a dynamic similar to practices of colorism among African Americans, Latinx, and Asian Americans.

Colorism is likely to affect life chances in *sending* and *receiving* countries. After all, the significance of color is not unique to the United States: skin tone stratification is best understood as a global phenomenon.[48] Brazil, for example, hews eerily close to the United States with its shared lineage as a former African slave-holding society; in fact, Brazil had more African slaves than any other country that was part of the transatlantic slave trade. Similar to the United States, the terms race and color are used interchangeably in everyday life, and, in this case, even on the census. Nevertheless, despite linguistic conventions that treat race and color as interchangeable, recent work shows that census race-color categories and skin tone are analytically and empirically distinct. In fact, they are so distinct that skin tone is not only a better predictor of inequality than self-identified census race-color categories, but skin tone is significantly associated with socioeconomic status in Brazil even after adjusting for self-identification into official race-color categories.[49]

Though colorism is typically rendered as a Black-White issue, owing to the hegemonic stature of U.S. social science on ethnoracial matters,[50] cases such as Japan and India demonstrate that colorism has existed and continues to exist in various locales, absent an African versus European dynamic. In fact, in the cases of Japan and India, preferences for white skin predated contact with Europeans.[51] Though the roots of these preferences go back hundreds of years in many contexts, these phenotypic preferences persist to this day and are socially consequential, particularly in regard to marriage and interpersonal relationships. The persistent mass media onslaught of a fair-skinned Indian beauty (both in the Indian media and in global media) has led to the explosion of an Indian skin-lightening industry. In fact, India and Indian diasporic communities constitute the world's largest market for skin-lightening cosmetics.[52]

With respect to the United States, at the very least, the implications of skin tone stratification for the study of ethnoracial inequality should be quite clear. While it is true that ethnoracial inequality between broad, superordinate categories has persisted for centuries in the United States, so too has skin tone stratification within and across most of these broad, superordinate categories. The bulk

of the evidence suggests that not only African Americans, but also Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Latinx are all significantly stratified by skin tone. Perhaps even White Americans, too, pending systematic evidence, are stratified at least to some muted degree by skin tone. To this list, we can also add immigrants to the United States, which means that the integration of new members of American society is also hampered and stratified by skin tone. Ultimately, then, skin tone stratification appears to be quite pervasive in the United States, so much so that it seems quite fair to label it a *pigmentocracy*, despite the media's and academia's relative marginalization of skin tone stratification.

Even with all the evidence of its powerful role in shaping life chances, trajectories, and outcomes, the topic of colorism has consistently been placed on the back burner not only by social scientists, but even by African Americans and other ethnoracial minorities suffering from its negative consequences. Considering the case of African Americans, at first blush, it does not make much sense that attention to skin tone stratification is so muted and marginalized among them. After all, across nearly every outcome that social scientists study with respect to ethnoracial inequality between Blacks and Whites, African Americans are also significantly stratified by skin tone, so much so that intraracial inequalities along the color line, across a whole host of outcomes, often rival or exceed ethnoracial inequalities between Blacks and Whites as a whole.[53] It is, then, quite puzzling that most African Americans choose not to protest this form of unfairness and treat it as secondary to ethnoracial inequality. After all, at least in everyday life and in crucial social interactions across a wide array of domains – from the education system to the criminal justice system and even marital markets – their outcomes are not only shaped by their membership in the broad, superordinate category of African American, but also by how light or dark their skin is.

Perhaps the combination of intra- and interracial processes that produce and reproduce skin tone stratification make it a complicated and unpalatable target for conspicuous and sustained political recognition. Perhaps the constant conflation of race and color makes it hard to see color as relevant for life chances and outcomes relative to the gravity of the term race. With so much attention to race, in the sense of belonging to a broad, superordinate category, one can understand how many ethnoracial minorities, even those of dark skin, may come to see their color as secondary to their categorical race – a peculiar form of color-blindness. Even our current policy structure is mostly blind to skin tone stratification even though the terms race and color are found throughout it. The conflation of race and color in our legal system results in cases in which, for instance, defendants in a color lawsuit (the IRS) can successfully argue that there could not be discrimination because "skin color and race are essentially the same characteristic."[54] Skin tone seems, however, to be not only a blind spot in our civil rights framework, but

also a cognitive blind spot : while evidence shows we are able to suppress ethnoracial biases with conscious effort, skin tone biases seem quite resistant to suppression even with effort.[55]

In a society with increasing intermarriage and "multiracial" children – in which everyone will look mixed – the importance of skin tone should only increase over time as ethnoracial categories become even more heterogeneous with respect to phenotype. Add to this dynamic skin tone stratification experienced by new immigrants (and their future descendants) and it becomes clearer that, if anything, the significance of skin tone should only increase. This should be quite concerning given colorism's relative lack of media visibility, political attention, and policy responses. Ethnoracial inequality, all too often, is simply envisaged as being primarily a matter of mere membership in this or that ethnoracial category as opposed to what "type" or "kind" of a member of said category we appear to be (such as how prototypical or atypical). We tend to ignore how our bodies signify social difference (like categories and social status), how our bodies operate as a form of capital (that is, bodily capital). In a society in which explicit forms of racism are sometimes seen as so illegitimate that even some avowed White supremacists deny being racist, skin tone stratification and the biases that underlie it are quite likely to persist without much attention at all. If it is the goal of future research to help us understand and inform policy to mitigate ethnoracial inequality, we face at least two crucial challenges. First, to push the boundaries of how we understand ethnoracial inequality today and, second, to radically reimagine ethnoracial *equality* in order to better inform the content of our dreams for the future.

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The Racialization of "Illegality"

Cecilia Menjívar

This essay examines the intertwined nature of seemingly neutral immigration laws that illegalize certain immigrant groups and the socially constructed attitudes and stereotypes that associate the same legally targeted groups with "illegality," to produce the racialization of illegality. These complementary factors are further sustained by other social forces, including media discourses that reify those associations. The racialization of illegality is a fundamentally situational, relational, dynamic, and historically and context-specific process. Today, Latino groups are the preeminent target group of both the social and the legal production of illegality. Thus, this essay examines Latinos' racialized illegality across geographical contexts, within their group, and in relation to other contemporary immigrants. Although expressions of racialized illegality and specific targeted groups will vary across time and space, the contours of the phenomenon will be present across contexts and times (and produce specific outcomes) because they are shaped by existing racial hierarchies.

In a December 2011 interview, the sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona, Joseph Arpaio, explained to me that his critics did not "get it": he was not a racist, his only goal and responsibility was to enforce the law.[1] To accomplish this, he needed to deploy his officers to neighborhoods and businesses throughout the Phoenix metro area where they had "intel" that "illegal activity" was going on. They were not, he assured me, out to get Latinos; it just so happens that there are many Latinos who are "illegal," he explained. The U.S. Supreme Court disagreed. The sheriff's zealous approach to immigration enforcement was found to be unconstitutional; the Court ruled that the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office racially profiled Latinas/os living in the county.[2]

Latinas/os – mostly Mexicans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans – overwhelmingly bear the burden of the immigration enforcement system in the United States today. Immigrants from these four countries make up 70 percent of the undocumented population; however, they are overrepresented among the immigrants who are detained and deported: 88.6 percent of the detainees are from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador and 79.4 percent are men; 90 percent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) removals are from these four countries as well.[3] The reverse holds for other immigrant groups, especially Asians, whose undocumented immigrant population is the fastest growing in the

United States, increasing from 7 percent of all undocumented immigrants to nearly 16 percent in 2015 alone.[4] For instance, while 4 percent of the Indian population in the country is undocumented, these immigrants constitute only 0.6 percent of ICE removals. And though Filipinos make up 3 percent of the undocumented population, Chinese 3 percent, and South Koreans 2 percent, none of these groups reaches 0.5 percent of ICE removals.[5]

This strong association between being Latina/o and undocumented, broadcast in the media and cemented through enforcement practices, has led scholars to examine experiences of "illegality" through a lens of race, and to conceptualize illegality as racialized.[6] Indeed, some scholars and activists have labeled the targeting of enforcement on the Latino population as a whole, and Latino men in particular, as a racial project and a gendered racial removal program.[7] Sociologists Tanya Golash-Boza and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo observed that "between 1993 and 2011…there was a 10-fold increase in the number of Mexican deportees, and a 12-fold increase in the number of Central American deportees while the deportations of Asian and European immigrants increased fourfold and those of African and Caribbean immigrants only doubled."[8] Thus, the immigration regime targets Latinas/os today with particular force: both the legislative and the enforcement side of the regime illegalize and racialize them.[9]

Sociologists and immigration scholars who point to the increasing use of undocumented legal status as a proxy for race and to the centrality of racialization processes in the immigration system argue that the status of "illegality" is not a race-neutral term; it has become synonymous with "Mexicanness" and with being Latina/o.[10] And since race is a "fundamental organizing principle of social relationships," "illegality," like race, has become an axis of stratification with effects similar to those of other social hierarchies.[11] This race-based enforcement system, as Douglas Massey has argued, affects Latinas/os in similar ways as the criminal justice system marks Blacks.[12] The racialization of "illegality," therefore, has real-life consequences for immigrants, their families, and communities.[13]

Scholars have thus conceptualized the intersection of legal status (or illegality) and race as the *racialization of legal status*.[14] Asad L. Asad and Matthew Clair developed the concept of *racialized legal status* to highlight how "ostensibly race-neutral legal classifications . . . disproportionally impact racial/ethnic minorities."[15] Focusing on criminal and legal statuses, they call attention to the disproportionate burden of such classifications on racial/ethnic minorities and to the stigmatization these classifications produce, which enable statistical discrimination "against in-group members who are not" marked by the stigmatized status.[16] Amada Armenta has observed that scholarship on the effects of criminalization tends to focus on the effects of immigrants' legal status, not the *racialization* of the status, a concept that she argues more precisely captures these conditions.[17] Last, San Juanita García has called attention to the institutionalized aspects of "illegality,"

which intersect with race to shape various forms of exclusion associated with anti-immigrant sentiment; and Juan Herrera has highlighted racialization within stigmatized immigrant groups, which complicates conceptualizations of racialized illegality.[18]

The racialization of illegality is a product of various forces. It is generally acknowledged that the category of "illegality" is produced by law; it is a political identity that underscores immigrants' relationship to the state.[19] However, "illegality" is also socially constructed based on stereotypes that assign illegality to certain groups, producing what René Flores and Ariela Schachter refer to as "social illegality."[20] Certain characteristics associated with illegality "become embedded in elaborate narratives of threat and transgression that intersect with racism and reactionary politics."[21] Social illegality thus complements and sustains legal structures and bureaucracies of enforcement. Popular discourse buttresses the continued reproduction of a class of immigrants seen as particularly suited for certain jobs who can then be made excludable and disposable.[22] Along these lines, Armenta has noted that the overwhelming targeting of enforcement on Latinas/os she found in Tennessee – that is, their racialization as undocumented – is not simply the result of racist officers' decisions to stop, arrest, and detain these immigrants; instead, these practices are the result of institutionalized policies in enforcement agencies, policies and laws that on their face appear to be race-neutral.[23] Nazli Kibria, Cara Bowman, and Megan O'Leary have observed that "the race-immigration nexus" constitutes a "fluid and intertwined bundle of linkages . . . among institutions, ideologies and practices."[24] Thus, the institutionalization of exclusion through "illegality" based on race creates the illusion that enforcement is directed at excluded groups, for instance Latinas/os, because of their legal status, not their race; however, seemingly neutral immigration policies have racial effects because laws are not implemented in a social vacuum but within specific racial formations.[25]

The social construction of illegality lies at the root of how immigrants are perceived by the public, employers, and institutions and how racialized illegality is deployed in various spheres of life. Flores and Schachter found that certain attributes of an immigrant group – such as national origin, social class, and criminal background – powerfully shape public perceptions of "illegality." Mexicans as well as other Latin Americans, especially Salvadorans, are particularly suspected of illegality, whereas Asians and Europeans "arouse the lowest levels of suspicion."[26] These scholars also found that jobs in the informal economy have become markers of illegality. Suspicions and perceptions that equate certain national origins, levels of education, and occupations with illegality solidify ethnoracial stereotypes on which social illegality is based. This linkage is not unlike Marta Maria Maldonado's finding that employers of Latina/o agricultural workers rely on race as a proxy for worker quality, marking recent immigrants (and their legal status) as hard workers and second-generation Latinas/os as "lazier," thus justi-

fying exploitative working conditions for the recently arrived (and mostly undocumented) workers.[27] And Amanda Moras found that employers rely on cultural markers such as English language proficiency to hire domestic workers; such determinations racialize Latina immigrants as domestic workers.[28]

The racialization of illegality is also tied to notions of deserving and undeserving, good and bad immigrants. Social illegality shapes immigrants' perceptions of themselves and how they are perceived in society. For instance, a Maya Guatemalan undocumented worker who was apprehended during the Postville, Iowa, raid in 2008, who, according to the interpreter, "No matter how many times his attorney explained his rights to him, he kept saying, 'I'm illegal, I have no rights. I'm nobody in this country. Just do whatever you want with me.'"[29] Furthermore, as undocumented Latina/o immigrants try to distance themselves from their negative portrayals, they seek recognition for their deservingness by underscoring civically accepted acts, such as paying taxes and working.[30] In their efforts to signal deservingness and "goodness," immigrants often outperform U.S.-born workers because the notion of a strong work ethic operates in a racial register.[31] Distancing also occurs among other immigrant groups associated with stigmatized minorities. For instance, Hana Brown found that Liberian refugees use their refugee status to distance themselves from native-born Blacks and establish their position above them in the U.S. ethnoracial hierarchy.[32]

T he racialization of illegality we see today has a long history.[33] Enduring structural racism is embedded in U.S. immigration law. Formal exclusion based on race, which reinforces stereotypes of immigrants classified as non-White as excludable, inferior, and "alien," is nothing new.[34] At different points in U.S. history, immigration law has institutionalized practices and values that position certain immigrant groups, specifically Mexicans, Latinos, and Chinese, as "illegal."[35] Scholars have traced the relationship between Chinese migration and racialized exclusion, whereby immigration laws that excluded Chinese laborers, presumably to protect American workers and the nation, created an excludable category based on race.[36] Likewise, the production of the "illegal alien" category in the 1920s "reframed immigration from Mexico as both undesirable and an affront to strong American traditions of law and order."[37]

Therefore, time and space matter significantly. The racialization of legal status is a dynamic process; it is geographically conditioned and historically specific. Given the centrality of racial systems in the organization of social life, the process itself will exist at different historical junctions and across contexts and societies, but the expressions and hierarchies produced will be context-specific and historically situated. For instance, in contrast to the constructions of race that formally excluded certain immigrant groups in the past, immigration policies in the post–civil rights era function through color-blind racism, creating the more sub-

tle yet equally powerful racialization in immigration practices today.[38] Thus, in contrast to overtly racist immigration policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the practice today is to deem certain activities that are common among certain immigrant groups "illegal."[39] Legal status today then can serve as a proxy for race, both formally in the immigration system and socially, as when the public and media equate Latinas/os with being undocumented.[40]

Racialization of illegality also takes different expressions across contexts and societies today. For instance, in the Dominican Republic, illegality has been racialized as Haitian, and postwar migration to Britain has been associated with a host of social problems and with being Asian or Black.[41] In India, Bangladeshis are "marked as Muslim and male" and "made synonymous with 'illegal migrant.'"[42] And in a study of the racialization of legal status of Central Asian immigrants in Russia, my colleagues and I found that legal status does not lessen these immigrants' experiences of racism.[43] Within the larger group of Central Asian immigrants, Kyrgyz migrants, despite being culturally closer to Russians and up to that point enjoying a privileged path to citizenship, experienced more hostility. They were racialized as darker and phenotypically more distinct than the other groups in our study, Tajiks and Uzbeks, and thus were more often the target of ethnoracially motivated harassment by authorities who would regularly demand to see their papers.

The racialization of legal status only has meaning in a context of expanded enforcement, fear, and increased penalties for the individuals who are targets. García has called attention to the centrality of context in sustaining racialization processes, which unfold in the workplace, in educational and health institutions, and in the criminal justice system and homogenize Mexicans, regardless of nativity or legal status, as "illegal."[44] Such a climate was the case in Arizona, where a string of laws passed in the 2000s culminated in the signing of SB 1070 in 2010, requiring law enforcement officials to determine an individual's legal status during a lawful encounter if there was "reasonable suspicion" that the person was unlawfully present in the United States. The law was written and signed in a context saturated by other exclusionary laws, by media broadcasting the association between Latinas/os and undocumented status, and general social illegality that strongly associated being Latina/o with being undocumented.[45]

Since legal status is not a physically identifiable characteristic, Maricopa County officers needed to use other markers to make this determination. The Maricopa County (the largest county in Arizona) Sheriff's Office set up checkpoints in predominantly Latino neighborhoods and conducted regular workplace raids overwhelmingly targeting businesses that employed Latina/o workers.[46] These practices resulted in "hyper-surveillance, abusive stops, problematic searches and unwarranted detention of suspected unauthorized immigrants,"[47] creating conditions of fear and anxiety for Latinas/os living in Maricopa County, regardless of citizenship or legal status.[48]

Although experiences of illegality are strongly linked to race and place, the legal production of illegality in the United States is enacted at the federal level, with consequences throughout the country but with specific local manifestations.[49] Media play a key role in the creation of social illegality, locally and nationally, contributing strongly to shape associations between undocumented status and being Latina/o. Women's studies scholar M. Cristina Alcalde found that even though White youth in Kentucky condemned the racism they saw in their communities, their beliefs about immigration were similar to those in their social milieu: these youth made a strong connection between undocumented status and being Latina/o.[50] Thus, Alcalde argues, race matters; racism against Latinas/os is the norm rather than the exception for past and current generations.

The strong association between "illegality" and being Mexican or Latina/o produces a spillover effect that reaches Mexicans and other Latinas/os who hold lawful permanent residence, those who are naturalized, and even those who are U.S.-born.[51] Because this association is predicated on characteristics socially attributed to Latinas/os as a group, the boundaries of illegality are blurry in practice, not only to the public but also to those who enforce immigration law.[52] In practice, then, the category of illegality spills beyond the group that the law formally illegalizes and targets. As such, legal scholar Kevin Johnson has observed that Mexicans (and I would add Latinas/os who share phenotype with Mexican immigrants and speak Spanish or Mayan languages) "bear the brunt of race-based immigration enforcement, which also cuts to the core of their belonging to the national community."[53]

García observed that regardless of their legal or generational status or the length of time they have lived in the United States, the women in her Houston-based study were often marked as undocumented.[54] This spillover effect thus extends to a wide swath of the Latino population regardless of generation, nativity, or legal status.[55] Although undocumented Latinas/os show the greatest concern about deportation, research has shown that (especially after Trump's election) 66 percent of Hispanic lawful permanent residents and 33 percent of U.S.-born Hispanics worry about their own deportation or that of a family member.[56] In our study comparing perceptions of the police among Latinas/os of different legal and citizenship statuses in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and Phoenix, we found that in a saturated enforcement context like Phoenix, Latinas/os are apprehensive of contacting the police regardless of their legal status.[57] Similarly, in El Paso, Texas, researchers found that living in neighborhoods with Latina/o-associated characteristics increases the likelihood for third- and fourth-generation Latinas/os to be questioned about their citizenship status.[58]

The racialization of illegality for Latinas/os is sustained among Latinas/os as well as through the racialization of legal status for non-Latinas/os. The racialization of "illegality" among Latinas/os is buttressed through

distinctions of skin color and ethnicity, which strengthen a system of racial stratification within Latinas/os that can create conditions for within-Latinas/os exploitation.[59] Thus, Herrera has challenged the "homogenization of Latinos as a single 'race.'"[60] In his research among day laborers in California, he analyzes constructions of racialized difference between Guatemalan indigenous and nonindigenous laborers as *racialized illegality*. Indigenous Maya and nonindigenous migrants experience illegality differently, based on how they were racialized in their country of origin.[61] Indigenous Latina/o immigrants therefore face institutional and state discrimination as their nonindigenous counterparts do, but also experience an added layer of discrimination based on their indigeneity, which they also encounter from Latina/o peers.[62]

Internal racism exacerbates experiences of illegality across Latino subgroups. For instance, ICE raids targeting Maya Guatemalans have pushed these immigrants to the bottom of the Latino social hierarchy in the community.[63] Knowing that these Guatemalans are racialized as undocumented and thus targeted in the raids, other Latinas/os in the community sought to distance themselves from them to avoid falling onto ICE's radar.[64] ICE enforcement and the racialization of Maya Guatemalans as undocumented can undermine community and intensify intraethnic divisions.[65] Andrea Gómez Cervantes has argued against conventional associations of "illegality" with a homogenized Latina/o immigrant. In her research in Kansas, she found deep divisions within Latinas/os, among whom lighter skin can translate into legal protection, but "looking Mexican" or indigenous makes them vulnerable to immigration enforcement.[66]

The racialization of "illegality" for Latinas/os is further reinforced by the racialization of legal status among other groups. For instance, among Asian immigrants, racialized legal status erases the association between "illegality" and being Asian, even as research indicates that Asians are the fastest growing undocumented racial group in the United States, with a six-fold increase since 1990 and with one in every six Asian immigrants having undocumented status in 2015.[67]

In her comparative research on Korean and Mexican undocumented youth in Los Angeles, Esther Yoona Cho observes that undocumented Koreans face double racialization. Although they do not experience the daily fear of deportation that Mexicans and Latinas/os do because Koreans are not immediately suspected of illegality, undocumented Koreans conceal their status. As such, their prospects for engaging in coalitional relationships are diminished significantly, especially when they are unaware of other Asians in the same undocumented predicament.[68] The racialization of legal status among Asians is based on "model minority" stereotypes that allow them to "pass" for "legal."[69] Cho notes that Koreans struggle with "having to navigate the very palpable constraints of illegality, while being disasso-

ciated with illegality due to visible markers of being a model minority."[70] And as undocumented Asians have become aware of the punitive enforcement practices directed at Latinas/os, some Asians "position themselves away" from Latinas/os, thus unwittingly reinforcing the "good immigrant–bad immigrant" dichotomy and posing challenges to organizing efforts for rights of the undocumented across immigrant groups.[71]

Similarly, Caitlin Patler has found that variations in access to coethnic networks and knowing other students in similar statuses determine whether undocumented students will reveal their status.[72] Latina/o undocumented students in her study were relatively open about their legal status, but this was not the case among undocumented Asian and Pacific Islander students and Black students, who reported feeling isolated and too scared or embarrassed to seek support from their friends.[73] In addition, Asian American and Pacific Islander youth eligible for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) experience *dual liminality*, positioned between model minority and marginalization both from mainstream society and from their coethnic communities based on their legal status.[74]

Undocumented Asians suffer similar forms of exploitation as undocumented Latinas/os, including long working hours and reduced access to medical care, but their invisibility as undocumented (and racialization as documented) hurts coalition building efforts around undocumented workers' rights. Researchers have also found that assumptions of "legality" for Asians often prevent undocumented Asians from seeking social services for fear of outing their legal status.[75] Thus, racialization of *legality*, in a context of extreme enforcement and hostility toward the undocumented, can also be harmful.[76]

Ostensibly neutral immigration laws that illegalize certain immigrant groups, enforcement practices that target the same immigrant groups, media discourses that reify notions of the group as "quintessentially" undocumented, and social attitudes and perceptions that reinforce such narratives coalesce to produce the racialization of illegality. It is a relational, dynamic, and historically and context-specific process. This means that expressions of racialized illegality and targeted groups will vary across time and space, but the contours of the phenomenon will be present (and produce specific outcomes) because they are shaped by the existing racial hierarchy at a specific historical moment.

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ENDNOTES

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Criminalizing Migration

César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández

Beginning in the 1980s, the United States embarked on a decades-long restructuring of federal laws criminalizing migration and increasing the consequences for migrants engaging in criminal activity. Today, the results are clear: a law enforcement apparatus and immigration prison system propelled by a vast infrastructure of laws and policies. The presidency of Donald Trump augmented this trend and brought it to public attention. But lost in President Trump's unique flair is an ideological commitment shared by multiple presidential administrations and legislators from both major political parties to use the criminal justice system and imprisonment to sift migrants. Examining these ideological attachments reveals Trump-era policies to be the outer edge of decades-long trends rather than extreme and momentary deviations from the norm.

Jerry Armijo does not remember his move to the United States. He was about one year old at the time, so that is to be expected. After a few years in Florida, his parents moved the family to South Texas when he was eight years old. They settled there and have not moved since. Jerry – his actual name is Gerardo, but he goes by the Anglicized version – grew up in South Texas. He finished elementary school there, then middle school and high school. After that, he set his sights on exploring the world. Like many young people in the Rio Grande Valley, the southeastern tip of Texas, Jerry's ticket to the world came courtesy of the United States military.

With a high school diploma in hand, he joined the Army. In Kosovo, he received a Bronze Service Star. NATO recognized his contributions to the organization's peacemaking efforts. From a military base in Germany, he started the long process of applying for naturalization, his only option for obtaining United States citizenship. Having been born in Mexico, Jerry was not a citizen of the country whose uniform he wore. Instead, he had been a lawful permanent resident of the United States – a green-card holder – since the age of thirteen. Before then he was in the country on a long-expired tourist visa. Overwhelmed by obstacles he ran into trying to get fingerprinted for the citizenship application's background check, he eventually gave up. He planned to do it after leaving Germany, he told me when I spoke with him at my family's law firm years later. That day never came.

For the Army, it was not a problem that Jerry was not a United States citizen. Lawful permanent residents are welcomed to enlist. In 2015, years after Jerry had left the service, there were 7,926 troops in the Army who did not claim United States citizenship.[1] To the military, Jerry's willingness to put his life on the line for the United States was more important than his citizenship. To Jerry, the Army's willingness to place in him the responsibility to protect the only country he had ever called home was just as important.

Eventually, Jerry became a tank commander. And later the Army sent him to Iraq. He quickly got used to avoiding improvised explosive devices (IED). It was easier to spot them on the road, he recalled. In the undulating sands of the desert floor, however, it was hard to see a hidden lump. Leading a group of tanks through the sand one day, Jerry suddenly felt the tank shake, his spine compress, and around him he heard steel reach its breaking point. Jerry's tank had passed over an IED that blasted through the armored vehicle's bottom.

With an injured leg and traumatized psyche, he was sent back to South Texas. Instead of receiving the care that he needed, Jerry found his way to drugs. It would not take long for the police to find their way to Jerry. Going through the criminal justice system, it seemed like he might be able to get his life on track. The court was supporting his rehabilitation and Jerry was doing as asked. After a difficult few years since that fateful moment in Iraq, things seemed to be improving. Then Jerry suddenly stopped showing up for court dates. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency had arrested him and was holding him in a nearby immigration prison. Part of the Department of Homeland Security, ICE is responsible for managing the federal government's network of prisons where people who are suspected of violating federal immigration law are held. While Jerry sat inside the immigration prison, ICE attorneys started the process of forcibly removing him from the United States.

This time, Jerry had some luck on his side. His parents managed to gather up enough money to hire a lawyer. In immigration courts, there is no right to government-paid legal counsel. Except for those people who are able to find pro bono assistance, representation comes at a cost. In the immigration courts of South Texas, very few are so lucky. One study, published in 2015 but still the best available, found that in cases at two South Texas courts, Los Fresnos and Harlingen, only 18 and 14 percent, respectively, of detained migrants were represented, approximating the national average of 18 percent.[2] Thanks to a media campaign and legal arguments, ICE released Jerry.

As a lawyer, Jerry's story is relevant to me because he was a client of my family's law firm. My brother, also a lawyer, did most of the work to release him. But as a researcher interested in the expanding willingness of U.S. law and policy to criminalize migration, Jerry's experience illustrates the blurry boundaries in which lawyers, judges, and, most important, migrants live. Though immigration

law is formally classified as a type of civil law, imprisonment takes a central role in enforcing immigration law. People like Jerry regularly find themselves locked up in facilities ringed with concertina wire that resemble state prisons or county jails. Often, they are held in facilities that are nothing more than county jails from which ICE has a contract to use a certain number of beds. In other instances, immigration law transgressions are in fact handled through the formal criminal justice system. Two federal crimes in particular – unauthorized entry and unauthorized reentry – dominate dockets in many federal criminal courts. These trends have received heightened attention under the administration of President Donald Trump, but neither comes out of a vacuum. On the contrary, both present-day realities flow neatly from developments in law and policy stretching back decades.

For most of the twentieth century, few people suffered adverse immigration consequences due to involvement in criminal activity. In the ordinary course, criminal activity was investigated, prosecuted, and punished through the criminal justice system, if at all. Typically, law enforcement agencies are not required to explore the possibility that a crime was committed. Likewise, prosecutors are not usually obligated to pursue criminal charges against anyone even if the evidence of guilt is strong. Bending to the reality that resources are finite and decisions to lodge the power of the criminal justice system against someone are meant to invoke the stigmatizing power of the community, courts defer decisions about investigation and prosecution of crime to police and prosecutors.

Prior to the 1980s, concerns about the exchange and use of illicit drugs was only an infrequent cause of exclusion or deportation from the United States. For the nine decades spanning 1892 to 1984, only 15,824 people were excluded from the United States due to crime or drug activity.[3] Another 56,669 people were deported for the same reasons across the different, but mostly overlapping period of 1908 to 1990.[4] Cumulatively, it took approximately ninety years for the government to complete slightly more than 72,000 legal proceedings against migrants with criminal histories or for involvement with drugs. In fiscal year 2002, immigration officials did that in a single year.[5] What had taken almost a century suddenly became the annual norm. In fiscal year 2012, the federal government hit a high-water mark of removing 200,039 migrants with a criminal history. Federal officials have yet to match that figure, but through the 2019 fiscal year, they have never failed to remove at least 100,000 people with criminal histories.[6]

Between the mid-1980s and the early years of the twenty-first century, far more than statistics changed. To dramatically alter enforcement trends, law and policy had to change, too. And so they did. Starting with President Ronald Reagan's election to the White House, Congress and multiple administrations have expanded the criminalization of migration, setting a trend that has evolved but not stopped. Early in Reagan's tenure, the federal government adopted a categorical policy of

detaining Haitians who arrived in the United States intent on requesting asylum. Explaining the administration's rationale in a 1981 speech, Reagan's attorney general claimed detention of asylum-seekers was necessary to discourage people from coming to the United States.[7] The following year, a Justice Department lawyer named Rudolph Giuliani pitched to Congress a $35 million proposal to build two prisons. The federal government needed the additional space, he told the House Judiciary Committee, "if we are to adequately enforce our immigration laws."[8] Giuliani's request met stern resistance that year and failed to convince the House to go along, but Congress would not take long to follow the administration's lead.

Starting in the mid-1980s, Congress would enact a series of laws that raised the consequences of criminal activity and expanded imprisonment's role in enforcing immigration law. In 1986, for example, Congress enacted the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, empowering the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to request that local law enforcement agencies detain anyone arrested for a drug crime.[9] Two years later, Congress enacted the identically named Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, creating a category of crime called "aggravated felony" that required the INS to take custody of any migrant convicted of such an offense.[10] At the time, only three crimes – murder, drug trafficking, and firearms trafficking – fit the definition of an aggravated felony. Today, the label attaches to twenty-one categories of offenses.

A change in presidential administration would not change the course that President Reagan set by intertwining criminal justice practices and laws regulating migrants' ability to remain in the United States. On the contrary, trends brewing in the criminal justice realm would quickly make their way into immigration law. In 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the Immigration Act, a bill that he referred to as "meet[ing] several objectives of my Administration's war on drugs and violent crime."[11] As President Bush suggested, the law increased the consequences of engaging in illicit drug activity. Specifically, it expanded legal authority to deport migrants convicted of a broad range of drug crimes.[12] His successor, President Bill Clinton, would likewise approve of laws increasing the penalties for migrants who commit crime. In 1994, Clinton supported the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, a law that authorized construction of INS prisons and created a federal program that reimburses local law enforcement agencies for detaining certain migrants.[13] Two years later, a pair of laws that Clinton signed just months apart dramatically revamped federal law and policy-making. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, adopted in April 1996, added nonviolent offenses like perjury and passport counterfeiting to the aggravated felony definition.[14] In September of that year, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) added to federal immigration law the statutory provision that to this day dictates which migrants federal officials, including immigration judges, are barred from releasing from custody. It also created the 287(g) programs that ICE would favor in the early years of the

Obama administration.[15] In their own way, each amendment represents the war on drugs' entry into immigration law and law enforcement.

Perhaps more important than piecemeal ratcheting up of the consequences awaiting migrants who got caught in drug activity, several of these laws reflected ideological trends sweeping criminal justice circles. In particular, the 1990s witnessed multiple measures that took power away from judges. Through the 1990 immigration law, immigration judges saw their power to issue waivers of deportation limited; it would be eliminated entirely when IIRIRA was enacted in 1996. Separately, the 1990 law repealed a decades-old power that federal judges had used to bar federal immigration officials from using a specific criminal conviction to detain or deport a migrant. Called a judicial recommendation against deportation (JRAD), the special procedure essentially let judges give migrants a second chance at remaining in the United States, even after a conviction. They could use their sentencing authority to put the conviction off-limits to immigration officials. Both the waiver power taken from immigration judges and the JRAD stripped from judges in criminal cases allowed ostensibly neutral arbiters to forgive past transgressions.

Congress's decision to eliminate both authorities reflected an ideological transformation. Instead of allowing migrants to transcend their worst moments, immigration law came increasingly to limit migrants to one opportunity at making a life in the United States. While it was not categorically impossible to receive a pardon either in immigration court or in a criminal proceeding, it became increasingly difficult to do so. These shifts in law reflected a growing skepticism of judicial neutrality. A decades-long political milieu that framed judges as biased in favor of defendants reflected "the diminishing role of the judge" that Jonathan Simon chronicled in *Governing through Crime*.[16] While Simon focused on criminal laws, traditional criminal policing, and criminal courtrooms, the 1990s saw numerous instances in immigration matters of the judicial backlash that he described. Instead of deferring to judges, whether in immigration courts or federal districts courts, Congress and multiple presidential administrations legislated a more constrained willingness to forgive migrants' errors.

Since the turn of the century, migration has only become more enmeshed with criminal policing practices. When immigration duties were reorganized in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, the Department of Homeland Security's ICE was given responsibility for enforcing immigration laws in the nation's interior, and its counterpart Customs and Border Protection, which includes the Border Patrol, was given similar duties along the border. Under President George W. Bush, Congress enacted the Secure Fence Act in 2006, which required the federal government to build 850 miles of fencing along the border with Mexico, though two years later, Congress reduced that requirement to 700 miles.[17] By the time Bush left office, the Border Patrol had built 306 miles of fencing intended to

stop pedestrians from crossing into the United States and another 301 to stop vehicles.[18] As a backup to the steel and concrete of border walls, the Bush administration also began to rely on federal prosecutors to increase the consequence of violating immigration law. Tapping the power of two federal crimes, unauthorized entry and unauthorized reentry, the Bush administration turned federal criminal dockets into fast-paced immigration processing centers. In the last fiscal year fully under President Bush, federal prosecutors convicted 21,054 people of immigration crimes in federal district courts, one-quarter of the total number of people convicted of all crimes in all federal courthouses that year.[19]

Bush's successor, President Barack Obama, shied away from wall-building along the border, but his administration relied heavily on the walls of prison buildings to enforce immigration laws. President Obama oversaw the growth of ICE's population of prisoners to as many as 478,000 in a single year. Among that large group were parents held with their children in closed-access facilities called "family residential centers." After shuttering a notorious center reserved for families in 2009, the administration opened two similar sites in 2014, both of which remain operational today. To detain such a large number of people, the administration relied heavily on information-sharing agreements between state and local law enforcement agencies and their counterparts with the federal immigration services. For roughly the first six years of President Obama's tenure, ICE operated Secure Communities, an initiative that sifted identification information gathered by on-the-ground police and sheriff's deputies through DHS databases containing information about citizenship and immigration status. The administration touted the initiative as a means of identifying and apprehending dangerous individuals only to reel when public attention focused on numerous instances of people with minor infractions caught up in its policing web. DHS did itself no favors by first suggesting that participation was voluntary, then explaining that state and local law enforcement agencies could not back out. By late 2014, criticism had become so intense that Jeh Johnson, at the time Secretary of Homeland Security, announced its repeal. In the same memo, Secretary Johnson described a new initiative: the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP). Though the two programs differed markedly in scope, PEP, like Secure Communities, also used an information-sharing model between state and local law enforcement agencies and their federal counterparts.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration continued President Bush's emphasis on unauthorized entry and unauthorized reentry prosecutions. Prosecutors charged so many people with federal immigration crimes that, in 2011, an administrative unit of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said that the situation in Arizona was "crushing" the courts.[20] To move large numbers of immigration crime cases through the federal courts, Operation Streamline – started in Del Rio, Texas, in late 2005 – spread across Southwestern federal courthouses during

the Obama years. In Operation Streamline proceedings, migrant defendants are processed en masse, sometimes as many as several dozen at a time.

President Trump's policies took his predecessors' positions and highlighted their sharpest edges. Having carried himself into the White House in part on the strength of racist taunts and claims to build a border wall, he spent considerable energy launching or promoting attacks on migrants. Most of the time, he laced accusations with fear-mongering rhetoric that echoed the criminal justice conversations of recent decades : innocent White victims pitted against merciless perpetrators, almost always People of Color, and the legions of White elitists who facilitate their violence. When a jury acquitted Mexican citizen José Inés García Zarate of murder in the death of Kate Steinle, a young White woman, for example, President Trump quickly released a video criticizing the outcome. In the style of George H. W. Bush's 1988 Willie Horton campaign attack against Michael Dukakis, President Trump then blamed Steinle's death on his political opponents, Democrats, accusing them of favoring dangerous migrants over blameless U.S. citizens.[21]

Aside from inflammatory rhetoric, the Trump administration also targeted migrants and their allies. Days into his presidency, President Trump issued an executive order prioritizing immigration policing against migrants who have been convicted of, charged with, or merely "committed acts that constitute a chargeable criminal offense."[22] A few months later, his first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, delivered a strident speech before a crowd of Border Patrol officers accusing "criminal aliens" of "seek[ing] to overthrow our system of lawful immigration." He promised the agents assembled in Nogales, Arizona, directly on the Mexican border, "It is here, on this sliver of land, where we first take our stand against this filth."[23] Soon federal prosecutors in nearby Tucson seemed to follow the attorney general's suggestion by targeting border activists like Scott Daniel Warren for humanitarian activities that have long been common in harsh borderlands terrain. In 2017, prosecutors accused Warren of providing, at no cost, "food, water, beds, and clean clothes" to two Mexican "illegal aliens" who approached him deep in the Arizona desert.[24] This, they claimed, constituted conspiracy to harbor migrants, a federal crime punishable by up to twenty years imprisonment.[25] Two trials later, the first ending with jurors unable to reach agreement and the second in acquittal by a unanimous jury, in early 2020, prosecutors finally ceased their efforts to convict him.[26] Despite that prosecutorial setback, unauthorized entry and unauthorized reentry have continued to have a large presence in federal courts.

Writing in the late nineteenth century, the legal scholar and future Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. lifted the cloak of neutrality that often characterizes conversations about the courts. "The life of the law has not been logic : it has been experience.... [T]o know what it is,

we must know what it has been, and what it tends to become," he wrote in the opening passage of his influential assessment of the U.S. legal tradition, *The Common Law*.[27] To Holmes, the law is the product and the result of human activity. Thought of another way, the law responds to the politics of a particular moment as much as it influences the politics of the moment.

Since the 1980s, a political project of regulating the lives of migrants through demonizing rhetoric and hard-edged laws has blossomed. President Trump is certainly explicit when it comes to creating and fanning fears of migrants. Beneath his bombast and racism, Trump's efforts to tie migrants to criminal activity are not new. In a primetime address in November 2014, President Obama pitted migrant criminals against families. "[W]e're going to keep focusing enforcement resources on actual threats to our security," he said. "Felons, not families. Criminals, not children. Gang members, not a mom who's working hard to provide for her kids."[28] Like in every diverse group of people, some migrants of course commit crimes, from the least objectionable to the most despicable. For almost a century, most empirical studies have found that migrants tend to commit less crime than people who are born in the United States. Associating migrants with criminality creates a false impression that there is greater criminality occurring within these communities than empirical reviews support.

The varying forms in which policy-makers tie migrants to criminal conduct reflects an ideological commitment to categorizing people on a spectrum of desirability. To President Obama, families are welcomed, but felons are not. To President Trump, Norwegians are desirable, but Mexican "rapists" are not. These binaries reveal two important assumptions. First, that it is possible to identify relevant contrasts: families versus felons, Norwegians versus Mexicans. Second, that it is possible to identify who should fit into which pole. Despite their differences, the binaries chosen by Presidents Obama and Trump equally reveal the fallacies of this enterprise.

Distinguishing who is worthy of inclusion in the U.S. political community based on criminal status is politically and logically attractive. There is little to lose politically from stigmatizing people associated with criminality. In early 2020, the campaign manager for Senator Bernie Sanders, at the time one of two leading contenders for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, described the senator's willingness to deport some "violent criminals."[29] A few weeks later, President Trump's campaign released a Twitter advertisement featuring dark-skinned tattoo-faced men next to words of mock appreciation, "MS-13 Gang Members: Thanks for pledging to not deport us!"[30]

What these distinctions offer in attractively simple rhetoric – dangerous offender versus innocent potential victim – they lose when mapped onto real people. The difficulty is that, regardless of the basis for categorization, the distinction between who is desirable and who is not falls apart quickly after piercing the

surface. Neither Senator Sanders nor President Trump seemed to leave room for rehabilitation. President Obama's emphasis on felons was similarly facile. Felons are not divorced from families. Families do not excise relatives upon the conclusion of a criminal proceeding. On the contrary, many families attempt, often at great cost, to maintain a meaningful relationship with convicted offenders. Indeed, Jerry Armijo fits the description of President Obama's felon, yet it was his family that hired a lawyer to help him. In the simplicity of political rhetoric, there is no room for nuance. Lamentably, immigration law is similarly myopic. Just about any drug conviction is "a violation of . . . any law . . . relating to a controlled substance" opening up the possibility of deportation.[31] Many drug crimes also constitute "illicit trafficking in a controlled substance," a type of aggravated felony that comes with mandatory confinement and few avenues for avoiding deportation.[32] Immigration law makes no allowance for Jerry's time in the military. Congress's stark pronouncements have rendered irrelevant his willingness to die on behalf of the United States.

President Trump's embrace of Europeans and denigration of Latin American and African migrants is equally simplistic. Is it possible, for example, to disentangle the bulk of Mexicans living today from the grandchildren of Norwegians who settled in Veracruz, on Mexico's Gulf Coast, prior to 1940?[33] Where to place someone like Leonora Carrington, the surrealist painter and writer born in England but whose professional life was anchored in Mexico City for fifty years (after stops in France, Spain, and the United States)?[34] And just as it is impossible to disentangle Jerry's two momentous statuses, veteran and felon, President Trump's pejorative description of an Indiana-born federal judge as a "Mexican" is a reminder that criminal status, like citizenship, race, and ethnicity, are socially constructed markers to which privilege is attached. I am a child of Mexicans born in a Texas county named after the Mexican revolutionary hero Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and I insist on using four names, including one that harkens to the last Aztec emperor. But to President Trump, I am simply a Mexican. To President Obama, reflecting the substance of present-day immigration law, it is the fact that Jerry was unable to avoid criminal investigation, prosecution, and conviction that matters. It is that stain that makes Jerry a felon rather than a family member.

Even if it were possible to readily identify felons, linking juridical demerits to a malleable legal construction breathes substance into a fictional vessel. Criminality is created as much by the conduct of individual people who do what the law prohibits as it is by the political process that bars certain activities and not others. Immigration law, for example, imposes a heavy toll on all migrants who possess a small quantity of marijuana: imprisonment is required during the pendency of immigration court hearings and deportation is possible.[35] For U.S. citizens, buying marijuana in broad daylight is an important source of economic activity in communities around the country. As a result, the young couple Nate and Claudia

could be split by the same visit to a Colorado marijuana dispensary. While U.S. citizen Nate was unaffected, his on-and-off-again girlfriend Claudia, not a U.S. citizen, was detained by immigration officials, then barred from the country.[36]

Assigning important legal consequences to the outcomes of police activity also ignores the unequal distribution of policing resources. Along the U.S. border with Mexico, the federal government deploys tens of thousands of Border Patrol agents to identify people who are committing an immigration crime. Whereas in 1980, the Border Patrol employed approximately 2,500 agents total, by 2019, it had almost 17,000 stationed along the Southwestern border alone.[37] By contrast, violent crime is committed on college campuses daily, but few perpetrators are investigated. Put another way, the public spaces of the overwhelmingly Mexican and economically impoverished borderlands are heavily policed for nonviolent crime, but the closed spaces of overwhelmingly White and wealthy college dormitories receive little attention despite well-documented patterns of violence.

Law's role in disbursing policing to some people and privilege to others highlights the importance of the legal system's political dimensions. Across the last four decades in the United States, the ideological commitment to stigmatize migrants through the use of criminal law has enjoyed bipartisan support. The criminalization of migration – indeed, the criminalization of migrants' bodies – has not been driven by partisan disagreements. Rather, what started with President Reagan has slowly evolved into reality under President Trump. To be sure, there are differences between the two major political parties in the United States, just as there are differences that appear across decades and from one presidential administration to another. Still, what the law bars today, as much as what it permits or encourages, reflects a shared ideological commitment to control migrants through the allure of categorization : desirable migrants on one side of the prison fence or border wall, undesirable migrants on the other. Whether promoted by Republicans or Democrats, this is an exercise in political judgment masquerading as pseudoscientific objectivity. Through its command of policing and prosecution resources, law turns a label's symbolic denigration – criminals, felons, rapists, Mexicans – into reality. Through that storytelling-turned-public-policy, simplistic political calculations have been converted into the drama and trauma of human experience one juridically constructed category at a time.

This is a vision of morality premised on the impossible search for a clean cleavage. Simplistic political rhetoric transformed into substantive laws and policies is ill-equipped to capture the complexity of the human experience that Holmes wrote about. It is worse yet at assigning privilege and penalty to the bureaucratic sorting that necessarily happens when Congress bends to the temptation to ignore the nuances that Holmes alluded to. Whatever value there is in casting aside

felons, there is less in relying on a troubled criminal justice system to decide who is allowed to make a life in the United States and who is not.

Future attempts to sort people into camps of desirables and undesirables, like today's efforts, will inevitably fail. Embracing these attempts to categorize requires shutting our eyes to the inherent fallacy that any small collection of factors can reflect a person's worth for making a life in the United States. If we are going to continue asking the law to assess worth myopically, then we should at least acknowledge that the law is turning ideological commitments into policing commands. Current laws that criminalize unpermitted human mobility across international boundaries privilege Canadians and Western Europeans who have easy access to formal permission to travel to the United States and ignore the daily reality that many of them will later violate immigration law by not leaving the country when required.[38] On the flip side, current laws that allow or require confinement and forcible removal based on criminality privilege the entrenched biases of the criminal justice system.

We can continue fantasizing that it is possible to neatly categorize people as fit or unfit for membership or we can own up to the reality that the pursuit of that goal is like a mythical quest. To assume that it is possible to neatly categorize people as fit or unfit for membership in the political community that is the United States requires faith in legislators' ability to identify suitable markers of undesirability and an equally powerful belief that, even if they could do that, they could also then create a bureaucracy that boxes people accordingly. Imperfect legislatures and fallible bureaucracies are unlikely to ever reach those high bars. Alternatively, the second option requires accepting that this goal is impossible to achieve but refusing to deviate. To accept this path requires concluding that Jerry Armijo is a felon first and an Army veteran second. To some, that is satisfactory. To others, it raises ethical doubts about the proper weight to give criminality versus military service.

Since the 1980s, the United States has committed itself to drawing lines between migrants based on criminal conduct ferreted out by state, local, and federal police forces. This is nothing more than sorting migrants based on politically palatable characteristics flagged through problematic policing practices. Even if the sorting criteria were to change, continuing the present-day quest to categorize would inevitably require similarly dubious decision-making processes. Altering course requires radically changing existing laws and policies to leave the migrant-sorting exercise in the past. Anything less would simply reshuffle priorities just enough so that faith can once more become the overriding phenomenon that law boosts.

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Race, Legal Status & Social Mobility

Mary C. Waters & Philip Kasinitz

In this essay, we review what is known about the role of race and legal status in the incorporation of immigrants in twenty-first-century America. While race and eth-nicity matter in the social mobility of immigrants, racialization is not the impass-able stumbling block critical race theory predicts. The research paints a remarkably consistent picture of intergenerational socioeconomic progress, one that is very sim-ilar to what happened with immigrants from Europe a century ago. This mobility is accelerated for Asians and Blacks, but slower among Latinxs. Legal status is in-creasingly a block to integration and affects both undocumented immigrants and their citizen children. While race and legal status intersect, we conclude that legal status is now playing a relatively autonomous role in limiting the life chances of many immigrants. We raise the alarm about not only the direct effects of legal sta-tus, but its increasing role in racializing and excluding Latinx Americans.

How much will their non-White status limit the full integration of the cur-rent wave of immigrants and their descendants? This is a question that, ironically, seems to unite the left and the right in American politics today. The Trump presidency made racial exclusion and denigration of immigrants a cor-nerstone of its ideology and policy. At the same time, many progressive academics and legal theorists have critiqued the very idea of assimilation or integration of im-migrants and their children, arguing that "people of color" would never experience the eventual mobility and acceptance that European immigrants of the past did. Meanwhile, immigrants from all over the globe – most of them people of color – continue to be drawn to what they still perceive as a land of opportunity and a place to make a better life for their children.

The question of the role of race in the acceptance and absorption of non-White immigrants is of course not an "either-or." No honest observer could argue that race does not matter enormously in American society. The question is how it mat-ters and for whom.

In recent decades, this question has been complicated by another factor: legal status. Starting in the late 1980s, the militarization of the Southern border creat-ed a large and more or less permanent unauthorized population.[1] Today there are an estimated 10.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (down from a peak of 12.2 million in 2007).[2] Unlike many unauthorized immigrants

during the twentieth century, these people are not transient or circular migrants. By 2017, two-thirds of America's undocumented had lived in the United States more than ten years. Only 14 percent have been here less than five.[3] They and their relatives (who include approximately 5.9 million U.S. citizen children) are clearly part of American society economically and socially. Yet they remain politically excluded and vulnerable.

The label "illegal" brands otherwise law-abiding migrants with the stigma of criminality, especially Latinx and Caribbean people who account for more than three-quarters of the undocumented. This is clear in the rhetoric of the Trump administration: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." This mischaracterization is attached to old and ugly racial stereotypes. Once applied to unauthorized immigrants, it then stigmatizes their co-ethnics, including those whose ancestors have been in the United States for generations.

The current wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric coexists with considerable evidence of relatively successful social and economic integration into U.S. society by many, although not all, immigrants of color and their descendants. In light of the striking contrast in life outcomes between those with and without legal status, we argue that although legal status and the stereotypes deriving from it are clearly related to race, legal status is now playing a relatively autonomous role in limiting the life chances of many immigrants.[4]

In this essay, we survey what is known about the role of race and legal status in the incorporation of immigrants in twenty-first-century America. The story is both cautiously optimistic and alarming. While we recognize the continued work that needs to be done to eradicate systemic and interpersonal racism, we summarize decades of research that finds considerable progress in the incorporation of new, non-White immigrants and their descendants. Yet we raise the alarm about not only the direct effects of legal status, but its increasing role in racializing and excluding Latinx Americans.

There is no magic pill to address America's deeply rooted racial inequities. By contrast, however, the existence of a large population of permanently settled American residents who lack legal status was not an inevitable outcome of America's racial DNA. It is relatively new and the result of bad public policy. As such, it can be fixed by better policy, such as by a legalization program similar to that enacted in 1986, or merely by applying the statute of limitations to the misdemeanor of illegal entry. With these legal actions, the fortunes of millions of Americans could be improved, and the conflation of Latinx identity with illegality could begin to be severed.

American sociology has taken immigration and the process of assimilation as one of its core concerns since the 1920s. But this early research concentrated on European immigrants and their children and had a blind spot when it came to

race. A largely separate stream of research reaching back to the pioneering work of W. E. B. Du Bois dealt with the experience of African Americans. The experiences of Asians and Latinx were either ignored or shoehorned into these separate theories and literatures. Even into the 1970s and 1980s, research on race and on immigration continued on parallel tracks. Scholars of race such as William Julius Wilson described the hollowing out of American cities, the lack of jobs for those with low skills, failing inner city schools, and rising racial segregation.[5] Scholars of immigration described the growth of low-skilled jobs in central cities, the invigoration of central city neighborhoods, and the use of public schools in America's cities for social mobility. It was as if they were describing two different nations.

During these decades, the racial demography of the United States was transformed from a society primarily composed of Whites and Blacks – as late as 1970, Asians and American Indians each constituted less than 1 percent of the U.S. population, while Hispanics made up only 4 percent – into the racially diverse nation we see today. There was no precedent to evaluate whether the increasingly diverse post-1965 immigrants would assimilate in the same ways as earlier European immigrants, or whether they would be racially excluded.

In the early 1990s, sociologists such as Herbert Gans, Alejandro Portes, and Min Zhou asked whether it was possible that the children of current immigrants would find their social mobility and acceptance blocked by racial discrimination. Gans described his worries in an article entitled "Second Generation Decline?" and Portes and Zhou developed the theory of segmented assimilation.[6] These theories raised the question of whether race would be a barrier to the fortunes of the second generation and gave rise to many empirical studies (including one of our own) designed to address this question. Overall, these studies found little evidence of second-generation decline or downward assimilation.[7]

Soon, however, the very idea of assimilation or integration came under fire in the academy. Critical race theorists generally reject the idea of assimilation altogether, or even associate it with White supremacy, colonialism, and imperialism. Critical race theory originated in legal scholarship and stresses the permanence of racism as a feature of American society and the ubiquity of White supremacy.[8] In this tradition, sociologist Mary Romero has criticized scholars studying immigrant assimilation for perpetuating the myth of meritocracy for immigrants and natives alike. She criticizes the focus on assimilation for accepting White middle-class standards as the norm. Instead of comparing immigrants with U.S.-born people of color, she advocates approaches that emphasize the "connections in the treatment of all racialized groups and recognize citizenship status as a social construct."[9] Other scholars adopting critical race theory have criticized the study of assimilation for not critiquing White supremacy.[10] Tanya Golash-Boza, Maria Duenas, and Chia Xiong have argued (somewhat unfairly in our view) that assim-

ilation is a zero-sum game, that "people of color who are socialized into Anglo-American culture lose valuable skills, networks, and knowledge."[11]

Sociologist Moon-Kie Jung has criticized scholars who "engage in suspect comparisons to past migration from Europe; [and] read out or misread the qualitatively different historical trajectories of European and non-European migrants."[12] Instead, he advocates a study of immigration that shifts the focus of study from "difference" to "domination." He concludes that scholars operating in a paradigm that measures assimilation "reinforce hope about the possibilities of inclusion by continuing to laud Anglo/White-centric models of incorporation that are largely mythological."[13]

Today, with the Obama-era hopes for a "postracial" society dashed with the return of blatant racism and nativism promoted by Donald Trump, it is easy to understand the appeal of critical race approaches. However, this theory runs the risk of being overly determined. There is, as historian Barbara Fields notes, a danger in according race "a trans historical, almost metaphysical status that removes it from all possibility of analysis and understanding."[14] Or as historian Eric Foner argues, there is a danger of employing race and racism "as a *deus ex machina* – something that exists outside of history but can be invoked as the ultimate explanation for historical events." Of course, Foner is not denying the centrality of race in American life. Neither are we. Foner argues that "it is better to see racism as a part of history. . . . like anything else (it) rises and falls over time."[15]

One can recognize the centrality of race in American society and history while also recognizing that it is contingent. Racial hierarchies shift. Racial boundaries blur. Thus, it is most useful to see race and racism as variables. In order to understand race and racism, we need to understand how they interact with other variables, including legal status.

In this vein, neo-assimilation theory, developed by sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee, takes note of substantial progressive change in U.S. institutions since the civil rights movement, opening up what they call the "mainstream" to individuals and groups that had previously been excluded.[16] Expanding on this theory, Alba has pointed to the importance of the changing boundaries around ethnoracial groups, allowing for changes not only in the hierarchy of groups but in how permeable groups are, and even how they are defined.[17] Thus, Alba describes how, in the mid-twentieth century, an Anglo-Saxon Protestant mainstream evolved to absorb White ethnics, as boundaries that had once seemed impermeable were eroded by intermarriage and mixed ancestry. In his recent book *The Great Demographic Illusion*, he notes that this is happening today for the descendants of non-White immigrants through high intermarriage and an expanding definition of "Whiteness."

One point on which neo-assimilation, segmented assimilation, and critical race theory are actually in agreement is the recognition (largely missing in the pre-1960s accounts of assimilation) that incorporation into mainstream society

is a two-way process. It is not enough for a group to come to share the beliefs or behaviors of the dominant society. That society must also be willing to accept the former outsiders. Attention to race casts this point in sharp relief. Many groups of European immigrants were initially seen as racially inferior. Their status, like that of other racialized groups, was associated with selected physical attributes, as a look at the caricatures of Irish, Jewish, or Italian immigrants in nineteenth-century political cartoons attests. Their Whiteness was an achievement, the end of a political project, not the starting point. As such, the assertion that assimilation into the mainstream was for Whites only may actually be telling the story backwards. It is not that being White allowed admission to the mainstream. It is that the groups who joined the mainstream came to be considered "White."

However, it is also true that even the most despised and racialized Europeans were always "potentially" White. The difference lies to a considerable degree in legal status. The Europeans were free. They had the right (albeit often ignored in practice) to seek redress of grievances in the courts. They were able to naturalize (far faster than immigrants can today) and, having done so, to vote. None of this, as Alba shows, was sufficient to guarantee admission to mainstream institutions. That had to await changes in demography and economics as well as culture, and it took longer than is often remembered.[18] But it did make such acceptance possible. By contrast, African Americans were excluded from all of the basic rights of societal membership, both under the "social death" of slavery and the social exclusion of segregation.[19] Adopting "mainstream" behaviors or outlooks made no difference: the mainstream had no intention of accepting them. Similarly, after 1882, Asians were barred in most cases from immigration and, perhaps more important, perennially barred from naturalization. They could never be full members of society, their behavior notwithstanding. Indigenous Americans similarly were restricted to a special noncitizen status. The story of Latinx people is more mixed and varied. But it is fair to say that a considerable number of these people were also in semipermanently excluded statuses.

T he question is not whether legal and structural barriers have historically prevented the full incorporation of non-Whites into American society. Clearly, they have. The question is whether this remains true for contemporary immigrants and their children who arrived in the United States in a post–civil rights context. Here the data tell a more mixed and less over-determined story.

Richard Alba and Victor Nee's new assimilation theory directs our attention to the laws and norms that determine how open and accepting the institutions of society – the workplaces, universities, political parties, and government bureaucracies – are to people of different ethnoracial origins.[20] The legal and social changes of the civil rights movement, including programs such as affirmative action, opened up some institutions to a diversity that had never been achieved before. In many

institutions, the value of diversity has become powerful as an ideal, even if actual practice often falls short.

Yet a focus on changes in law and norms returns our attention to an important but, in the present climate, virtually impermeable barrier: legal status. Since 1986, the last time an amnesty was granted to undocumented American residents, the number of undocumented people in the United States has grown dramatically. Since then, Congress has passed laws making immigration enforcement progressively more punitive and targeted at both legal permanent residents and the undocumented.

Laws passed in 1996 and 2001 seeded the current "crimmigration" regime. The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act laid the legal groundwork for mass deportations of undocumented immigrants, as well as requiring that legal noncitizen immigrants be deported if convicted of an aggravated felony. The Patriot Act of 2001 further increased the power of the federal government to apprehend, detain, and deport legal immigrants who are deemed a threat to national security.

The 1996 IIRIRA provided local and state police the authority to stop and detain people for suspected immigration violations, with subsequent turnovers to federal authorities resulting in deportations. While the 1996 authorization has been replaced, the principle of integration of local and state police records with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immigration records is now entrenched.

The net effect of these changes has been a growth in the intersection of the criminal justice system with the immigration enforcement system, a massive rise in the numbers of documented and undocumented immigrants deported each year, and an increase in the numbers of undocumented immigrants in mandatory detention throughout the country.

In fact, since 1985, detention capacity has increased nearly 1,500 percent.[21] There are an average of thirty-four thousand people in detention each day and more than four hundred thousand a year.[22] Immigration enforcement now constitutes more than half of the federal criminal workload. Immigration laws allow prosecutions without criminal constitutional protections, detention without bond, interrogation without Miranda rights, arrest without probable cause of crime, and no right to an attorney in deportation proceedings.[23]

Since the 1980s, we have created a class of long-term residents without the rights of Americans and put legal immigrants at risk of losing their rights at any time. Immigrant enforcement has expanded to areas far from the border, with new effects on legal immigrants as well as on U.S. citizens who live in mixed-status families, including U.S. citizen children.[24] Legal scholar Daniel Kanstroom has described these developments as placing all immigrants, including those who entered legally, on an "eternal probation" model. All noncitizens are thus subject to a "flexible, ever-shifting – even retroactive – regime of deportation."[25]

A growing body of literature describes the ways in which lack of legal status decreases wages, depresses educational attainment of the second generation, and even affects the cognitive development of young children.[26] Undocumented immigrants make up the largest group of disenfranchised Americans since the end of Jim Crow. But civil rights–era tactics to fight these injustices often prove inadequate because the undocumented, by definition, do not have civil rights in the United States. This blocked mobility and social exclusion is all the more regrettable and frustrating given the trends outlined below that show the real progress, economic mobility, and social acceptance made by legal immigrants and their children, despite their non-White status.

As sociologist Herbert Gans pointed out, many people think of assimilation and social, or socioeconomic, mobility as the same thing.[27] This has its roots, he argued, in the assimilation of European immigrants in the last century, when almost all immigrants were low skilled and poor, and they entered a society that was experiencing widespread social mobility for natives and immigrants alike. Thus, becoming American by assimilating also meant access to higher wages for the immigrant and better education, income, and occupations for their children. But Gans also reminds us that assimilation and social mobility are not the same thing: assimilation is the decline of ethnic distinctiveness and the convergence between immigrants and the U.S. born. Whether this was always linked to upward mobility among early twentieth-century immigrants is debatable. However, in contemporary American society, the erasure of ethnic distinctiveness is not a precondition for upward mobility. Further, mobility, whether within one lifetime or intergenerationally, can be upward or downward. Indeed, as economist Raj Chetty and colleagues have demonstrated, social mobility has been declining in the United States, particularly for those at the bottom of the income distribution.[28]

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report on immigrant integration in 2015. (We follow their definitions in using the terms *assimilation* and *integration* interchangeably).[29] The NAS report defines integration as a two-way process by which "members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another." Their conclusion was that, across all measurable outcomes, including educational attainment, income, occupational distribution, poverty status, residential integration, language ability, health, crime, and family status, immigrants and their descendants were becoming more like the U.S. born. In most cases, this convergence made immigrants better off in terms of their well-being. Yet in three important areas, immigrants and their children were less well-off as they became more like other Americans: their health declined, their crime rates rose, and the proportions of single-parent families increased.

Some immigrants welcome assimilation. Others actively resist it. Many do both, seeking to prevent the assimilation of their children in some arenas while taking actions that make it more likely in others. However, almost all immigrants

desire social mobility : making a better life for themselves, and especially for their children. Does the move pay off? The empirical research shows that social mobility happens at a different pace for different ethnoracial groups and, looking at outcomes, there is a racialized pattern of convergence between immigrants and natives of the same ethnoracial group, although the second generation generally does better than natives of the same ethnoracial background. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of mobility, and none of the immigrant groups experience complete racial exclusion and blocked mobility. It is possible to argue whether the glass is half empty or half full, but there is no empirical support for an empty glass.

P rogress is evident over time for the immigrant generation. Sociologists Andrés Villarreal and Christopher Tamborini examined first-generation wage trajectories over twenty years in a long-running longitudinal survey matched to their income records from their individual tax returns. They compared the wage trajectories of immigrants to natives of the same ethnoracial group, and to U.S.-born Whites. All four major ethnoracial groups start out behind U.S.-born Whites, but Asian and White immigrants substantially reduce the gap over time, while Latinxs and Blacks do not, although Black immigrants have the second highest wage growth after Asians. Hispanics start out with low incomes and have the slowest rate of growth. Yet compared with U.S.-born members of the same ethnoracial group, all four groups come within 10 percent of native wages after twenty years, and Black immigrants exceed the wages of U.S.-born Blacks. Black immigrants with a college degree have completely closed the gap with their U.S.-born White counterparts.[30]

Researchers Julie Park and Dowell Myers found evidence of generational assimilation when they compared immigrant parents in 1980 with second-generation adults in 2005. They found that all ethnoracial groups show a great deal of social mobility across generations. All of the groups except Latinxs match the level of U.S.-born White high school completion. Black and White immigrant parents and the second generation exceed U.S.-born White social mobility with respect to college completion and upper white-collar occupational attainment. The Black second generation also closes the gap with U.S.-born Whites in terms of high school completion. Not surprisingly, given what is known about racial discrimination in housing and mortgage lending, the one area that Black immigrants and their children lag behind Whites is homeownership. Second-generation Blacks have the lowest homeownership of any second-generation group.[31]

While Latinxs make progress by generation, with the children doing much better than the parents, they do not close the gap with U.S.-born Whites on college attainment or upper white-collar occupational attainment. However, they do close the gap in terms of homeownership and percentage in poverty. First-gener-

ation Asians are a highly selected group and have a college completion level that is almost double that of U.S.-born Whites. Second-generation Asians cannot improve much on their parents' level of educational attainment, but they do have better occupational mobility. These children of Asian immigrants, controlling for education, have eliminated the gap in occupations with U.S.-born Whites. While Asian Americans still face discrimination at the highest levels of American corporate and professional life,[32] this "bamboo ceiling" is so high that it is not visible in Park and Myers's statistical analysis.

Immigration scholar Van Tran also finds a great deal of social mobility across generations in his examination of specific national origin groups, instead of the broad ethnoracial categories. Tran finds that all of the second-generation groups show a great deal of mobility compared with their parents in terms of educational and occupational attainment. For example, while 67 percent of Mexican and 59 percent of Salvadoran immigrants lack a high school degree, these figures drop to 17 percent and 12 percent among their second-generation children. In multivariate models, Tran finds that second-generation Haitians and Jamaicans catch up to U.S.-born Whites in college completion. Colombians and Cubans surpass them. Mexican and Dominican second-generation adults do not catch up to Whites in terms of educational attainment, but they do outperform their parents by a wide margin. All of the other Latinx national origin groups achieve parity with U.S.-born Whites in educational outcomes.[33]

Finally, economist Ran Abramitzky and colleagues have examined income mobility in first- and second-generation father-son pairs.[34] Using census data, they compared income mobility for first- and second-generation father-son combinations for fathers in 1880 and adult sons in 1910, fathers in 1910 and adult sons in 1940, and fathers in 1980 with federal income tax records for their adult sons in 2010. These three immigrant cohorts represent different sending regions in the history of U.S. immigration: the 1880 cohort came primarily from Northern and Western Europe, the 1910 cohort from Southern and Eastern Europe, and the 1980 cohort from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Contrary to the assumption that today's non-White immigrants have a completely different experience than the White immigrants of the past, they found remarkably similar social mobility for the second generation in each immigration era. Among immigrants from countries where immigrants earned much less than U.S.-born natives, "second generation immigrants catch up or even overtake the earnings of the U.S. born."[35] Abramitzky and colleagues found highly similar advantages for second-generation immigrants compared with the U.S. born in all three cohorts, where the children of immigrants whose parents are at the twenty-fifth percentile in income distribution in the United States rank five to eight percentile points higher than the children of U.S.-born individuals whose parents were also at the twenty-fifth percentile.[36]

All of these empirical studies find that while race and ethnicity matter in the social mobility of immigrants, racialization is not the impassable stumbling block critical race theory predicts. A remarkably consistent story of intergenerational socioeconomic progress is painted, one that is very similar to what happened with immigrants from Europe a century ago. This mobility is accelerated for Asians and Blacks, but slower among Latinxs. Dominicans and Mexicans do not eliminate the gap with U.S.-born Whites, although they show progress vis-à-vis their parents.

The slower mobility of Latinxs, and particularly Mexicans, has been a subject of much debate. Sociologists Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz have pointed to exclusion based on systemic and interpersonal racism directed toward Mexicans in particular, but extending to all Latinxs.[37] President Trump rallied supporters using animus toward Mexicans and calls for exclusion, and the history of Mexican Americans includes legal segregation, substandard education, and forced deportations. This form of racialization has, no doubt, helped to produce the "generations of exclusion" that Telles and Ortiz documented.[38]

There are, however, other factors that may be playing a role in the slower measured rate of Mexican American upward mobility. Assimilation of Mexican Americans may, paradoxically, be responsible for the mismeasurement of their situation. Unlike African Americans, the quintessential racialized minority, Mexican Americans have long had a high intermarriage rate.[39] There is evidence that a significant proportion of the children of couples where one spouse is Mexican and the other is a non-Hispanic White do not identify as Mexican American. Economists Brian Duncan and Stephen Trejo found that 30 percent of these mixed ancestry people do not identify as Mexican on government surveys such as the Current Population Survey. This attrition is highly selective because the people who no longer identify as Mexican have greater educational attainment and overall higher social mobility.[40] Therefore, estimates of Mexican American social mobility that rely on this subjective identification underestimate group mobility.

The other possible explanation for slower mobility is the deleterious effect of lack of legal status.[41] The paradox here is that being undocumented in the United States does not stop assimilation in the cultural sense or integration in the social sense. The undocumented have been putting down roots: working, forming families, buying houses, attending church, and sending their children to school. They, and particularly their children, have been learning English, absorbing American culture and values, and converging with the U.S. born on many measurable attributes. However, despite their assimilation, their legal status blocks their economic mobility.

A showcase of the positive effect of adding social mobility to an assimilated population previously without socioeconomic mobility was provided by the passage of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. Undocumented

immigrant children, as immigration scholars Roberto Gonzalez and Leo Chavez have put it, "awakened to a nightmare" when they discovered, often in their teens, that they were barred from many colleges, financial aid, almost all jobs, and even a drivers' license.[42] DACA unblocked their path and, in just eight years, the mobility of many of these young people blossomed as they made higher wages, moved into better jobs, and reported better life satisfaction. Political scientist Tom Wong and colleagues surveyed DACA recipients every year for the last five years and found that, since receiving DACA, respondents' average annual earnings increased by 86 percent. Some 58 percent reported moving to a job with better pay and, among those over age twenty-five, 9 percent started a business and 20 percent received a professional license.[43] If ever there were a natural experiment to prove the societal benefits of legal status, DACA was surely it. This made former President Trump's cruel determination to end it particularly disturbing and President Biden's support for DACA and legalization understandable and hopeful.

R ace matters. It structures everyday life in America in a host of ways. It can be seen in racial differences in the economy, social life, and culture. It can be seen in large statistical differences and in microlevel encounters between Americans. It matters, too often with deadly consequences, in encounters between people of color and the police.

However, when considering blocked mobility among immigrants and their descendants, race, while heavily correlated to legal status in the largest current immigrant groups, does not appear to be the most important factor. Indeed, on almost every measure, documented immigrants of color, including Black immigrants, are doing better than African Americans. This is even more true for their second-generation children. If anything, the inclusion of Black immigrants and their children, now close to 20 percent of the Black population, in the African American category in most statistical analyses may be obscuring how badly off some segments of the African American community actually are.

The ever-present well of racism directed at newcomers is spilling hatred again. Yet the upward mobility of most immigrants of color with legal status and their children is clear. It does not do immigrants or their supporters any good to deny the empirical evidence of successful integration and social mobility of non-White immigrants and their children. At the same time, we need to focus attention on the counterproductive social policy that has created a new category of people who are Americans in every meaningful sense but who cannot enjoy the benefits of their investment in our society due to their lack of legal status.

What, then, is to be done? The clearest and most obvious answer would be amnesty and a path to citizenship. Extending the full rights of societal membership and citizenship to people who have long proved themselves an important part of our economy and society is consistent with the best of American values.

With nonrefugee migration across the Southern border at historic lows, the present moment would seem an ideal time to do it.

If full-scale amnesty is politically impossible, a more modest proposal would be simply to apply a statute of limitations to illegal entry. The statute of limitations for federal crimes is five years, except for those in four categories: murder, terrorism, some sex offenses, and illegally crossing the border or overstaying a visa.[44] Most Americans would weigh the crimes in the first three categories very differently from those in the fourth.

These are modest reforms. They would not eliminate racial bias or cleanse the original sin of racism from American society. They would, however, greatly improve the lives of millions of people and help create a more diverse, more fair, and more democratic society for all of us. And this makes them well worth pursuing.

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The Legal Status Divide among the Children of Immigrants

Roberto G. Gonzales & Stephen P. Ruszczyk

Over the past thirty-five years, federal immigration policy has brightened the boundaries of the category of undocumented status. For undocumented young people who move into adulthood, the predominance of immigration status to their everyday experiences and social position has been amplified. This process of trying to continue schooling, find work, and participate in public life has become synonymous with a process of learning to be "illegal." This essay argues that despite known variations in undocumented youths by race, place, and educational history, undocumented status has become what Everett Hughes called a "master status." The uniform set of immigration status–based exclusions overwhelms the impact of other statuses to create a socially significant divide. The rise, fall, and survival of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, a policy offering qualified youths a temporary semilegal status, have underlined how closely access and rights hew to the contours of contemporary immigration policy.

S tudies of immigrant incorporation – also called assimilation and acculturation – have long been important to our understanding of the processes through which immigrants and their children adapt to American society. More recently, as the experiences of today's immigrants diverge considerably from those of European immigrants of the twentieth century, scholars have noted that immigrant incorporation does not play out evenly among different immigrant groups and that, for some, it does not follow a uniform and positive trajectory.[1] For those immigrants who are undocumented, incorporation prospects are daunting.

Increased enforcement at the U.S.-Mexican border has stemmed long-established patterns of circular migration,[2] leading to increased numbers of settled migrants who are long-term stayers.[3] Today, nearly one in four immigrants in the United States lack legal status. And about one in nineteen U.S. workers are undocumented.[4] These immigrants have grown roots in their communities where they are also raising families. Nearly half of all undocumented immigrants today are parents of minors and more than 16.5 million people live in mixed-status households with members of varying immigration statuses. Among the children of un-

documented immigrants, more than 4.5 million are native-born citizens, while 1.1 million are also undocumented (more than that number are now young adults who have been in the United States since childhood).[5]

Over the last thirty-five years, immigration policy and enforcement practices have diminished noncitizens' rights and have made neighborhoods and public spaces fertile ground for detention and deportation. As a result, immigration policy has become increasingly consequential in shaping how a larger share of immigrant youth adapt, come of age, and experience life in the United States.[6] Today, more than ever before, the legal status divide is at the crux of what differentiates how the children of immigrants experience everyday life.

To be sure, undocumented immigrants are not a monolith. There is great diversity in their origins and their experiences in the United States, the latter shaped by family background, place of residence, race, and educational level. These varying contours inform the experience of young people growing up under the condition of illegality. However, even when considering the impacts of these other social identities, undocumented status stands out as the primary factor in undocumented young people's everyday lives and their long-term trajectories. It has become, in the words of sociologist Everett Hughes, a "master status."

In 1965, the Hart-Celler Act ushered in our contemporary era of immigration. It eliminated national-origin quotas and created new family and skilled-worker preference categories for entry. These changes opened up immigration from previously restricted countries in Asia, yet also established caps on immigration from the Western Hemisphere. As sociologist Douglas Massey and demographer Karen Pren have argued, migration from Latin American countries surged *in spite of* the new system, which changed the auspices under which they arrived: increasingly as undocumented migrants.[7]

As the children of this post-1965 wave of immigrants began to come of age, old debates about assimilation and belonging took a different form as many questioned the applicability of the canonized account of assimilation theory to contemporary immigrants.[8] In particular, scholars pondered whether changing contexts and the racial and educational characteristics of these immigrants influenced the pace *or* direction of their incorporation.

Recognizing growing stratification within the United States, scholars have sought to identify different pathways of immigrant incorporation.[9] To that end, they focused on the interplay between human-level variables and structural and contextual considerations in examining how and why immigrants fare differently. Immigration status, racial discrimination, and economic climate were thought to shape the children of immigrants' likely paths. To be sure, the effects of racial exclusion have endured over generations for groups such as Mexican Americans.[10] But with increasing efforts to restrict opportunities for undocumented immi-

grants, and a racialized enforcement regime, immigration status rapidly emerged as a driver of immigrant incorporation.[11]

Over the last thirty-five years, growing restrictions have intensified the negative impact of undocumented status. Fewer pathways to legal status and citizenship have trapped undocumented immigrants and their children in a legal limbo, while U.S. policy has increasingly stripped their access to social welfare programs. Coinciding with the incremental erosion of rights has been the creation of what former Director of Immigration and Naturalization Services Doris Meissner and her colleagues have called the "formidable deportation machine."[12] This new "machinery" has not only focused on removing undocumented immigrants apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border, but it has also extended its reach to the country's interior. Increased staffing for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) along with increased integration between local law enforcement and ICE under 287(g) agreements and the Secure Communities program have created an immigration dragnet wherein enforcement actions have increasingly resulted from information gathered during local criminal justice and traffic enforcement, snaring immigrants for improper lane changes and countless other noncriminal offenses.[13]

Between 1997 and 2012, the U.S. government carried out more than twice the total number of all deportations from the United States prior to 1997.[14] In 2013 alone, the United States deported a record 438,421 immigrants.[15] In fact, during the Obama presidency, more than three million immigrants were removed from the country.

Taken together, the restriction of rights and ramped up enforcement efforts have had far-reaching effects across a greater number of people, including young people.[16] Deportations of parents and spouses have left a huge emotional and economic void in family life while creating undue hardship for children left without their parents and for families struggling to make ends meet without the economic contributions of the deported family member.[17] What's more, fears of deportation have had particularly negative effects on the health and well-being of children growing up.[18] For undocumented immigrants who arrived as children, these developments have contributed to their lives becoming increasingly difficult as they reach adolescence and young adulthood.

Undocumented status is generally perceived as a condition affecting only adult migrants. But a growing body of research strongly suggests that living in a mixed-status family and possessing undocumented status as an adolescent and young adult negatively impacts a range of experiences, both in everyday life and along longer trajectories.[19]

Within mixed-status families, undocumented parents confront a wide range of barriers in their day-to-day lives. They have trouble accessing health insurance or opening a bank account. Fear of deportation makes them less likely to apply for their citizen children's food stamp and health care benefits even when eligible. Undocumented status often prevents families from accessing urgently needed services from the very institutions intended to benefit immigrant families. These children – both the foreign- and American-born – grow up in impoverished households with limited supports. Such experiences of disadvantage unique to undocumented status have particularly strong effects on childhood development, health and well-being, and academic performance; effects not experienced by other children of immigrants.[20]

But for those children who lack legal status themselves, growing up undocumented erects multiple barriers along their adolescent and adult trajectories that widen the divide among the children of immigrants. Owing to the 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe*, they are legally integrated into K–12 schools.[21] As such, they develop identities and accumulate Americanizing experiences alongside American-born citizen peers. Childhood thus constitutes a period of integration, as their school experiences allow them to develop feelings of belonging to the United States as well as expectations and life aspirations rooted in American culture.[22]

It is not until adolescence that undocumented youth embark on the "transition to illegality," beginning with the startling realization that rites of passage corresponding to their life stage are closed off to them.[23] At the time when friends are obtaining driver's licenses, seeking after-school jobs, and beginning the college application process, undocumented youth come to realize how lacking lawful immigration status will prevent them from participating in these defining rites of passage and will ultimately thwart their attempts at developing their desired adult lives. Characterized by confusion, frustration, and vulnerability, this critical developmental stage is a major "turning point" away from normative developmental trajectories, producing a "jolting shift" in their self-perceptions and compelling them to make adulthood transitions within similar social confines as their undocumented parents.[24]

For most undocumented young people, knowledge of their immigration status renders educational pursuits both financially unrealistic and unprofitable. Exclusions from federal financial aid make it difficult for most undocumented youth to finance their higher education. Further, just as they experience a shrinking of access, their familial and financial responsibilities increase, forcing them into a series of difficult decisions regarding work and travel. While some young people respond to these changes through resistance, finding new strength to push for their goals despite these barriers,[25] others become disillusioned and lower their aspirations.[26]

Access to educational supports, critical services, and extrafamilial adult mentors can mean the difference between successful college transitions and an early entry into low-wage employment and illegalized daily lives.[27] Those undocumented youth who manage to make successful transitions to postsecondary education – a very small proportion – are able to delay aspects of the transition to illegality by avoiding low-wage work and remaining in supportive community and institutional contexts. However, college-going undocumented young people are not immune from stigmatization, immigration status–related threats, family responsibilities, financial concerns, or fears of deportation. These factors compel many to stop out and delay their educational plans.[28] Ultimately, without access to work authorization, college-educated undocumented young people face the same limited and limiting job prospects after graduation and enter a low-wage workforce even less prepared and more vulnerable than their peers who left school long before them.[29] They, like their more modestly achieving counterparts, engage in a process of "learning to be illegal."[30]

Yet, like other groups, undocumented immigrants are not homogenous. The effects of illegality are, predictably, stratified by other demographic characteristics, such as race, social class, and place of residence.[31] Research has shown that Black and Latin American–origin men, for example, are disproportionately targeted for deportation.[32] Perceptions of illegality are often informed by race.[33] Research on undocumented young people across racial and class backgrounds has uncovered differential experiences across diverse racial and country of origin groups. For lighter-skinned young people and those from higher social class backgrounds, the stigma of being undocumented may be tempered, particularly at younger ages.[34] These young people who possess a "phenotypic passport" experience fewer negative interactions with authorities and less fear of deportation.[35]

Additionally, the experience of undocumented status can vary widely across geographies. Congressional gridlock over immigration policy spanning the last two decades has moved immigration lawmaking to states, counties, and municipalities. This local lawmaking has led to an "uneven geography" of immigration policies and practices across the country, ranging from integrative to exclusionary.[36] Whereas some states have opened up access to broader inclusion, offering undocumented immigrants eligibility for driver's licenses and in-state tuition at public universities, others have adopted a more restrictive stance by attempting to criminalize unauthorized presence and exclude undocumented immigrants from public universities.[37]

Indeed, the places where immigrants settle, whether areas with well-established infrastructures or new destinations that are less developed, play an important role in structuring access to public transportation, critical services, and opportunities to participate in community life. Traditional gateways offer immigrants social, economic, educational, and legal assistance from vast community-

based networks, but high costs of living can add strains to everyday life. Meanwhile, immigrants in new rural destinations may have an easier time finding employment and affordable housing but encounter a "constellation of rural disadvantage"[38] that includes widespread poverty, limited opportunities for stable employment, underdeveloped social service and educational infrastructures, and lack of public transportation.[39]

These observations underscore a growing reality that even among a group assumed to be uniformly disadvantaged, key differences in the geographical settings where they grow up can play an important role in shaping diverging experiences. Nevertheless, federal policies – in particular, the limited opportunities to legalize one's status – inhibit the effect of inclusionary state policies. In analyzing recent attempts in Colorado to improve postsecondary access for undocumented students through state legislation, sociologist Lisa Martinez argues that while these important local reforms have created some opportunities for young undocumented people, legal limitations at the federal level leave them in holding patterns that delay or impede their access to higher education and upward mobility.[40]

To be sure, the burgeoning scholarship on undocumented young people has begun to expose the various layers of stratification structured by race and place. But does stratification and difference render illegality any less consequential?

The "master status" concept theorized by Hughes posits that the placement of people in certain social categories powerfully constrains the characteristics attributed to them by other categories.[41] In other words, individuals possess a variety of status traits that shape a range of outcomes, including social mobility, personal identity, and treatment by others. However, some characteristics are more prominent and, hence, overshadow other social categories to emerge as the predominant attributes in one's identity and experiences. In the long term, the master status casts a shadow over those defined by it, oftentimes freezing them in this definition.

Due to the intersecting nature of inequalities in the United States, there has been some debate over whether one particular trait dominates all others or if it is a constellation of traits that interacts with each other and at different places, times, and spaces, any one of these different traits becomes more or less consequential.

In childhood, as youths participate in mainstream spaces, some social boundaries may be permeable and "blurred."[42] As undocumented youths move into adulthood and out of mainstream spaces, however, they are increasingly likely to encounter a wide range of "bright boundaries" that make unauthorized status an exemplar of a master status.[43] The vast majority of undocumented immigrants have lived in the country, have contributed to the U.S. economy, and have participated in their communities for more than a decade. As such, they enjoy, and have struggled for, spaces of belonging, building cultural citizenship in the process.

Yet their legal designation and identity shape how they are treated and perceived, deepening the divide between them and their legal counterparts.[44]

Social construction casts those possessing unauthorized status as criminal and immoral. As a result, a set of social resources are withheld from them. Per U.S. employment law, they cannot work legally. They are ineligible to vote. They also cannot serve in the military or enroll in most work-readiness programs. They are excluded from a growing range of social entitlement programs and have limited access to health care and social services. They cannot access driver's licenses in most U.S. states. They are ineligible for federal financial aid and a wide range of federally funded postsecondary supports. They can be detained and removed from the country at any time. In addition, setting up bank accounts, applying for credit cards or loans, and accessing state identification is either impossible or extremely difficult.

In short, undocumented migrants live within a context that views their unauthorized status as a crime and frames them as a threat to American society and the rule of law.[45] The negative discourse about immigrants – in particular, those from Latin America – is rooted in economic and cultural concerns.[46] On the one hand, they are perceived as taking jobs, seats in college, and scarce health care and social service resources from American citizens. On the other, they are seen as cultural invaders threatening an American way of life.[47] This discourse has been associated with a growing pattern of hate crimes and physical violence against immigrants that has also restricted their everyday routines and interactions with institutions.[48]

Nonetheless, undocumented immigrants live in a society that is patterned by numerous forms of stratification and inequality. Historically, immigration and race have been intimately intertwined. It is impossible to tell the story of immigration to the United States without retelling accounts of discrimination, exclusion, and expulsion.[49] To that end, immigration scholarship has highlighted the salience of other traits such as race, class, gender, and place of residence in shaping experiences and opportunity.

More recently, in studies of undocumented immigrant youth, scholars have advocated for an intersectional lens, suggesting that multiple social locations work together to structure advantage and disadvantage.[50] Building on earlier work that sees systems of oppression as overlapping and producing specific marginalization where multiple systems intersect,[51] sociologists Zulema Valdez and Tanya Golash-Boza note that for working-class undocumented Mexican university students, unauthorized status, social class, and family educational history coconstruct their experience of higher education.[52] Similarly, Laura Enriquez, in posing the question, "a master status or a final straw?" suggests that other social locations, like race and school tracking, "set the stage" for educational disadvantage.[53] In this conceptualization, undocumented status emerges as the "final straw" that pushes marginal-

ized young people to leave school. These recent works rightfully demonstrate the interaction between various statuses to shape opportunity and disadvantage.

So, is undocumented status one of a number of overlapping statuses that work together to limit the experiences of undocumented young people? Or is it a master status? According to Hughes, while master status is the central status that establishes one's overall position in society, some statuses could be master statuses in certain situations or until the presence of a more dominant status renders them subordinate. Take, for example, race and gender. While in most situations, being a physician or belonging to the middle class may override most other traits in one's identification, race and gender will often supersede these statuses in the larger society. Therefore, the master status concept does, indeed, allow for the possibility of a master status to be the dominant status in one situation but not necessarily all others.

Hughes also introduced the notion of *auxiliary traits*, a set of complementary attributes often associated with a master status. He noted that statuses have both a primary trait – which marks insiders within the group from outsiders who are not part of it – and a set of complementary traits. So, for example, the physician, who has fulfilled certain educational and training requirements, is licensed to practice medicine.[54] Here, the medical license is the primary trait. Related, the doctor might possess certain auxiliary traits, like being upper-middle-class, White, and male. These traits are often associated with physicians. But it is a possibility that some people who possess the master status may lack some of these expected auxiliary characteristics. One might be a physician, but also be from a racial minority group and/or be female.

These examples highlight the nuanced and flexible understanding of the master status concept. Accordingly, a status can be dominant in one situation but become subordinate in another (and vice versa). And within any given status, there is a great deal of heterogeneity within associated statuses that yield different types of stratification within groups. Hence, the master status concept and seemingly more nuanced perspectives regarding intersectionality and stratification are not mutually exclusive, and therefore not in tension.[55] To be sure, undocumented immigrants are diverse in both race and class. They may occupy various positions within the U.S. education system that differently structure educational attainment. Their racial and ethnic backgrounds may make them targets for discrimination and enforcement measures or allow them to pass as citizens. And some become undocumented through an unauthorized entry and others by overstaying a visa. Regardless of their race, national origin, class background, mode of entry, or educational attainment, they face a uniform set of exclusions and withheld resources and opportunities that create a socially significant divide. It is not that they don't experience other forms of inequality – they do. But even in overlapping contexts, illegality takes precedence. As Susan Coutin warns,

> Even if this space is in some ways subversive, even if its boundaries are permeable, and even if it is sometimes irrelevant to the individuals' daily lives, [it] can be deadly. Legal nonexistence can mean being detained and deported, perhaps to life-threatening conditions. It can mean working for low wages in a sweatshop or being unemployed. It can mean the denial of medical care, food, social services, education and public housing. And it can mean an erasure of rights and personhood . . . .[56]

Social-legal positionality changed for certain undocumented young people in 2012 when President Barack Obama implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, commonly known as DACA, an administrative policy that offers temporary protection from deportation and work authorization to certain eligible young people.[57] While not a legal pathway to citizenship, this change offered an estimated 1.9 million eligible young people the potential to transform their developmental pathways and reduce the legal barriers to broader participation in U.S. society and, at least partially, delay the transition to illegality. In addition to DACA's provisions, many states have passed other legislation, helping DACA beneficiaries access essential benefits like driver's licenses and Medicaid. By 2018, more than 814,000 young people had been granted DACA status.

Over the course of the program's eight years, DACA has allowed its beneficiaries better opportunities to support themselves and their families. DACA has enabled young people to access better-paying jobs, health care, driver's licenses, and the means of establishing credit through bank accounts and credit cards.[58] Many have improved their living arrangements, purchased new cars, and enrolled their children in day-care programs. They have also experienced enhanced feelings of security, belonging, and overall well-being.[59] As a result, these new opportunities have provided beneficiaries increased social mobility.[60]

DACA has also helped beneficiaries launch careers by enrolling in new education and workforce training programs and gaining valuable on-the-job training.[61] In many states, DACA has provided beneficiaries with educational opportunities and resources otherwise unavailable to undocumented immigrants not covered by DACA, such as access to in-state tuition and professional licenses for specialized vocations.[62] As a result, these developments have created a new divide between DACA beneficiaries and their undocumented counterparts and family members who do not possess DACA status.

But has it allowed young people to bridge the divide with their American-born and citizen counterparts? As a semilegal status, DACA has limited inclusionary power. Due to DACA's temporary and partial nature, it ultimately falls short in endowing its beneficiaries with durable forms of membership and any long-term certainty about their place in U.S. society. As an administrative policy, DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship, it does not override exclusions from federal financial aid, it places limits on occupations its beneficiaries can pursue, and it still

leaves open the door to deportation. And DACA beneficiaries remain connected to family members, romantic partners, and friends who do not qualify for DACA. Their fates are ultimately impacted by their loved ones' vulnerability.[63] Taken together, these limitations underscore a persistent divide between DACA beneficiaries and their documented peers.

The evidence from DACA, a "liminally legal status" that does not endow full and permanent rights, signals trouble ahead in the twenty-first century. While there is general consensus regarding the "bright boundaries" of unauthorized status, there is recognition that growing numbers of migrants around the globe possess statuses beyond the dichotomous categories of citizenship.[64] Increasing numbers of migrants occupy statuses that are temporary, uncertain, and nonlinear.[65] Sociologist Cecilia Menjívar has observed that those possessing liminal statuses often live in a state of legal limbo that can persist indefinitely, sometimes never leading to citizenship or other forms of formal integration.[66] While they enjoy certain rights and privileges, their "precarious" status places limits on a range of activities. For example, precarious immigration statuses are often accompanied by precarious access to public services. In addition, while these liminally legal immigrants are sometimes able to renew their status and the benefits that come with them, a period of nonrenewal (due to lengthy processing times or denial) can push them out of status, even if temporarily, resulting in potential job loss, bureaucratic hurdles, and stress. They may also be subject to deportation for relatively minor offenses, due to legislation in recent years that has expanded the grounds for deportation.

Ultimately, the durability of statuses like DACA is called into question precisely because the tension between access and exclusion, between belonging and vulnerability, that characterizes their daily experience remains unresolved.[67] While the ability to experience temporary and partial integration into the U.S. economy and society is significant, it cannot fully counter the master status nature of illegality.

In 2017, the Trump administration moved to terminate DACA. Following the termination, it was promptly challenged in the courts, yet the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services stopped accepting new applications. The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on November 12, 2019, and ruled five-to-four against the Trump administration in June 2020, narrowly avoiding a reversal of the progress beneficiaries have made over the last eight years. On December 7, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security announced it would accept initial applications for the first time in three years. Still, this short history exposes the program's fragile nature and its limits in providing long-term stability and rights for its beneficiaries. It also throws into doubt whether liminally legal policies like DACA can override the master status nature of undocumented status.

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Latinos & Racism in the Trump Era

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This essay examines the roots, causes, and effects of racism experienced by Latinos in the Trump era. We argue that Trump and his administration were not the origin of Latinos' experiences of racism, but his rise to power was, in part, derived from Latino racialization. Preexisting politics of Latino immigration, Whites' fear of loss of status due to demographic shifts, and historical and contemporary processes of racializing Latinos were seized by the Trump administration and made central features of his renegade presidential campaign and policy agenda. White nationalist racism became the defining feature of the Trump presidency, making Latinos' heightened experiences of racism, and the relegitimization of overt White nationalism, one of its lasting legacies.

The United States is in the midst of a demographic shift to a majority-minority country, wherein the aging and declining White population coincides with the growth of communities of color, including an increase in the Latino population. The largest minoritized group in the United States, Latinos make up 18 percent of the population today and the U.S. census projects that they will represent nearly 30 percent of the population by 2060.[1] Latinos are a group diverse in national origin, class, race, and ethnocultural characteristics.[2] Latinos have historically been among the most demonized ethnoracial groups in the United States, and much has been made by politicians, the media, and pundits of the growth of the Latino population.[3] Contrary to the belief that Latino population growth is driven by immigration, nearly two-thirds of Latinos in the United States are native born.[4] The size and heterogeneity of the Latino population have also been shaped by declining fertility rates and dwindling migration from Mexico since the Great Recession, coupled with an increase in migration from Central America.[5]

Scholars have been forecasting the dynamics underlying the United States' impending majority-minority demographic shift for decades;[6] concurrently, a web of White nationalist anti-immigrant organizations, founded or funded by John Tanton, were building momentum and gaining credibility in media and political circles as an alarmist voice on immigration. These organizations, and Whites who fear a loss of power and status, found a champion in Donald Trump, who appealed directly to their distress about waning White dominance.[7] Trump's campaign

targeted Latinos via racist and xenophobic rhetoric from its inception. Trump relied on racist tropes and populist language, honed over the course of his campaign by advisors Stephen Miller and Steve Bannon, to position himself as the protector of America's declining White majority who are under attack by immigration. The public was bombarded with promises to "Make America Great Again" by building a "big, beautiful wall" along the U.S.-Mexican border to curtail supposed high levels of undocumented migration, crime, and drugs, and to "instill the rule of law at our borders." Trump rebuked Latin American countries, especially Mexico, for "not sending their best" and homogenized Latinos as criminal invaders regardless of age, gender, or motive for migration. During the final presidential debate in 2016, Trump equated immigrants with criminals, "drug lords," and "bad hombres," promising that "We have some bad hombres here and we're going to get them out."[8]

Despite research underscoring the fallacies of these claims, studies have demonstrated that Trump's xenophobic campaign rhetoric was effective in activating many Whites' demographobia, or feelings that Whites are under siege by growing racial/ethnic diversity, and that racism and anti-immigrant attitudes motivated some Trump voters.[9] Indeed, Trump's nativist nationalism, anti-immigrant policy agenda, and misogyny have allowed him to connect to a sense of White loss after decades of neoliberalism have exacerbated inequality, shifting the blame about the vanishing American Dream from the federal government to women, immigrants, and people of color.[10]

We turn our attention to Latinos' experiences of racism in the Trump era. This essay will show that while Donald Trump and his administration were not the origin of Latinos' racialization and experiences of racism, Trump's rise to power has been, in part, derived from relying on Latino racialization. We take particular note of the resurgence of overt racism and White nationalist violence targeting Latinos that parallels the political ascendance of Trump. We show how preexisting politics of Latino immigration and historical and contemporary processes of racializing Latinos as criminals, others, and colonial subjects were seized by the Trump administration and made central features of his renegade entry into politics. By adding force to already existing draconian anti-Latino policies and using moments of supposed crisis to propose new ones, normalizing nationalist xenophobic rhetoric on the national stage, and inciting violence against Latinos from federal agencies to private citizens, Donald Trump propelled himself into the political arena as the defender of those fearing demographic change and immigration. Fear of the non-White other, and the Latino other, in particular, serves as a tie that binds him to several of his advisors, pundits, and, ultimately, his constituents and was used to maintain his political power and influence. Ultimately, though Trump did not introduce White nationalist racism into U.S. politics and social life, it was the defining feature of his presidency, surely making Latinos' heightened experiences

of racism, and the relegitimization of overt White nationalism, one of its lasting legacies.

The contours of a shared Latino identity are ever-evolving, but the racism and xenophobia targeting Latinos is enduring. Racism, beyond holding prejudicial beliefs, is a system of domination – advantage and disadvantage – based on socially constructed categories of race.[11] In the United States, racism is guided by a "White racial frame," wherein Whiteness is deemed superior and other groups are deemed inferior.[12] Racism is structurally reinforced through racial formation and racialization via social institutions and discriminatory practices within them that exacerbate social inequality and oppress individuals and groups along racial lines.[13] Racism is also socially produced interpersonally, whether consciously or unconsciously, through racist thinking and discriminatory interactions between individuals that include exclusion, stigmatization, harassment, violence, or threats of violence. Racism continues to shape the everyday lived experiences and life chances of racial and ethnic minoritized groups in the United States, regardless of immigrant status, generation, and class.

Racism against Latinos encompasses racial ideologies touting that biological distinctions across groups result in cultural and social differences and multilevel racial structures that advantage those deemed superior while disadvantaging others.[14] *Racial ideologies* are a set of principles and ideas that serve to divide people into groups and that benefit the interests of the dominant group. Racial ideologies in the United States center on hegemonic Whiteness and work to protect White supremacy. They find their power in repeated cultural representations, or controlling images that solidify as racial scripts, that shape how members of a racialized group are perceived and treated at interpersonal, institutional, and political levels. First introduced by social theorist Patricia Hill Collins in her study of gendered depictions of African Americans in the media, "controlling images" draw on intersectional ideologies of race, gender, age, class, and sexuality to define identity.[15] Notably, controlling images works to identify those who are insiders by highlighting the characteristics that would make one an outsider. Historian Natalia Molina refers to "the practice of defining one racialized group with reference to what is attributed to another" as *racial scripts*.[16] Once defined, controlling images and racial scripts proliferate throughout time and space via media, policy, violence, and everyday interactions. As "White institutional spaces" are created and protected, racial ideologies and racial scripts are reinforced.[17]

Latinos are often depicted by controlling images of what anthropologist Leo Chavez refers to as the *Latino threat narrative*, in which men are constructed in political rhetoric and the media as illegal, criminal, and culturally and intellectually deficient, and women and children as public resource drainers and, ultimately, a threat to White hegemony.[18] These controlling images shape public discourse

and commonplace understandings of Latinos – regardless of national origin, race, class, or generation – in American society, and are presented in racial scripts that pit Latinos against U.S.-born Whites and other immigrant groups.[19]

Ultimately, racial ideologies reinforce hegemonic Whiteness through the formation of racialized language, structures, stereotypes, and practices that shape institutional integration, cultural belonging, and life chances. Defining Latinos as a threat simultaneously casts Latinos as non-American and therefore undeserving of access to citizenship rights and resources, such as education, health care, housing, and wealth, and justifies dehumanizing policies. Racialization processes mean that, despite heterogeneity in national origin, Latinos share a common ethnoracial categorization. Racial ideologies and structures continue to shape patterns and processes of ethnoracial identification – how Latinos see themselves – and ethnoracial boundaries – how they are viewed and treated by others – and their experiences in the Trump era.[20]

After Trump took office in January 2017, the racial ideologies espoused along the campaign trail of Mexican immigrants and Latinos as criminals were translated into racist policies that amplified existing structures of enforcement and inhumane treatment of Latino immigrants, in turn reinforcing the ideologies themselves. During his first week in office, Trump signed two executive orders that disproportionately targeted Latinos via enhanced interior and exterior enforcement, as the U.S. detention and deportation regime has long served as a site of Latino racialization. The first order, on "Border Security," was intended to keep his campaign promise of building a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border, despite the fact that the militarization of the Southern border had proven ineffective in deterring undocumented migration and in fact had resulted in the long-term settlement of undocumented Latinos in the United States.[21] The executive order also authorized the expansion of the Border Patrol and directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to construct additional detention facilities along the U.S.-Mexican border and significantly restrict access to asylum.

The second executive order, "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States," delineated Trump's interior enforcement priorities. The order resurrected and expanded efforts to bridge local and federal law enforcement agencies and increased the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. Before Trump, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, both enacted in 1996, gave room for states and cities to implement immigration law by encouraging police officers to question individuals about their immigration status during stops. A noncitizen could then be transferred to ICE custody and deported. In 2008, ICE launched the Secure Communities and Section 287(g) agreements, which facilitated data-sharing links between local po-

lice officers, DHS, and the FBI, and significantly increased deportations, earning Obama the moniker "Deporter in Chief." In a victory for immigrant rights activists, Secure Communities was reined in during Obama's second term due to racial profiling concerns. However, Trump's executive order resuscitated Secure Communities. As scholars have demonstrated, the definition of people considered to be "priorities" was expanded to include undocumented immigrants charged with minor offenses or *suspected* of committing a crime.[22] In the administration's first one hundred days, the number of civil immigration arrests increased 38 percent compared with the previous year. Researchers have shown that dark-skinned Latino and Black men from a small number of countries are disproportionately targeted by enforcement efforts, producing a "gendered racial removal program."[23]

As social, economic, political, and environmental instability, fueled by a long history of U.S. intervention in the region, spurred child and familial refugee migration from Central America in 2018 and 2019, Trump drew on the migration and apprehension trends at the U.S. Southern border to manufacture a Latino immigration crisis from a humanitarian one, resulting in increasingly draconian policies targeting Latino immigrants.[24] Trump's immigration policy architects, particularly Stephen Miller, are connected to a web of nativist organizations, such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform and the Center for Immigration Studies, whose goals are to reduce the migration of non-Whites to the United States.[25] Miller advocated for actions such as "zero tolerance," implemented in May 2018, that inhumanely separated children from their parents seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexican border. In January 2019, DHS announced the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP; commonly known as Remain in Mexico) that create a vertical border by mandating that growing numbers of asylum seekers await hearings in Mexico in encampments. The MPP violates international human rights law by denying refugees their legal right to seek asylum in the United States, while exposing people to extortion and violence as they await hearings in Mexico. Together, Trump's rhetoric and policies reinforce the idea that Latino asylum seekers are unworthy of entry to the United States and of access to U.S. rights and citizenship, and they manufactured a humanitarian crisis at the border by detaining children and families on U.S. soil in facilities likened to cages and under deplorable conditions, subjecting them to abuse, and creating border refugee camps.

Further concretizing the conflation of immigrants with criminals in the American public imaginary, Trump zeroed in on the Salvadoran-American gang MS-13 to justify his draconian policies. Despite being born on the streets of Los Angeles, California, and a product of U.S. society that excluded and marginalized many Salvadoran immigrants who fled the U.S.-backed Salvadoran Civil War, MS-13 was upheld as an example of the threat Central Americans posed to the United States. Journalists referred to this demonization as Trump's transformation of the Salvadoran-American gang into "public enemy number one." When Trump

rescinded the Obama-era executive order of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on September 5, 2017, he justified the decision by falsely claiming that DACA spurred a "massive surge" of immigrants from Central America, some of whom, he claimed, joined MS-13. During a May 2018 White House meeting about sanctuary states, at which a public official mentioned MS-13, Trump raged against Latino immigrants by saying, in front of reporters, "You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people, these are animals, and we're taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before." These racist criminal and animal tropes are controlling images that are used to instill fear and remind Whites who the "other" is, a key tool to garner support for Trump's policies. They are employed to defend the growing reach of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and ICE and to justify the dismantling of the U.S. asylum system and humanitarian protections.

Trump's racist and dehumanizing rhetoric and policy actions have increased Latinos' experiences of institutionalized legal violence via the expansion of the detention and deportation regime, state-sponsored abuse against children, and the stripping of civil rights, while fomenting racial violence directed at Latinos and other groups.[26] For example, counties across the United States that hosted rallies for the presidential candidate in 2016 witnessed a 226 percent surge in hate crimes.[27] In November 2019, the FBI reported that anti-Latino or Hispanic hate crimes increased over 21 percent in 2018.

Among the most overt hate crimes against Latinos was an August 2019 attack during which a White nationalist terrorist shot and killed twenty-two people and injured twenty-six others in a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, a city that is about 80 percent Latino and that borders Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. In an anti-Latino immigrant screed, the shooter expressed his rage over interracial mixing and what he referred to as the "Hispanic invasion of Texas" and that he was "defending [his] country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by invasion." The manifesto echoed fears of demographic change and Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric that also singled out El Paso in his 2019 State of the Union address as having "extremely high rates of violent crime – one of the highest in the entire country, and considered one of our nation's most dangerous cities," which, according to Trump, only became "one of the safest cities in our country" after a border wall was erected. Various fact checkers and El Paso's Republican mayor swiftly contradicted the statement by saying El Paso was safe prior to the already existing border fence being reinforced by the Trump administration's border wall efforts. Latinos in El Paso and across the nation, already reeling from years of Trump's racist rhetoric, were deeply affected by this act of racial terrorism. Journalists documented that many Latinos across the nation – regardless of national origin and immigrant generation – expressed anger and fear of White nationalism, and the fear was especially acute among those with racialized markers of ethnorace: Spanish accents and dark skin.

Research supports the idea of a "Trump effect": that is, that "Trump's racially inflammatory speech emboldened individuals to express their prejudice."[28] The Trump effect has been compounded by Trump's reliance on social media to relay his unfettered opinion and racist rhetoric to his base, which allows "overt white racism and bigotry [to] be communicated in the public frontstage of social media as supposed cathartic, and importantly, non-racially motivated truth telling."[29]

The Trump administration disassociates violence by private citizens against Latinos from the rhetoric used by the president and touts that many of the actions taken by the administration that are racist toward Latino immigrants and their families are simply enforcements or extensions of already existing policies and practices. Indeed, Trump and his administration are a reprise of historically entrenched racism and institutionalized White supremacy that demonizes Latinos in rhetoric, policy, and practice dating back to the nineteenth century when the United States seized control of the Southwest.[30] These systems have been maintained through the persistent and effective racialization of Latinos for nearly two centuries, but they have been further institutionalized under Trump, who relied on his supporters' fear of immigration and Latinos.[31] Latino racialization is a product of the homogenization of a diverse population into a single racial category paired with controlling images that cast Latinos and those of Latin American descent in the United States as the subhuman other, which affects how Latinos are viewed by others and how they view themselves and their place in American society.[32] A recent report by the Pew Research Center finds that half of Latinos in the United States have serious concerns about their place in American society today. Two-thirds of those surveyed feel that Trump's policies have been harmful to Latinos, a much higher proportion than during the Obama or Bush presidencies.[33] The racialization one is subject to differs by social location and is experienced, embodied, and resisted differently across space, producing racialized illegality, racialized citizenship, and, in the case of Puerto Ricans, as racial/colonial subjects.[34]

First-generation immigrants – those who migrate to the United States – are subjected to a process of racialized illegality in which designations of foreignness and criminality intersect.[35] Latino immigration is weaponized for political gain, but their racialization as "illegal" has real consequences for immigration, naturalization, refugee, and asylum policy decisions. Rhetoric about these policies, and the increased attention to detention and deportation, shapes people's lives and experiences and consequently influences immigrants' collective experiences in the United States. Trump reinforced the tenets of racialized illegality for Mexican immigrants and, in the context of refugee flows from Central America, this frame has been expanded to apply to unaccompanied minors and refugees.[36]

Though racialized illegality primarily affects individuals targeted by immigration law, it reverberates at all levels of society. U.S.-born family members, and

even nonimmigrant peers, experience the fear of deportation of a loved one. The burden of the emotional distress that stems from a persistent fear of family separation negatively affects immigrants' mental and emotional health and can be acutely experienced by children. Latino women and children are disproportionately affected by lost or deferred educational or economic mobility as men – husbands, fathers, and financial providers – are subjected to deportation.[37] Hence, racialized law enforcement shapes the future of Latino families and communities through "multigenerational punishment" that affects immigrants' material, physical, and psychological well-being.[38] Mirroring these processes, immigrant Latinos feel greater worry about their place in Trump's America than the U.S. born, but both immigrant and U.S.-born Latinos worry that someone they know will be deported.[39]

Still, Latinos experience racism regardless of generation and legal status as racialization casts a wide net of political and social "exclusionary inclusion."[40] Later-generation Latinos may experience what historian Mae Ngai terms "racialized citizenship," whereby Americanness is White and, therefore, non-White groups are imagined as foreigners.[41] Racialized citizenship transcends generations. As racialized citizens, U.S.-born Latinos' social integration is limited by boundaries of racial otherness, which shapes their opportunities and mobility in American institutions.

Within the frame of racialized citizenship, integration processes – such as self-identification – are also racialized.[42] Researchers find time and time again that Latinos do not simply self-identify racially/ethnically as "American." Instead, they experience processes of racialized identification, in which they might identify as Hispanic, Latino, Latin American, Afro-Latinos, Afro-Caribbean, Indigenous, Mestizo (mixed-race), along their national origin lines, or as hyphenated Americans.[43] A recent study of Latino millennials in Chicago, Illinois, shows that U.S.-born Latinos are socially marked both as citizens who do not belong and as alien citizens.[44] Because Latino millennials feel that they are neither racially nor culturally compatible with the notions of Americanness (defined by Whiteness and Anglo-Saxon-Protestant heritage, respectively), they consider that their full inclusion is unattainable. The proliferation of controlling images of Latinos as criminals, at the border, or in procedures of removal and return – as was ongoing in the Trump era – serves to perpetuate notions of foreignness.

A national-origin group that encounters a distinct form of racism is Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898 and Puerto Ricans were extended U.S. citizenship in 1917, yet are excluded from full belonging. Nearly six million Puerto Ricans live in the United States today, while almost three million more live on the island and many Puerto Ricans have African ancestry. While formal citizenship status and rights are granted to Puerto Ricans, full membership in the United States is not achieved. Thus, Puerto Rican's citizenship is marked by a co-

lonial legacy of inferiority and racialization as a foreign other.[45] In this way, Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship on the ground, but have colonial/racialized citizenship in practice. President Trump's decision to give ten million dollars from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) budget to ICE in 2018 for the increased detention and deportation of immigrants, following his disastrous response to Hurricane Maria in 2017, elucidates the administration's fixation on undocumented Latinos and prioritization of the containment and removal of them over the protection of citizen Latinos.

Ultimately, decades of Latino exclusion and racialization via policy and rhetoric, and in practice, combined with the recent wave of xenophobia and the rise of White nationalism in the Trump era, create a harsh societal context of reception for Latino immigrants and their descendants in the United States today.[46] The racialization of Latinos in the United States as non-White, regardless of the reason for being so, casts Latinos as the other and reinforces racial boundaries and unequal power dynamics that have consequences in everyday life and across generations.

Still, there is no single Latino experience of racism. Skin color, for example, shapes experiences of racism, as dark skin is associated with criminality and undocumented status, even among those in the middle class and into the third generation.[47] The erasure of Afro-Latino and Indigenous voices from research, policy, and public representation signals the "hybrid hegemonies" that marginalize them within nested ethnoracial hierarchies.[48] Class status also shapes exposure to racism. While legal status, access to higher education, and entrepreneurship facilitate mobility into the middle and upper classes, many middle- and upper-class Latinos continue to experience racism and racialization within White-dominated institutions and in everyday life.[49] It is regularly assumed that they or their parents are undocumented immigrants, they are racially profiled by police, they are mistaken for "the help," even when dressed in professional attire, and they are castigated for speaking Spanish in White-dominated institutions or in public.[50] Geography is also an important determinant to Latinos' experiences of racism. As collaborations between federal and local enforcement resuscitated the linking of federal agendas to local authorities, the likelihood of racial profiling in the Trump era increased.[51] Some states, like California, which led the resistance to Trump's immigration policies, have implemented state-wide sanctuary policies to limit the reach of ICE. Combating racism against Latinos requires navigating this uneven terrain.

Nativism and White nationalism were alive and well in America and Republican politicians have long relied on racial stereotypes as "dog whistles" to activate their base long before Trump's ascension into politics.[52] However, what is different about the Trump era is the converging pressures of immigration-driven demographic change, rising economic inequality, and White racial resentment alongside the relegitimization of the alt-right and overt White

nationalism.[53] The Trump effect will leave a lasting mark on Latinos, and other racial/ethnic groups, in the United States. As ethnic studies scholar Alfonso Gonzales contends, the Trump era signifies "a shift in racial politics from so-called color-blind racism toward a resurgent white nationalism that seeks to dismantle rights regimes and programs won by racial minorities, indigenous peoples, women, LGBT communities, immigrants, and refugees."[54] Latinos, both recent immigrants and long-settled Americans who make up the largest racialized group in the country, will continue to experience racialization, which may result in "durable ethnicity" across generations.[55] Indeed, Trump's campaign primarily targeted Mexican immigrants but, as political scientist Angela Gutierrez and colleagues have found, his racist campaign rhetoric increased the salience of a racialized panethnic Latino identity regardless of national origin and feelings of threat spanning generations.[56] Trump's rhetoric also affected U.S.-born Latinos because they are closely connected to the issue of immigration.[57] These U.S.-born Latinos might be especially likely to participate in immigrant rights movements and become civically engaged in their communities. Hence, the so-called Trump effect has already caused many Latinos to develop reactive ethnicity, in which their ethnoracial identity was made more salient as Trump's racist rhetoric combined with increasing experiences of discrimination and violence in everyday life.[58]

What, then, might the Trump era mean for the future, both in terms of Latinos' experiences of racism and for scholars investigating Latino racialization and its effects? The attack on the United States Capitol by White supremacists, incited by Trump, in the waning days of his presidency, is evidence that though Trump was defeated, White nationalism persists. For Latino communities, the politics of immigration are central to processes of racialization: they shape how Latinos are viewed and treated, how Latinos see themselves, and what opportunities they have within the U.S. social structure.[59] The deportation regime in the United States has been racialized since its inception, but racialization solidified and expanded under Trump.[60] Furthermore, in the absence of undocumented migration from Mexico, and in light of increased refugee migration from Latin America, racialized illegality applies to all immigrants from Latin America, and to families and children *legally seeking asylum* from home-country conditions wrought by U.S. imperialism and intervention. This has implications for new immigrants and their children, regardless of national origin or legal status, because the social and economic consequences of racialized illegality will shape how they are viewed and treated by others in the Trump era and beyond: as racialized citizens or as racial/colonial subjects.

Latinos are not powerless in this context, as nativism and exclusion also produce group solidarity and mass mobilizations, resistance, and, ultimately, social change. Furthermore, Trump's rhetoric is not original. While it has activated a group of Whites across the United States who fear demographic change, it could also shift the political contours of the country. For example, as California was ex-

periencing immigration-driven demographic change in the 1990s, Pete Wilson's anti-immigrant and racist reelection campaign for governor of California in 1994 targeted undocumented Latinos in rhetoric and policy. Wilson's anti-immigrant campaign galvanized Latinos and other immigrant groups. The Wilson era gave rise to a new generation of Latino politicians, now wielding unprecedented progressive power in the state, increases in naturalization and voting, and long-term multiracial community organizing.[61] As a result, California turned solidly blue in the following decades and, in the absence of federal immigration reform, created a structure of state-level citizenship for undocumented Americans.[62]

Indeed, in four years under Trump, we witnessed major nationwide protests, federal judges made important rulings blocking a number of Trump's unlawful and racist policies, and institutional agents in government blew the whistle to decry Trump's dehumanizing policies. We saw widespread support for Black Lives Matter and the movement for racial justice. We also saw the fruits of deep-seated multiracial grassroots organizing in Georgia and Arizona, reminiscent of California, that turned these states blue and helped to defeat Trump in the 2020 election. Lessons are also to be learned from the immigrant youth movement that organized and gave us the Dream Act and DACA.

It is clear that White supremacy and racism are deeply rooted in American society and that race and racialization processes shape immigration policy decisions, inspire discrimination and White nationalist racism and violence, and shape Latinos' identification and feelings of belonging. Also evident is that the Trump era will affect Latinos' identities and experiences of racism and exacerbate existing racial inequalities for generations to come. As scholars continue to analyze the effects of the Trump presidency, we join others by calling on immigration and race/ethnicity scholars to integrate theories of race and racism into studies of the Latino experience in the United States, for the two cannot be disentangled.[63]

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"Trauma Makes You Grow Up Quicker": The Financial & Emotional Burdens of Deportation & Incarceration

Yajaira Ceciliano-Navarro & Tanya Maria Golash-Boza

Research on the impacts of incarceration and deportation describes the negative consequences for children and young people. But how these events impact adults and members of extended families has not been broadly considered. And no study has directly compared incarceration with deportation. The study described in this essay, based on interviews with 111 adult individuals with a family member deported (57) or incarcerated (54), reveals how these experiences have long-lasting emotional and financial impacts and considers the similarities and differences between incarceration and deportation. The deportation or incarceration of parents is devastating; yet the absence of other relatives such as sons, sisters, brothers, aunts, cousins, grandchildren, and other household members also translates into severe sentimental and economic hardships not only for the immediate but also for the extended family.

Incarceration and deportation have been studied extensively in the wake of the rise of mass incarceration during the 1970s and deportations during the 1990s.[1] Scholars and advocates have concluded that both systems of repression serve as a form of social control of People of Color, vulnerable immigrants, surplus workers, and those who have difficulty holding a job in the contemporary economy, such as the mentally ill. Both mass incarceration and mass deportation have intensified in times of crisis: incarceration rates grew in the aftermath of the 1970s oil crisis and the deindustrialization that followed and deportations increased after the Great Recession. Both incarceration and deportation have affected millions of people in the twenty-first century.[2]

The Black and Latinx communities have borne the brunt of both incarceration and deportation.[3] Black people are more than five times as likely as White people to be imprisoned. One in ten Black children has a parent behind bars, compared with one in sixty White children.[4] Nearly all deportees (97 percent) are sent to Latin America and the Caribbean, many of them leaving behind partners and children. These twin forces thus exacerbate preexisting racial inequalities and lead to devastating emotional and financial repercussions for Black and Latinx families.[5]

A plethora of studies have indicated just how deeply incarceration and deportation affect family members left behind, describing the emotional and material suffering among the children especially.[6] To date, however, no study has systematically explored the similarities and differences between incarceration and deportation. The purpose of this essay is thus to compare the effects of deportation and incarceration among adult members of affected families in California. Drawing from 111 interviews with family members of incarcerated and deported people, we explore how family members experience the emotional and financial burdens of deportation and incarceration and explain the similarities and differences between them.

The available literature reveals many similarities between the experiences of deported and incarcerated family members. Much of it focuses on the minor children of the removed person. For example, the incarceration of a parent can lead to anxiety, poor school performance, and long-term cognitive and emotional deficits.[7] The deportation of a family member has been tied to long-lasting emotional effects as well as poor mental and physical health and deteriorating school performance for children.[8]

It is never easy to have a family member behind bars, but the incarceration of a violent or abusive parent can often be beneficial for children and their families. Children who had a strong bond with their parents before incarceration, however, can experience trauma, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress.[9] These difficult emotions will, in turn, have a negative effect on children's behavior, school performance, and physical and mental health.[10]

Financial impacts also affect both groups. Insofar as most deportees and arrestees are men, their removal may involve the loss of the sole or primary breadwinner. In many cases, this happens without warning, leading to immediate hardship. Research ties both incarceration and deportation to food and housing insecurity.[11] Women and teenage family members may have to enter the labor market.[12] The need for remaining caretakers to take on additional paid work decreases their availability to the children. Likewise, financial hardships have short- and long-term impacts, affecting children's futures.[13]

The removal of a parent can also lead to changes that have their own emotional consequences. For example, children may have to move from their houses or neighborhoods, live with other family members, or take on new roles in the household, all of which may damage their emotional well-being.[14] When a family member is deported, families must make difficult decisions regarding whether they will relocate closer to the border to be near their deported relative, or move abroad to reunite as a family. If the family is not reunited, this forced separation often causes significant hardship and children frequently experience not only sadness and isolation, but also resentment and rebelliousness.[15]

Likewise, visiting family members behind bars creates its own stressors for the relatives of deported and incarcerated people. Organizing the visit itself can be extremely stressful due to the layers of bureaucracy, planning, and money involved.[16] At the same time, these visits can be positive experiences for children because they allow them to form or maintain emotional bonds with their incarcerated or detained parents.[17] For families of deportees, family members who lack citizenship often fear entering detention facilities, yielding an inability to visit, which is emotionally difficult.[18]

Both deportation and incarceration also create expenses that can be onerous for already stressed families. While the overall income level of deportees is difficult to determine, given noncitizens' marginalization in the job market and the fact that most are People of Color, it is likely that they faced some precarity before deportation. Most people who are incarcerated are of modest economic means, and incarceration pushes their families deeper into poverty.[19] It is costly to call incarcerated or detained people, to send packages, and to send them money for small comforts inside prison.[20] Even upon release families may have to repay bail or other fines, and formerly incarcerated people face almost insurmountable challenges in the labor market.[21] Similarly, helping a deported relative return to the United States or sending remittances and visiting if the relative remains in the origin country can be a financial burden on the families of deportees.[22] Deportation creates fear that can lead families left behind in the United States to move to other neighborhoods or cities, which can create additional financial costs.

Fear, in fact, may be a major distinction between the families of deportees and those of incarcerated persons. Relatives, both those who are legally deportable themselves and those who are not, experience fear and anxiety about their own possible deportation.[23] This fear translates into significant disruptions in a family's activities, as family members may avoid leaving the home to go to work or to attend school meetings or medical appointments for fear of deportation.[24] This sentiment is less common with family members of incarcerated people who usually do not fear that they too will be incarcerated. Nevertheless, the experiences of incarceration and deportation have not been directly compared prior to this study.

The findings presented here are based on 111 interviews, conducted between 2013 and 2019, in California. A team of researchers, including a faculty member, graduate students, and undergraduate students trained in interviewing techniques, conducted the interviews. Using a semistructured interview guide, we interviewed people over eighteen years of age who had experienced the deportation or incarceration of a member of their family with whom they lived. We chose to focus on all household members – instead of just parents and children – as most previous research has focused only on parents and children. The interviews lasted from one to two hours. The interviews, conducted in English or

Spanish, according to the interviewee's preference, were recorded, transcribed, and coded. All Spanish translations were done by the authors of this essay.

The participants included eighty-five women and twenty-six men. Fifty-four interviewees had a family member who had been incarcerated, and fifty-seven interviewees had a family member who had been deported. The first group ranged in age from twenty to eighty, and their average age was forty-two years old. The second group ranged in age from eighteen to sixty-one and the average age was twenty-eight. All but seven interviewees who were related to an incarcerated person were born in the United States, while twenty (35 percent) of the relatives of deportees were immigrants. With the exception of one person from Yemen, all the immigrants were born in Mexico. All but one of the relatives of deported people were Latinx, as were the majority of the relatives of incarcerated people. The incarcerated relatives included one mother, one sister, fourteen sons, twelve fathers, eight brothers, five cousins, three husbands, two uncles, two grandchildren, one stepson, one son-in-law, one partner, one nephew, and one ex-partner. Most deportees were male, with a total of forty-six participants experiencing a male relative's deportation. Two of these experienced the deportation of both parents. Male deportees included twenty-two fathers, ten brothers, four uncles, two husbands, and ten assorted others, including ex-fiancés, ex-husbands, and brothers-in-law. The deported female relatives included six mothers and three aunts. Parents were more common among the relatives of incarcerated people, comprising thirty-five, while only fifteen relatives of deportees were parents. More than half of the interviewees related to an incarcerated person had also experienced the incarceration of other relatives.

Our interviews revealed that the most common emotional experiences for people with incarcerated or deported relatives centered upon sadness, nostalgia, fear, frustration, relief, and stigmatization. The most common financial consequences include loss of income, costs related to the criminalization or deportation process, and financial obligations postrelease or postdeportation.

Interviewees in both samples described missing the removed person. They referenced feelings of emptiness and loss, especially on particular dates. For example, Lorna, whose stepson is incarcerated, said his absence is depressing for her, but emphasized how sad it is to see her husband missing his son on holidays:

> Well, yeah, I get more upset when it's around holidays and stuff, and he's not around. Because his dad gets more emotional because he wants his son there, you know? And all he gets to do is talk to him on the phone. So, it's just like kind of hard. *(Lorna, thirty-five years old, Salinas, California; her stepson has been incarcerated for three years and is still in prison.)*

Celina, whose father was deported some time ago, still feels the emptiness her father left:

> Yeah, I miss just family time, you know, just being with him in the house, just, yeah, basically spending time with him. *(Celina, twenty-four years old, Atwater, California; her father was deported six years ago.)*

Although most of the interviewees describe similar negative emotions (nostalgia and sadness) regarding relatives' deportation or incarceration, the interviews also revealed some differences in the nature of their emotional experiences. In narratives about deportation, family members reported that fear was the most predominant sentiment. In contrast, incarceration stories displayed a broader set of emotions, such as anger, frustration, disappointment, guilt, and relief.

In line with previous research, many of the interviewees related to deportees expressed fear and uncertainty. They wondered what would happen to their family and whether others would be deported as well. Ana and Ivonne described modifying their daily routines as a result. For Ana, this modification related to conversation, even at home. She said, of her aunt's deportation,

> We … weren't allowed to talk about it, like about what was happening because, like, you know she could get in trouble, or like if somebody finds out and somebody gets mad at like her like somebody in our family, like yeah. *(Ana, twenty-one years old, Santa Barbara, California; her aunt was deported fifteen years ago.)*

Ivonne's family no longer felt safe going out after her father was deported. She said,

> It was like something really – at the same time, it was frustrating because we couldn't do anything. It was like – it affected us all, we did not know what to do. We were scared. We were – we couldn't go out at peace anymore, so it affected my whole family. *(Ivonne, twenty-four years old, born in Mexico, now living in Merced, California; her father was deported eleven years ago.)*

Joana explained how she is concerned about her brother's safety in Mexico due to the presence of narcotraffickers in the small town where he lives. Because "they have a lot of narcos over there," she worries they may try to forcibly recruit her brother. *(Joana, twenty-six years old, Los Angeles, California; her brother was deported seven years ago and is still in Mexico.)*

Individuals with incarcerated family members tend to display a broader set of emotions, such as anger, frustration, disappointment, guilt, and relief. Andrea, whose son is still incarcerated, explained that her emotional response had

> changed because a lot of anger…a lot of guilt, you know, and it does something to you, your character. It makes you not want to do things; it makes you not want to be moti-

vated to get right. But you have to get through that and just give it to God and just move on, you know. You got to come out of it. And the only way you can is through God. *(Andrea, fifty-one years old, Madera, California; her son was incarcerated eighteen years ago and is still in prison.)*

Her negative emotions have had a direct impact on her daily motivations and health, and leaving everything in "God's hands" became a vital coping strategy.

People whose children had been incarcerated expressed a mix of sentiments like guilt and anger. They were concerned they had failed their children. For example, Danny said that maybe his son, Cris, took the wrong path because he did not give him enough attention. He also acknowledges hitting Cris and, three years before the interview, breaking Cris's nose by butting him with his head, although he recalled that Cris "more or less calmed down" after that. *(Danny, forty-eight years old, born in Mexico, undocumented, from Los Banos, California; his son has been in and out of jail for the last five years.)* Others interviewed whose relatives were incarcerated sometimes expressed similar feelings of responsibility; for example, Giani shared similar sentiments regarding his son's incarceration:

> I mean, that really worried me when, when the judge told him five....I felt so devastated and I felt so guilty, you know, I felt like I screwed up raising him that, that, that shouldn't happen. *(Giani, sixty years old, from Los Angeles, now living in Merced, California; his son is incarcerated.)*

Sometimes other siblings blame their parents for tolerating the behavior of the incarcerated relative. In fact, Danny's other son, Brian, believes that their mother is responsible for Cris's bad choices because she spoiled him. He expressed emotional detachment from his brother, saying that he had told his parents

> not to...have high expectations for Cris, because...you believe in him so much that then he's going to let you down again and it's going to hurt you. Then, like I said, [our mother] babies him a lot. *(Brian, twenty-five years old, born in California, now living in Los Banos.)*

While Brian did not express any concern over his brother's imprisonment, Mariana said knowing that her father was in prison gave her some tranquility. Mariana's father has been in and out of prison since she was a child, although he was in the community at the time of the interview. She said,

> It got to the point, I preferred he was incarcerated because I would not have to worry about him showing up and I did not have to worry about the phone calls....I felt safer when he was locked up. So, in that sense, that's how I would say it affected me. I felt safer when he was away. When he would come out, my stomach would turn....I would

just get really, really paranoid. *(Mariana, thirty years old, Los Angeles, California; her father is no longer in prison.)*

A common emotion was discomfort about talking about the removed person. In line with prior research, interviewees said they tried not to talk about family members who had been deported, although they did not actually express shame. For example, Joana said,

> I usually don't bring it up. Of course, I'm not ashamed of it. It's really something that happens to most of our families, most of the people I know. We go through the same experiences; we just don't talk about it openly. Whenever the situation comes up, of course they talk about it.

Similarly, Lucas explained:

> Some people know about it, but we don't talk much about it. Many people, at least those who are close friends or relatives, know what happened. But, they don't talk about it. . . . It's his life, these are private things, personal. *(Lucas, twenty-nine years old, born in Mexico, now living in Merced, California; his brother was deported six years ago.)*

As we surmised, shame was more common for interviewees related to incarcerated people. Many interviewees suggested that incarceration affects the whole family's moral standing and, therefore, they prefer not to mention it. Andrea explained:

> I was a teacher's assistant, and it was devastating to me, you know. It was embarrassing, you know, it was my son. I worked for the school district for about six years, someone called me saying we're here to pick up the dryer, but the SWAT team is at your house. They're surrounding your house. And they were there for my son, you know. He was in the house, under the bed . . . that was so embarrassing, I had to leave work just to go over there. *(Andrea, fifty-one years old, Madera, California; her son was incarcerated eighteen years ago.)*

Annie expressed concern about the stigma her brother faces due to his criminal record. She explained:

> He's released. He's still in the system of probation and constant struggle. So, there's always that. But just the stigma that comes with being incarcerated and him trying to succeed on his own but still having the title of being a criminal or having been to prison, it's just – it's hard. And it kind of leads back to the same paths. So, it's like an ongoing battle. *(Annie, twenty-one years old, born in Las Vegas, now living in California; her brother has been in and out of prison since she was a child, but is now free.)*

Whereas both groups had quite different experiences regarding shame and stigma, their experiences of new roles and responsibilities after the removal of

a relative were in many ways similar. For example, mothers are expected to take care of children and other relatives left behind. They also must find sources of income to meet the family's economic needs. Young women are also expected to take care of younger siblings when the mother is at work. Young men are expected to work too. Briana recalled,

> I feel like when we were younger, we got a lot of help from my grandparents and uncles and stuff like right, in the beginning, but then right when I turned sixteen, I got my first job and then ever since then I've been working and stuff. . . . I need to get it together because I have two younger siblings too and like, you know, so 100 percent, so I feel like because of that, I had to grow up like and I mean, I don't regret it or anything like that, I know I needed it, but at the same time, trauma makes you [laughs] grow up quicker. *(Briana, twenty-one years old, Los Angeles, California; her father was deported eight years ago.)*

Many interviewees who were children when a family member was incarcerated or deported had to take on financial and caretaking responsibilities in the home, which can be daunting for young people, and can derail their plans to attend university.[25]

Gender, age, and immigration status also shape the degree to which people experience stress. Monse, who is twenty years old and was born in Oakland, describes how, after her uncle's deportation, her entire family was financially impacted. Additionally, Monse, as the only family member with U.S. citizenship, had to deal with the courts and detention centers. Our interviews also revealed how women took on particular roles. For example, Megan explained that she cares for her brother, who is eighteen years older than she is. When her brother was released from prison, she let him come stay with her, despite her reservations. She explained:

> And I was like, you know what, eff it, just let him come to my house, let him come and I'll – I'll figure it out. And mom was like, are you sure? And I'm like, yeah, I got it. It's fine. I feel bad, I can't. My heart is telling me like, you know. And thank God. *(Megan, twenty-four years old, Fresno, California; her brother has been in and out of prison as long as she can remember, but he is now free.)*

Megan's testimony shows exceptional compassion for him. But she has a family of her own and is in constant fear he will relapse. Nevertheless, she said proudly that he has been off drugs for years and was now holding a job:

> This is the first time he's been normal. I have him in check. Yeah, this is the first time in a year he's been sober and everything for a year. Absolutely amazing. He got a job. He bought himself a little moped. Yeah [chuckles]. He's doing really good.

Megan's story describes herself, her mother, and her sister taking primary responsibility for supporting her brother in his recovery, although their father is alive. It was common for women interviewees to describe such gendered roles.

Mothers bear a particularly heavy burden. Gianna's son has been in prison for fifteen years and faces nineteen more years behind bars. She is seventy-six, which means she will be ninety-five on his release if she lives that long. She has been visiting her son since he was first incarcerated. These visits involve expenses such as renting a car, paying for food, and reserving a hotel room. Due to her advanced age, she brings a friend for practical support. Although Gianna has lived many years with this emotional and financial strain, she is considering opening a bank account for her son so that, once he is released, he has something to start his life. She explained what she told her son:

> I think that, I think what I want to do is open up a savings account for you. So, you know, another nineteen years maybe we can get through at least something to start our life with over again because you come home, you'll have what? *(Gianna, seventy-six years old, Los Banos, California; her son has been incarcerated for fifteen years.)*

People facing deportation and incarceration are often sent to various facilities during the course of their confinement. They usually start off in county jails, which are relatively close to family members. For example, when Joana's brother was first arrested, he was taken to the Los Angeles County Jail, where she and her mother visited him regularly as it was not too far from their home in Los Angeles. However, once he was taken to prison and then a detention center – both in the rural Central Valley – visiting him became much more challenging. California is a large state, and California state prisoners can easily be sent several hours from their family members. Immigration detention is a federal system, and thus detainees can be sent anywhere in the country. Our interviewees consistently told us that, when their detained relative was sent out of state, they did not visit them.

Deportation and incarceration have significant financial consequences, and our interviewees' descriptions of financial hardship due to the removal of a household member aligned with prior research on the topic. Our comparison between deported and incarcerated people, however, allowed us to see that deported people were more often employed before their detention than incarcerated people. The loss of this income was particularly severe when deportees are parents. Dalia explained that her husband was deported when she was pregnant. His deportation meant the loss of his income. She explained:

> It was hard financially because I was on my own. And then when I had my daughter, it got a little harder. You know, they need diapers and everything. My mom helped a lot there too but it's the responsibility of the parent too you know. *(Dalia, thirty years old; her husband was deported eleven years ago and has returned.)*

Although many incarcerated relatives were not major financial contributors prior to their incarceration, even a small contribution could be missed by those left behind. Mariana explained that although her father did not contribute much before, once he was incarcerated, he contributed nothing:

> Obviously, there was no money coming in from his end. He was not contributing at all. It just puts more stress on my mom financially and my older brother had to learn how to pay a mortgage and bills when he was only sixteen years old. *(Mariana, thirty years old, Los Angeles, California; her father has been in and out of prison since she was a child and is now free.)*

Housing instability was a common consequence after deportation. Meli, Luna, and Julia explained how, after their fathers' removals, their housing conditions changed and their families had to modify their habits. According to Meli,

> My mom couldn't afford the rent.... Yeah, basically, my neighborhood friend's mom let us live with them. She knew about our circumstances, and she would charge my mom rent, but it was cheap. She would charge my mom three hundred dollars for the master bedroom, so it was me, my brother, and my mom. *(Meli, twenty years old, Orange County, California; her father was deported seven years ago and has returned.)*

Housing instability can be very stressful for families of the deported, especially if they have to move to another city. As Luna explained,

> Then he was deported. We had to find out where we were going. We moved in with one of my mother's nieces in San José. She was very close to my mother. When she knew all this, she said: "You will come with me. I can take you guys." And all these things. This is how we ended up going back to San José. *(Luna, thirty-eight years old, San Jose, California; her father was deported and is still in Mexico.)*

Housing vulnerability also forces family members left behind to take on new roles, often unexpected. In Julia's words:

> We had to move from the house we were living in at the time, move to a much smaller house. It was just different: My mom had to work. My older brother had to work. So, it was a change. *(Julia, twenty-eight years old, Fresno, California; her father was deported and is still in Mexico.)*

Joselyn's mother was working two jobs to pay rent for the three-bedroom house where the family had lived for many years. When the family was downsized to two members in the house – Joselyn having grown up and moved out and her father having been deported – she did not anticipate getting a cheaper rental. As Joselyn explained,

> If they move, she said it's going to be really inconvenient because we have a lot of stuff because the rent is really expensive in L.A. So even if she does get one bedroom, it will

be like the same [cost]. So, she just doesn't feel it's the right decision to make to move out. *(Joselyn, twenty-seven years old, Los Angeles, California; her father was deported eight years ago and is still in Mexico.)*

An additional financial implication of deportation is the cost of visiting a relative in another country or, alternatively, the cost of trying to bring that person back to the United States. Families in the United States often send remittances, make international calls, and make international visits, each of which comes with great economic costs. Roberto explained:

I really – my grandma really wants to go this summer. So, hopefully, I get to go this summer. It's just that I gotta really get, basically, some money to go. Because traveling you need some money. It's always about the money. It's just I hope that I will go traveling and get to see my family again. *(Roberto, twenty-five years old, Santa Ana, California; his aunt was deported six years ago and is still in Mexico.)*

If relatives left behind decide to bring the person back with help of either smugglers or lawyers, the costs can reach tens of thousands of dollars. Many people make the decision to try to bring their family member back through legal or illegal means because they worry about their relative's safety in their place of birth. In addition to helping with necessities, Dalia's mother had taken on a loan. As Dalia said:

My mom actually asked for a loan so I could pay [for legal help to get Dalia's husband papers]. And I would just pay the loan.... And whenever he had to go to Ciudad Juarez [to the U.S. consulate], she would pay for all that.

The payment of bail is in some ways an analogous cost for families of incarcerated people, and it can be very onerous. Jannet says she has been in debt since the first of several periods of incarceration of her son:

And him, he right away called a bails bond[sman], and they called me and I, you know, I got him out. I've paid like up to $9,000 for the bails bond and lawyer and whatnot. *(Jannet, sixty-two years old, Sanger, California; her son has been in and out of jail and is now free.)*

Other interviewees emphasized the long-term cost of sending an incarcerated family member small amounts of money over a long period of time. As Jessie explained, she, her mother, and her sister-in-law pool about $20 a week each to send to her brother in prison.

I kind of pulled that together and I was oh shit it's almost a $1,000 a year, he's been in jail for fifteen years [and] we basically put in $15,000 in his books by the time that he has been in jail. That was like, holy shit really that's like a new car. *(Jessie, thirty-four*

years old, San Francisco, California ; her brother was incarcerated sixteen years ago and is still incarcerated.)

Like Dalia's testimony about the impact of her husband's deportation, Jessie's comments suggest a broad impact on many family members.

As we surmised based on the literature, the incarceration and deportation of relatives have similar impacts in many respects. After deportation or incarceration, painful feelings emerge. These feelings have an impact on different dimensions including behavior, educational paths, physical and mental health, and housing conditions. Financial difficulties are similar and long-lasting. These families' financial difficulties are so overwhelming that they eventually become emotional burdens as families and their members have to change their routines, move from their homes, and take on new roles. The cumulative cost to society is significant.

According to the narratives of the interviewees, individuals with deported families tend to express more fear and anxiety than individuals with incarcerated relatives, who expressed more disappointment, anger, and stigma. Both groups deal with the penitentiary and judicial system and the associated burdens, such as visits, calls, and sending money. When a relative is deported, transnational relationships can lead to emotional and financial strain, and individuals have to live their lives without a loved one. When an incarcerated person returns home, financial and emotional strain can continue, particularly when the released person experiences unemployment.

There are 113 million adults in the United States – nearly one-third of the population – who have an immediate family member who has been to prison or jail. Insofar as Black Americans make up 40 percent of the incarcerated population yet are only 13 percent of the U.S. population, it is clear the burdens of incarceration fall mostly on Black people in the United States.[26] Over six million people have been deported from the United States since 1996, three times the sum of all people deported prior to 1996. Nearly all deportees (97 percent) are of Latin American or Caribbean origin, meaning that the burdens of deportation fall mostly on Latinx and Caribbean people.[27] Deportation and incarceration are both punitive social policies. They are both being practiced far more today than in any prior period in history. They are both far more common in the United States than in any other country.[28] And they both reinforce deep racial divides in the United States by pushing Black and Latinx families further into poverty and creating additional, sometimes insurmountable, barriers for Black and Latinx youth.

Our study included not just parents and children of incarcerated and deported people, but any household member, which allowed us to explore the impact of incarceration and deportation on the entire extended family. We found that

the deportation and imprisonment of sons, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, step-parents, and grandchildren can all have significant financial and emotional consequences because families are intertwined: if your uncle is deported, it affects your mother, your grandmother, and your cousins, and our interviewees were clear about the deep and enduring effects of the removal of any relative from their household.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Asian Americans, Affirmative Action & the Rise in Anti-Asian Hate

Jennifer Lee

No court case in recent history has propelled Asian Americans into the political sphere like Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, *and no issue has galvanized them like affirmative action. Asian Americans have taken center stage in the latest battle over affirmative action, yet their voices have been muted in favor of narratives that paint them as victims of affirmative action who ardently oppose the policy. Bridging theory and research on immigration, stereotypes, and boundaries, I provide a holistic portrait of* SFFA v. Harvard *and focus on Asian Americans' role in it. Immigration has remade Asian Americans from "unassimilable to exceptional," and wedged them between underrepresented minorities who stand to gain most from the policy and the advantaged majority who stands to lose most because of it. Presumed competent and morally deserving, Asian Americans subscribe to the stereotype, and wield it to their advantage. Competence, moral worth, and respectability politics, however, are no safeguards against racism and xenophobia. As fears of the coronavirus arrested the United States, so too has the rise in anti-Asian hate.*

No recent court case has propelled Asian Americans into the political sphere like *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard,* and no issue has galvanized them like affirmative action.[1] The plaintiffs allege that Harvard discriminates against Asian applicants by holding them to higher academic standards and rating them poorly on personal characteristics such as "likeability," "fit," and "courage" in order to suppress their rate of admission. Invoking Harvard's past practice of using subjective measures like character to limit the number of Jewish students in the 1920s, the Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) allege that the university is now repeating its ugly history with Asians. Charging Harvard of imposing a racial penalty and a de facto quota on Asians, SFFA's proposed solution is to retreat from race: to eliminate the consideration of race and ethnicity in all admissions decisions, which, in turn, would effectively eliminate affirmative action.

On September 30, 2019, after nearly a year of deliberation, District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs ruled that Harvard does not discriminate against Asian American applicants – a decision upheld by a federal appeals court on November

12, 2020 – thereby allowing the university to continue its practice of affirmative action to pursue the benefits of diversity. Supporters of the policy hailed the ruling a victory, while opponents decried it a moral failing, and one they aim to have overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. With the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the bench, SCOTUS is now stacked in SFFA's favor, and the future of affirmative action is in peril. While Asians have taken center stage in the latest battle over affirmative action, their attitudes have been drowned out by the inflammatory rhetoric of SFFA, on the one hand, and the staunch advocates of affirmative action, on the other.

Moving beyond the rhetoric, I bridge theory and research on immigration, stereotypes, and boundaries to provide a holistic portrait of *SFFA v. Harvard* and focus on Asian Americans' role in it. I begin by showing how the changing selectivity of contemporary U.S. Asian immigration has recast Asian Americans from "*unassimilable to exceptional,*" resulting in their rapid racial mobility.[2] This mobility combined with their minoritized status places them in a unique group position in the U.S. racial hierarchy, conveniently wedged between underrepresented minorities who stand to gain most from the policy and the advantaged majority who stands to lose most because of it. It also marks Asians as compelling victims of affirmative action who are penalized because of their race.

It is a mistake to assume, however, that Asians have been passive agents in this project. Presumed competent and morally deserving, Asian Americans subscribe to the stereotype, and wield it to their advantage. Asian, however, is a catch-all category that masks more than it reveals. While the majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action, one group stands apart in their opposition: Chinese Americans. And because Chinese is synecdoche for Asians,[3] their attitudes have been blithely taken (or more precisely, mistaken) to represent the views of all Asians, resulting in biased narratives of Asian Americans.

Competence, moral worth, and respectability politics are no safeguards against the virulent anti-Asian racism that has surfaced since the outbreak of the coronavirus, flagrantly dubbed by the Trump administration as the "China virus" and "kung flu." Faulting China for the spread of COVID-19, Trump turned a blind eye to the subsequent surge in attacks against Asian Americans who have been stabbed, beaten, spit on, harassed, vilified, and scapegoated. Trump's racist and xenophobic "China virus" rhetoric reanimated a century-old trope that Asians are vectors of filth and disease, exposing not only the precariousness of their status but also the country's nativist fault line.[4]

L ess than a century ago, Asians were described as marginal members of the human race, full of filth and disease, and unassimilable.[5] Confined to ethnic enclaves, barred from White schools, and denied U.S. citizenship, Asians were not extended the right to become naturalized citizens until the passage of

the McCarren-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1952. Yet despite decades of legal exclusion, institutional discrimination, and racial prejudice, Asians now boast the highest educational outcomes and highest median household incomes of all U.S. groups. How did the status of a group once considered the "yellow peril" change from unassimilable to exceptional in the course of a century?

Asian Americans' rapid racial mobility stems from the change in U.S. immigration law. Abolishing national origin quotas, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act created new preferences for foreign-born applicants based on family reunification, skills, and refugee status. The change in legislation legally engineered a new stream of highly educated Asian immigrants who fulfilled high-skilled labor shortages in the United States. As a result, contemporary Asian immigrants in the United States are, on average, more likely to have graduated from college than their nonmigrant counterparts in their countries of origin, and also more likely to hold a college degree than the U.S. mean. Their dual positive immigrant selectivity – what Min Zhou and I have referred to as *hyper-selectivity* – is the most distinctive feature of contemporary Asian immigration.[6]

A look at the five largest U.S. Asian immigrant groups – Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Koreans – shows that all five are highly selected from their country of origin, and all but Vietnamese are hyper-selected.[7] As Figure 1 shows, 55.1 percent of Chinese immigrants in the United States have graduated from college compared with only 3.6 percent of adults in China, meaning that U.S. Chinese immigrants are more than eighteen times as likely to have graduated from college than Chinese adults who did not emigrate. U.S. Indian immigrants are ten times more likely to have a B.A. compared with their nonmigrant counterparts in India, and U.S. Vietnamese, Korean, and Filipino immigrants are three to four times more likely than their respective nonmigrant counterparts. Moreover, apart from Vietnamese, the other Asian groups are also more highly educated than the general U.S. population, reflecting their dual positive immigrant selectivity. Their hyper-selectivity gives them and their U.S.-born children an edge over other U.S. groups – including native-born Whites – in the domain of education.

While the hyper-selectivity of Asian immigrants has led to the rapid racial mobility of Asian Americans, their mobility has come with social costs.[8] Deemed highly competent, Asian Americans are also perceived as cold, calculating, and too narrowly focused on success at all costs.[9] The vulnerable combination of high competence and low warmth not only relegates Asians as an out-group, but also serves as the bases of anti-Asian bias.[10] It has also made Asian Americans ideal candidates for SFFA to recruit in their mission to dismantle affirmative action.

"Were you rejected from the University of Texas, Harvard or the University of North Carolina? It may be because you were the wrong race." The question appears on SFFA's website followed by an invitation:

Figure 1
Percent of First- and Second-Generation Asians and Nonmigrant
Counterparts to Graduate from College
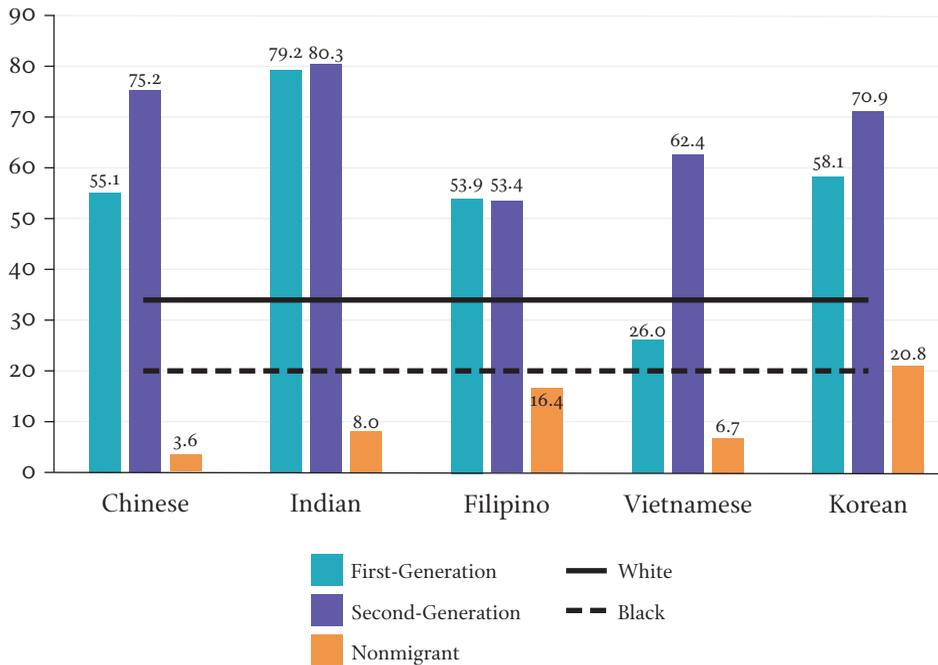
Source: Van Tran, Jennifer Lee, and Tiffany Huang, "Revisiting the Asian Second-Generation Advantage," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42 (13) (2019): 2248–2269.

"Students for Fair Admissions would like to hear from you. Tell us something about yourself." They do not specify who they would like to hear from, but a photo of more than fifty Asian Americans in front of a banner that reads, "Harvard: STOP Discriminating Against Asian American Students" beckons its intended audience.

In the photo are individuals holding signs lambasting Harvard's use of racial quotas and discriminatory practices in the name of diversity. One sign summons Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I have a dream" speech but flips the script to read: "I Am Asian American. I Have A Dream Too." Here Dr. King's call for equality of opportunity for African Americans has been reinscribed by Asian American opponents of affirmative action who equate the alleged discrimination experienced by Asians in the twenty-first century to the brutal, de jure discrimination experienced by African Americans in the early twentieth. In so doing, SFFA evokes a false equivalency of race, minoritized status, and moral deservingness.[11]

Michael Wang's narrative is emblematic of the racial discrimination experienced by Asian Americans, according to the Students for Fair Admissions.[12] The only son of Chinese immigrants, Michael had his sights set on Harvard since he was eight years old. With the help of his parents and especially his father (a former teacher in China), Michael began working diligently toward this goal a decade before he applied to Harvard. When Michael was in elementary school, his father tutored him in math and petitioned the local middle school to allow Michael to take classes there. By seventh grade, he was taking math classes at the local high school. So academically advanced was Michael that he skipped the eighth grade altogether.

By the time Michael applied to college, he boasted a perfect ACT score, a near-perfect SAT score of 2230 out of 2300 (which placed him in the ninety-ninth percentile), thirteen Advanced Placement courses, and a 4.67 grade point average. Salutatorian of his high school class, Michael's academic profile was buttressed by his impressive extracurricular record: he played piano, founded his high school's math club, was on his school's debate team, and sang at President Barack Obama's first inauguration as part of the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Armed with a stellar record, Michael applied to seven Ivy League universities and Stanford, but was rejected by all except the University of Pennsylvania. He was wait-listed at Harvard and Columbia, yet was eventually rejected by both. He was admitted, however, to the University of California, Berkeley, and Williams College, and chose to attend Williams.

The rejections prompted him to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education against Princeton, Yale, and Stanford, charging that these elite institutions rejected him because of his race. Michael was not alone. In March 2016, a coalition of 132 Asian American organizations filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Education against Yale, Dartmouth, and Brown, alleging that these Ivy League universities make decisions based on informal racial quotas that effectively cap the number of Asian American students. The year prior, in 2015, the coalition targeted Harvard.

In the Students for Fair Admissions, Michael Wang found an institutional ally, and in Michael Wang, SFFA found a model candidate to hail as a victim of discrimination and affirmative action. With the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president in November 2016, both SFFA and Michael Wang found and seized an opportune political moment. Despite its namesake, however, the Students for Fair Admissions is not an organization established by aggrieved students like Michael Wang who were rejected by Harvard. Rather, it is an organization founded by Edward Blum, a White, male former stockbroker turned legal entrepreneur and ardent anti-affirmative action crusader who fought to dismantle race-conscious policies for decades, including a key portion of the Voting Rights Act. In *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), Blum fought and succeeded in freeing nine states, largely in the South, to change election laws without prior federal approval. With support from conservative donors and high-powered, Republican lawyers, Blum orches-

trated more than two dozen lawsuits challenging voting rights laws and affirmative action practices across the country.[13]

Blum arranged the lawsuit against Harvard under the rubric of the Students for Fair Admissions, as well as the more recent suit against the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the closing arguments for which took place on November 19, 2020. In addition, he organized the lawsuit against the University of Texas in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, and its appeal, in which Abigail Fisher – a White woman – charged the University of Texas with denying her admission because of her race. But Abigail Fisher was far from the model candidate to challenge UT Austin's policy of race-conscious affirmative action. A White woman with a 3.59 grade point average and an SAT score of 1180 out of 1600, Fisher's academic record was by no means exceptional nor did it make her an obvious selection for admission to the University of Texas's flagship campus at Austin.

Recognizing that Fisher's record failed to match her sense of entitlement, Blum admitted, "I needed Asian plaintiffs." And he got them. Using advertisements showcasing pensive-looking East Asians (see Figure 2), Blum recruited Asian American plaintiffs by raising the provocative question, "Were You Denied Admission to Harvard? It may be because you're the wrong race." He used the same question and rhetoric to recruit Asian Americans in his fights against the University of North Carolina and the University of Wisconsin.

As details of *SFFA v. Harvard* unfolded, both camps of the affirmative action debate held their ground, but one particular allegation drew widespread ire. SFFA claimed that admissions officers categorically rated Asian applicants poorly on character traits such as "likeability," "courage," and "fit," and used these subjective measures as the bases for denying admission to academically and morally deserving applicants. That Asian Americans scored highest on measures like grades and test scores but lowest on personal characteristics corresponds with the stereotype that Asians are competent but cold: technically strong but socially weak; model students and workers but poor visionaries and leaders. This argument hit home for many Asian Americans – including myself – who battle these stereotypes every day.

So what are we to make of this allegation? First, the "personal" rating is not a measure of "personality," as it has been popularly described. Rather, it includes factors such as the applicants' intended major and career, the neighborhood in which they grew up, whether they were raised by a single parent who did not attend college, or raised by two parents who graduated from Harvard. It also allows admissions officers to consider whether the applicants are refugees, whether they had to work to support their families during high school, whether they hail from a rural background, and so on. So rather than relying solely on standardized test scores like the SAT, which account for only 2.7 percent of the variation in freshman

Figure 2
Students for Fair Admissions Advertisements Seeking Plaintiffs against Harvard, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Wisconsin

Source: Jenn Fang, "#IAmNotYourWedge: Lawsuits against Harvard and UNC Assert Anti-Asian Discrimination in Admissions," Reappropriate, November 19, 2014. Original ads taken from http://harvardnotfair.org/; http://uncnotfair.org/; and http://uwnotfair.org/.

grades after students' backgrounds are taken into account, admissions officers can consider applicants as a "whole person" and evaluate candidates holistically.[14]

Second, the difference in personal ratings between Asian and White applicants is, on average, 0.05 points on a 6-point scale. Asians received an average rating of 2.82, while White applicants, an average of 2.77, in which 1 denotes "outstanding" and 6 "worrisome." Hence, contrary to SFFA's claim, Asian American applicants were not rated significantly poorer than White applicants.[15] Third, analyses show variation in the personal ratings of Asian American applicants. Asian females, on average, received higher personal ratings than Asian males, and Asians from California received the highest ratings compared with those from other regions of the country. The intragroup variation in the personal ratings of Asian American applicants indicates that there is not uniform, categorical bias against them on the part of admissions officers.

Finally, analyses of the admissions data from the opposing camps differed in a crucial way. SFFA excluded legacies, recruited athletes, and the children of faculty and donors from their analyses. The omission is consequential since applicants from these special interest groups are admitted at significantly higher rates than those who do not belong to these categories. That Asian applicants are underrepresented in each of these categories served to amplify SFFA's claim that Asians experience bias in admissions.

Here it is worth underscoring that eliminating bias has never been the core of SFFA's mission. If it were, SFFA would have championed eliminating the bias *for* legacies: applicants whose parents attended Harvard. The legacy effect is potent. Harvard's own analysis shows that legacies received a 40 percent boost in their chances of admission. Between 2010 and 2015, the admission rate for legacies was 34 percent, compared with less than 6 percent for nonlegacies, indicating that legacies are nearly six times as likely to be admitted than nonlegacies. Double legacies – applicants with both parents who attended Harvard – receive a more generous boost.

Not surprisingly, Harvard's legacies are largely White, and the number of White legacy admits exceeds the number of Asian, Black, and Hispanic legacy admits combined. Close to 22 percent of White admits at Harvard are legacies. Harvard's preference for legacies places all non-White applicants at a disadvantage, which feels especially acute since the admissions rate dropped to a historic low of 4.5 percent in 2019. Harvard's bias for legacies and SFFA's decision not to focus on them also reveals a glaring *affirmative action paradox*. While race-conscious policies have been on trial time and again, categorical preferences for legacies continue to go unchallenged and unchecked. Looking ahead, it remains to be seen whether Harvard's preference for legacies will remain intact as Asian American applicants become an increasingly larger share of the university's legacy pool.

At the moment, however, the question that remains unanswered is whether Harvard's inclusion of a "personal" rating is a measure of "included variable bias," in which the variable itself is the product of and, therefore, masks evidence of discrimination. As one group of statistical analysts articulate in a *Boston Review* feature, "If personal ratings were awarded in racially discriminatory ways, it would be inappropriate to appeal to them to explain disparities in admissions."[16] They add, "Even if a variable helps to explain away a disparity between groups, that variable may itself be the product of discrimination or have little rational relation to a legitimate policy goal." Harvard's history of deploying "character" ratings to disadvantage Jewish applicants to cap their numbers in the 1920s lends credibility to this possibility.

But it is a mistake to reduce the alleged bias against Asian applicants to the overt bias against Jewish applicants in the 1920s, which is based on yet another false equivalency: that of equating affirmative action to negative action. Beginning in the 1920s, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton began requiring recommendation letters, personal interviews, essays, and descriptions of extracurricular activities, which, in turn, dissuaded and disadvantaged "the wrong kind" of college applicant.[17] Consequently, these Ivy League schools could shroud their admission process through layers of subjectivity, and cap the number of Jewish students they could admit without overtly discriminating against them.

Quotas used to cap the number of Jewish students at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton in the 1920s were a negative action against Jewish applicants, and were ruled

unconstitutional in *University of California v. Bakke* (1978). A quota implemented to limit or designate the number of slots allotted to a particular ethnic or racial group wholly differs from race-conscious affirmative action: the former predetermines results based on ethnicity and race; the latter allows ethnicity and race to be considered among many factors in admissions decisions. Apart from the crucial substantive difference, there is a fundamental arithmetic difference that opponents of affirmative action have failed to reconcile: the growth of the Asian American student population at Harvard and other elite universities has occurred in tandem with the growth of affirmative action.[18]

There is yet another flaw in the false equivalency of touting Asian Americans as the "new Jews": in the 1920s, the Jewish community unanimously denounced Harvard's cap on Jewish students; today, Asian Americans are more divided about affirmative action. Michael Wang and Thang Diep represent opposing sides of the divide; the former opposes affirmative action, while the latter supports it. Thang Diep is a Vietnamese refugee who migrated to the United States at the age of eight with parents who did not attend college. A student at Harvard at the time of the trial, Thang testified on the university's behalf. While Michael and Thang did not apply to Harvard at the same time, it is worthwhile to compare their records nevertheless. A quick glance at grades and test scores puts Michael ahead. Michael's GPA was 4.67, while Thang's was 4.325; Michael's SAT score was 2230 while Thang's was 2060. Michael's SAT score placed him in the ninety-ninth percentile for college bound seniors, while Thang's score placed him in the ninety-fifth percentile and also placed him in the bottom quartile of his matriculating class of 2019 at Harvard. Despite Michael's superior academic record, he was wait-listed and eventually rejected by Harvard, while Thang was accepted.

Both records are exceptional for graduating high school seniors, but neither stands out among Harvard's applicants. Of the forty-thousand applicants who applied to Harvard last year, more than eight thousand had perfect grade point averages, three thousand four hundred had perfect SAT scores in math, and two thousand seven hundred had perfect SAT scores in English. With only two thousand coveted slots, Harvard could fill its entering class many times over with applicants with perfect grades and test scores. Hence, admissions officers rely on other measures in their evaluation such as extracurricular activities and a personal rating, as well as overall excellence. What set Thang Diep apart from the throngs of other applicants was his personal rating. A report by an alumni interviewer noted that his openness to new ideas was "truly unusual" and added that Thang would be an "outstanding" roommate. In short, Thang's personal rating boosted his application.

While Thang Diep and Michael Wang represent competing narratives of Asian Americans, the latter has dominated the discourse in the current battle over affir-

mative action. In part, this is because Michael Wang's exceptional competence fits the prevailing stereotype of Asian Americans, while Thang Diep's warmth defies it. But it is also because the default for Asian is East Asian. For the majority of Americans, their concept of who counts as Asian is East Asian: nearly four in five Americans consider Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans as Asian or Asian Americans (81 percent, 80 percent, and 78 percent, respectively).[19] By contrast, only 70 percent of Americans consider Southeast Asians like Filipinos as Asian or Asian American, and a mere 46 percent and 37 percent claim the same of Indians and Pakistanis, respectively (see Figure 3).
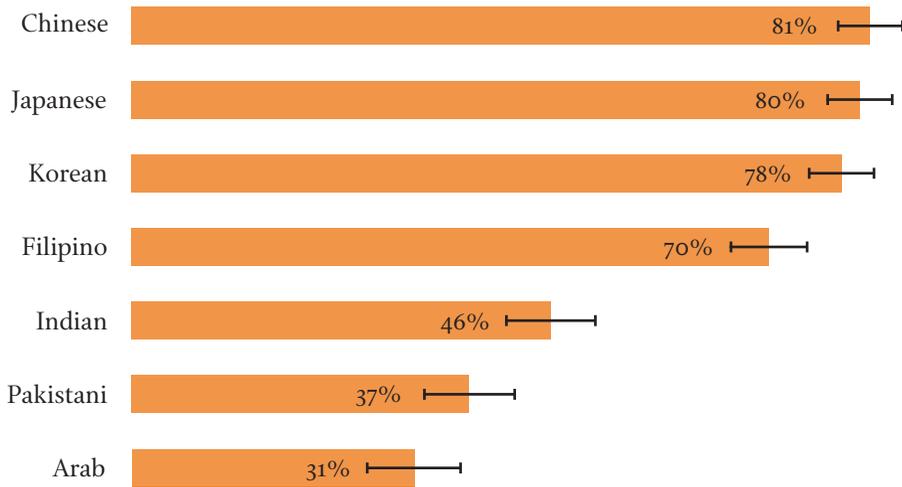
In addition, because Chinese boast the longest history in the United States and are the largest U.S. East Asian group, accounting for one in five Asian Americans, Chinese has become synecdoche for Asian.[20] This form of boundary contraction affects which Asian American narratives are privileged and accepted, and which are challenged and rejected. In this case, when narratives of Chinese are privileged over others, and then serve as the proxy for all Asian Americans, we paint an incomplete and biased portrait of Asian Americans' experiences and attitudes, including their support for affirmative action.[21]

In 2012 and 2016, AAPI Data surveyed Asian American registered voters about their views of affirmative action by posing several different questions of the policy, including the following, which is adapted from a Pew Research Center survey: "Thinking about colleges and universities, do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose giving blacks, women, and other minorities better access to higher education?" In 2012, three-quarters (75 percent) of Asian Americans supported affirmative action in higher education, but by 2016, the figure dropped to 65 percent. When Chinese Americans are excluded from the analyses, however, Asian Americans' support for the policy remained unchanged, with nearly three-quarters expressing support for affirmative action at 73 percent.[22]

As Figure 4 shows, the precipitous decline in support for affirmative action among Chinese Americans in the four-year period between 2012 and 2016 accounts entirely for the drop in support for the policy among Asian Americans – pointing to a pattern of *Chinese exceptionalism*. When we draw on the views of Chinese Americans to represent the views of all Asian Americans, we misrepresent Asian Americans' support for affirmative action.

I mmigration has remade Asian America time and again. Most recently, the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act ushered in a new stream of immigrants from Asia who are more highly educated and more positively selected than their counterparts of yore. Not only are contemporary Asian immigrants, on average, more likely to have graduated from college than their nonmigrant counterparts from their countries of origin, but they are also more likely to hold a college degree than the U.S. mean. The dual positive immigrant selectivity –

Figure 3
Percent of Americans Who Consider Each Group as "Asian" or "Asian American"

Group	Percent
Chinese	81%
Japanese	80%
Korean	78%
Filipino	70%
Indian	46%
Pakistani	37%
Arab	31%

Source: Jennifer Lee and Karthick Ramakrishnan, "Who Counts as Asian," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43 (10) (2020): 1733–1756.

Figure 4
Percent of Asian Americans Who Support Affirmative Action
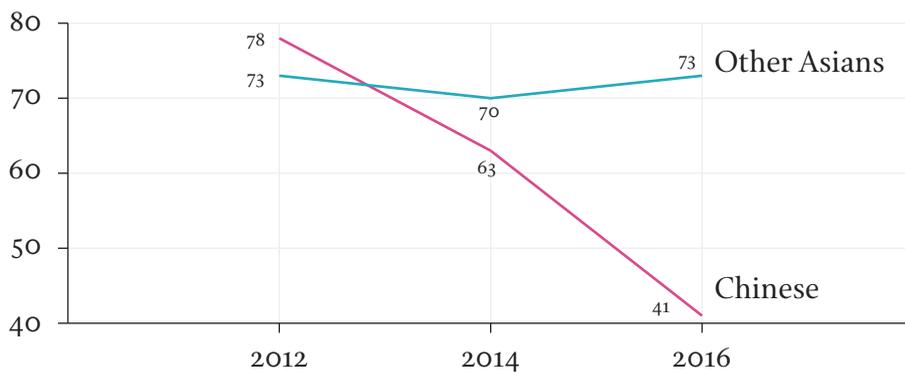
Source: Karthick Ramakrishnan and Janelle Wong, "Survey Roundup: Asian American Attitudes on Affirmative Action," Data Bits, a blog for AAPI Data, June 18, 2018, http://aapidata .com/blog/asianam-affirmative-action-surveys/.

their *hyper-selectivity* – has resulted in the rapid racial mobility of Asian Americans. Deemed subhuman and unassimilable in the nineteenth century, Asians have become America's exceptionally competent minority in the twenty-first.

Their rise in mobility has come with social costs, however. Presumed competent, Asian Americans are also perceived to lack warmth, creativity, and vision. Technically strong, but socially weak, Asians are stereotyped as hard-working students and diligent workers, but poor visionaries and implausible leaders.[23] The combination of high competence and low warmth, however, has made them credible candidates to challenge affirmative action. Under the rubric of the Students for Fair Admissions, Edward Blum recruited Asian Americans whose stellar grades, exceptional test scores, and bevy of extracurricular activities failed to gain them admission to Harvard, and then pointed to admissions officers who rejected them based on their poor rating on personal characteristics like character, courage, and fit. The personal rating encompasses far more than personal characteristics, yet SFFA has reduced it to personality, and touted it as the source of the alleged bias against Asian Americans – a provocative allegation that resonated with Asians and non-Asians alike.

While the debate about bias against Asian Americans continues to rage, Harvard's bias for legacies remains unchecked. Legacies are nearly six times as likely to be admitted than nonlegacies, and the majority of Harvard's legacies are White. Rather than fighting to dismantle all categorical bias, Edward Blum and SFFA have targeted the so-called Asian penalty. Hailing Asians as the meritorious, morally deserving minority who are unjustly penalized because of their race, SFFA has held up Asians as both victims of discrimination and victims of affirmative action. In the process, they have falsely equated affirmative action with negative action against Asians by arguing that undeserving minorities like African Americans and Hispanics get a boost because of their race at Asians' expense. But affirmative action is neither a quota nor can it be reduced to negative action. Indeed, the Asian American student population has increased in tandem with affirmative action. The missing component in SFFA's calculation is legacies whose birthright entitles them a lift in admissions, thereby placing all minoritized groups – including Asian Americans – at a disadvantage.

It is worth underscoring that Asians are overrepresented as a proportion of their population at elite universities like Harvard. They make up only 6.6 percent of the U.S. population, but 24.4 percent of Harvard's most recent freshman class. Where Asians are underrepresented is in the executive ranks and leadership positions in the workplace as they bump up against a career ceiling, otherwise known as the *bamboo ceiling*. College-educated Asians fall behind their White counterparts in earnings, and fall behind all groups in advancement beyond the professional ranks, even after adjusting for potential covariates, including native-born status.[24]

Recent reports of top technology firms in Silicon Valley show that Asians are the least likely racial group to be promoted into managerial and executive positions.[25] Asian men and women are half as likely to advance into the executive ranks as their White counterparts, with Asian women the least likely of all groups to be promoted – reflecting their acute intersectional disadvantage. A similar pattern emerges in law where Asians make up 10 percent of graduates of top-thirty law schools, but only 6.5 percent of all federal judicial law clerks. While Asians are the largest minoritized group in major law firms, they have the highest attrition rates and lowest ratio of associates to partners of all groups, at four to one, compared with two to one for Blacks and Hispanics, and parity for Whites.[26]

Even in academia, where Asian Americans are overrepresented as students in elite universities, they are nearly absent in leadership ranks, representing only 2 percent of college presidents. Asians are not well represented among the ranks of tenured faculty either. Take Harvard, for example. The current freshman class is 24.4 percent Asian American, but among its tenured faculty, only 11 percent are Asian. And there is a stark gender divide: 8 percent are Asian men, and a mere 3 percent are Asian women. Even rarer are Black, Hispanic, and Native American faculty. Combined, they account for less than 8 percent of Harvard's tenured professors. By far, the majority of Harvard's tenured faculty are White (80 percent), with White men constituting the lion's share at 61 percent. Asian Americans who oppose affirmative action in university admissions will find that they have shot themselves in the foot when they confront the career ceiling in the workplace.[27]

While the reigning misperception is that Asians are ardent opponents of affirmative action, the majority of Asian American registered voters support the policy. One group, however, stands apart: Chinese Americans. This sobering finding highlights both the heterogeneity of the U.S. Asian population and the salience of data disaggregation in accurately reporting their narratives.[28] Data disaggregation will become even more critical as the fastest growing U.S. racial group continues to diversify through immigration. Since 2000, the East Asian population dropped from 43 to 37 percent of the Asian American population, and the South Asian population increased from 19 to 27 percent. The share of the Southeast Asian population dropped slightly from 36 to 34 percent.[29]

As the U.S. Asian population grows and diversifies, so too do their political attitudes. While Asian Americans have become increasingly progressive, a new brand of Asian immigrants has entered the political sphere whose attitudes depart from the Asian American college student activists of the 1960s.[30] From opposing Proposition 16 (which would have reversed Proposition 209 and removed the ban on affirmative action in California), to protesting New York City's attempt to reform specialized high school tests, to siding with the Students for Fair Admissions in the fight against affirmative action at Harvard, this faction of politically conser-

vative Asian immigrants has no intention of following their liberal-leaning prede-cessors, nor do they intend to stay silent.

Politically conservative Asian immigrants who are calling for a retreat from race do not seek to deny opportunities for others: from their perspective, they seek to open opportunities for all. They believe in the American dream and im-migrated to the United States because they subscribe to the creed of America's open opportunity structure: those who get ahead do so on the bases of talent, hard work, and grit. They also believe that one's racial status should be neither a penal-ty nor a reward, and are committed to protecting the opportunities for their U.S.-born children who they have watched work hard, follow the rules, yet in some cas-es be denied university admission nevertheless. This group of Asian immigrants has aligned with conservatives like Edward Blum, the Students for Fair Admis-sions, and the Department of Justice under the Trump administration in the fight to dismantle affirmative action.

Whether more Asian Americans will choose to side with conservatives like Blum and Trump and splinter along political lines, or whether they will choose to forge a collective Asian American alliance will depend on whether U.S. Asians recognize and embrace their ethnic and class diversity. Will they forge a sense of linked fate akin to that which has guided the political attitudes and voting behav-ior of Black Americans?[31] Beyond these poles lies yet another possibility: an Asian America that recognizes the precariousness of their racial status and one that also recognizes the precariousness in status of all U.S. minoritized groups. The corona-virus crisis has presented us with the unique opportunity to embrace such a possi-bility, and reimagine what Asian America could look like.

In early 2020, as fears about the coronavirus arrested the United States, attacks on Asian Americans mounted steeply. In a one-month period beginning mid-March 2020, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council received more than 1,500 reports of anti-Asian hate incidents, with the majority of the reports made by Asian American women. Ranging from verbal harassment to physical assaults, Asian Americans have been vilified based on the false assumption that they are to blame for the deadly pandemic. In Texas, for example, a man stabbed a Burmese American family – a father and two young children (ages two and six) – because he thought they were Chinese and were infecting people with the coronavirus. In Brooklyn, a man poured acid on an Asian woman while she was taking out the trash in her home, severely burning her head, neck, and back. In midtown Man-hattan, a Korean woman was grabbed by the hair and punched in the face.

Accusing China of manufacturing the coronavirus as a deliberate act of bio-terrorism, and then faulting China for its spread, Trump flagrantly dubbed it the "China virus," the "Wuhan virus," and "kung flu," and then turned a blind eye to the rise in anti-Asian racism and hate. The horrors of the coronavirus pandemic are already leaving scars: so potent was this rhetoric that just three weeks of "China

virus" in the media offset more than three years of prior declines in anti-Asian bias.[32] The pandemic – and Trump's glib designation of it – has revived the century-old trope that Asians are vectors of filth and disease, and has exposed America's nativist fault lines.

Politically conservative Asian Americans are arriving at the brutal realization that the ally with whom they have sided in their fight against affirmative action has elected not to side with them when they are the target of attack. In this defining political moment, they are learning that their perceived competence and moral worth are no shields from xenophobia and racism, and their elite degrees and respectability politics are no protection from anti-Asian hate. This moment of reckoning presents Asian Americans – regardless of political persuasion – an opportunity to reimagine what racial justice and multiracial coalitions could look like. Indeed, the coronavirus pandemic presents all Americans an opportunity to reimagine what equity, empathy, and moral worth could look like.[33]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Lee is the Julian Clarence Levi Professor of Social Sciences at Columbia University and President of the Eastern Sociological Society. She is author or coauthor of four award-winning books, including *The Asian American Achievement Paradox* (2015), *The Diversity Paradox* (2010), *Civility in the City* (2002), and *Asian American Youth* (2005). Her research focuses on the implications of contemporary U.S. immigration–particularly Asian immigration–on the native-born population. She has been a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago, a Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, and a Fulbright Scholar to Japan. Committed to public engagement, she has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, CNN, and a variety of other media outlets.

ENDNOTES

¹ I use the terms *Asian* and *Asian American* interchangeably throughout the essay.

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³ Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings* (New York : One World, 2020).

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The Surge of Young Americans from Minority-White Mixed Families & Its Significance for the Future

Richard Alba

The number of youth from mixed majority-minority families, in which one parent is White and the other minority, is surging in the early twenty-first century. This development is challenging both our statistical schemes for measuring ethnicity and race as well as our thinking about their demographic evolution in the near future. This essay summarizes briefly what we know about mixed minority-White Americans and includes data about their growing numbers as well as key social characteristics of children and adults from mixed backgrounds. The essay concludes that this phenomenon highlights weaknesses in our demographic data system as well as in the majority-minority narrative about how American society is changing.

A largely unheralded demographic development holds the potential to reshape the ethnoracial contours of American society in the coming decades. That development is the surge of young people coming from ethnoracially mixed families, and especially from those in which one parent is non-Hispanic White ("White" in what follows) and the other minority, either non-White or Hispanic.

To be sure, mixing across ethnic and racial lines has been a feature of the American experience since the earliest days of European colonization. Mixing between different European origins was celebrated as early as the eighteenth century by Hector St. John de Crèvecouer in *Letters from an American Farmer*. In the post–World War II period, the rise of marriage on a large scale across ethnic and religious lines among Whites played a leading role in the story of mass assimilation, which forged a White mainstream that included the descendants of late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century immigrants from Ireland and Southern and Eastern Europe.[1] Throughout American history, Whites' dominant status has been expressed in sexual encounters across racial divisions, particularly between White men and minority women, that have produced children. When these children were mixed White and Black, they were mostly consigned to the African American population by virtue of the so-called one-drop rule. When the

children were mixed White and American Indian, they had a greater chance of being absorbed into the White population.[2]

The mixing across the major boundaries – of race and of Hispanic ethnicity – appears to hold a new significance in the early twenty-first century. The current situation seems novel in the degree of social recognition accorded mixed ethnoracial parentage as an independent status, rather than one that must be amalgamated into one group or another (as in the one-drop rule). The Census Bureau's important decision to allow multiple-race reporting starting in 2000 is an acknowledgment of this new reality but also has contributed to it by creating statistical data concerning racial mixture that permeate into public consciousness.[3]

However, the extent and long-run significance of this mixing still elude the stylized demographic "facts" of which Americans are most aware, epitomized in the majority-minority society anticipated by midcentury. In truth, mixing between Whites and minorities presents major challenges to common conceptions of, and census classification schemes for, ethnicity and race. For this reason, the degree of mixing and our ability to discern its societal significance are not reflected clearly in publicly available demographic data.

In this essay, I assess ethnoracial mixing, presenting estimates of its current extent and trend. I also summarize, if all too briefly, what we know about the characteristics of individuals from mixed minority-White family backgrounds, in order to gauge where they appear to locate within American social structures.[4] Though the details of this picture are complex, its broad outlines seem apparent. For the most part, individuals from these origins seem to be integrating into what can be described as the "mainstream" of American society, where most Whites are also found. The important exception involves individuals with Black and White parentage, who suffer from the severe racism that still impedes Americans of visible African descent. In the conclusion, I point out the implications of mixing for our demographic understanding of the American near future.

Ethnoracial mixing in families has risen steadily since the late 1960s. Critical to this trend was the wonderfully named 1967 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court *Loving v. Virginia*, which invalidated the remaining antimiscegenation laws. To be sure, marriages are only a measure of the trend: they do not encompass the entirety of mixing since family connections, such as coparenting, form outside of marriage. But we have good data for marriage. The Pew Research Center has tracked marriages involving partners from two different major ethnoracial categories.[5] In 1967, about 3 percent of newlyweds were in intermarriages; by 2015, this rate had risen to 17 percent. It seems highly likely that the rate of mixing in families formed without marriage is at least as high, since one reason that couples do not marry is family opposition, which is usually greater when a partner belongs to a different ethnoracial group. Eighty percent of the mixed mar-

riages of 2015 united a White partner with a minority partner, the largest grouping among them constituted by Hispanic-White couples.[6]

A consequence of rising mixing in families is, quite obviously, an increase in the fraction of youth who are growing up with parents, as well as numerous other close relatives, from two different ethnoracial groups. We can think of kinship connections that by virtue of birth span major societal boundaries as the sociological essential of a mixed family background. Birth certificates provide the best data about mixed backgrounds in this sense, since they include the children of noncohabiting parents, who may still provide kinship connections for them. In 2018, fathers' and mothers' ethnoracial backgrounds were indicated on 87 percent of birth certificates. Birth certificates missing a parent's information – invariably the father's – are unlikely to represent mixed parentage since the missing data probably indicate a broken parental connection, so they can be counted among the unmixed. On this basis, 10.8 percent of all the births in 2018 were to mixed minority-White couples. The parents of an additional 3.7 percent of births came from different minority backgrounds.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the mixed infants of 2018 in terms of the ethnoracial origins of the parents.[7] The largest single category by far – almost 40 percent of all mixed births, and more than half of all those in which one parent is White – is for infants with one Hispanic parent and one White, non-Hispanic parent (a group I will refer to as "Anglo-Hispanic" or "Hispanic-White"). It is fairly evenly divided between families in which the Hispanic parent is the father and those in which it is the mother. Other large categories of mixed infants with one White parent include: those whose minority parent is Black (and usually the father), amounting to 13.3 percent of all mixed births; those whose minority parent is Asian (and usually the mother), 9.4 percent of all mixed births; and those with a mixed-race parent, 10.4 percent of mixed births. Most of the racially mixed parents have some White (that is, European) ancestry. As we will see, there is a strong tendency for individuals from mixed minority-White backgrounds to choose White partners.

Infants with a White parent are three-quarters of all mixed infants. In the quarter of mixed births involving minority parents only, Hispanics are again central. Infants with one Black parent, usually the father, and one Hispanic parent are 8.5 percent of all mixed births. Infants with one Hispanic parent and one non-Hispanic parent of mixed race are 3.6 percent; and those with one Hispanic parent and one Asian parent are 3.2 percent. Infants with a Black parent, usually the father, and a racially mixed parent are also appreciable in number at 3.9 percent of mixed births. The remaining 6.1 percent are scattered among various combinations of mixed minority origins.

To put the mixing between Whites and minorities into perspective, infants born to a minority-White parent combination are more numerous than those

Figure 1
Ethnoracial Mixes among 2018 Births
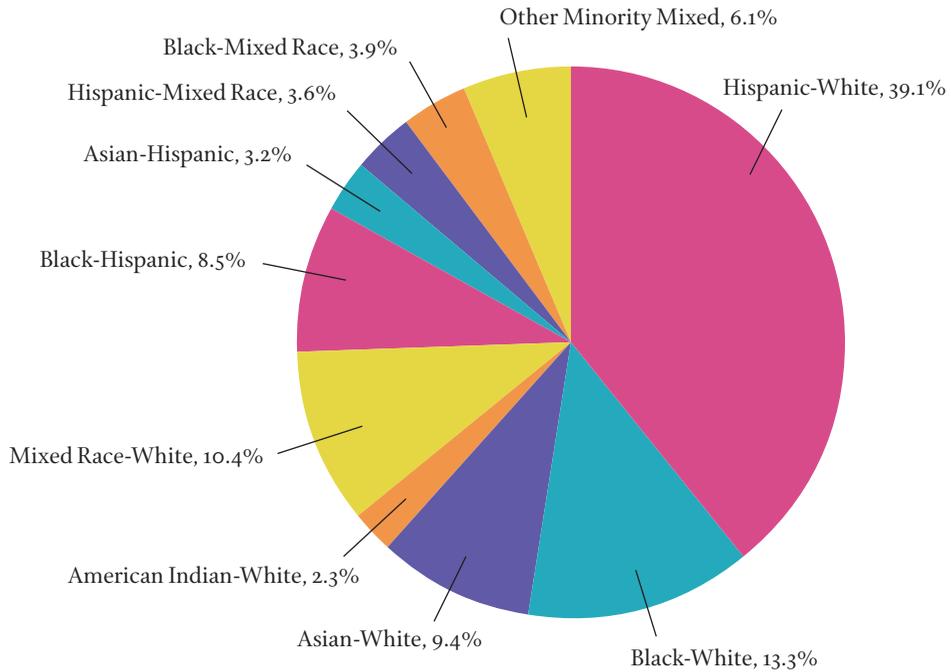
Note: Pie chart shows the composition of the 14.5 percent of all 2018 births that were mixed: that is, the father and mother belonged to different major ethnoracial categories.
Source: Author calculations from public-use birth-certificate data. (See Joyce A. Martin, Brady E. Hamilton, Michelle J. K. Osterman, and Anne K. Driscoll, "Births: Final Data for 2018," *National Vital Statistics Reports* 68 (13) (2019), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_13-508.pdf.)

born to two Black parents (9.1 percent of all births). However, when births to Black mothers who are solo parents (that is, no information for fathers is given) are counted in the unmixed Black group, then the unmixed Black group, at 13.6 percent, eclipses the mixed minority-White group. The latter is also smaller than the unmixed Hispanic group, at 19.5 percent of all births. However, no other group of minority babies approaches the mixed minority-White one in size.

Another way of thinking about numerical impact is in terms of the share of births to minority parents that also involve White parents. Consider the Hispanic population in this regard, since it is the largest minority in the United States and projected to increase substantially in size by midcentury. In 2018, 29.1 percent of all births involving Hispanic parents also involved a non-Hispanic parent, and 20.7

percent – one of every five – involved a White parent. Of course, many contemporary Hispanic parents are immigrants, and the rates of mixing are moderately higher when parents are U.S. born. The story is more or less the same for other minority populations. Even for Whites, still the largest ethnoracial population in the United States, the rate of mixing is appreciable : 19.0 percent, or one out of five.

Like the rate of intermarriage, the percentage of all infants with mixed parentage has been rising over time. The best measure we have of this trend comes from census data and must for this reason be limited to infants in households containing both parents. In 1980, just 5 percent of these infants had mixed parentage, and this mixing incidentally was dominated by Anglo-Hispanic couples. In 2017, the equivalent percentage was 16.1 percent, a threefold rise in less than forty years.

It seems certain that the rate of mixing will continue to rise, although it is impossible to say how high it will go. Key demographic features of the immigrant-origin minority populations point in different directions. On the one hand, their rising size over time is likely to dampen somewhat family mixing because larger groups offer more opportunity for in-group partnering. (By the same logic, the declining size of Whites among young adults is consistent with greater mixing for them.) On the other hand, the generational shift away from the immigrants – and especially to the third generation – is strongly associated with family mixing. And, in the case of Hispanics, increasing educational attainment is, too. The population projections of the Census Bureau indicate much greater future mixing between Whites and minorities.[8]

One great truism of social science is that where we start in life is a very good predictor of where we wind up. And for many children from mixed minority-White backgrounds, their start in life is better than where those with the same minority family origins start, though it is typically not equivalent to where White children begin. The one great exception involves children with one White and one Black parent, who suffer at the start from systemic racism that accompanies them as they grow up.

Consider the education of parents, a strong predictor of education in the new generation (see Figure 2). There is a gradient in the parental education of mixed minority-White infants that runs from the children of Asian-White parentage, the most advantaged, to those with a Black father and a White mother, who are dominant among Black-White infants but also the least advantaged mixed group. In the case of the former, the majority of infants have two parents who are college graduates, and for more than half of the rest, one parent graduated from college. In this respect, Asian-White infants enjoy a more favorable start in life than do infants with two White parents, among whom one-third have two college-graduate parents. However, the children of a Black father and a White mother are on average only slightly better off than the children of two Black parents; about 30 percent

Figure 2
Parental Education of Infants from Different Mixed and Unmixed Family Backgrounds
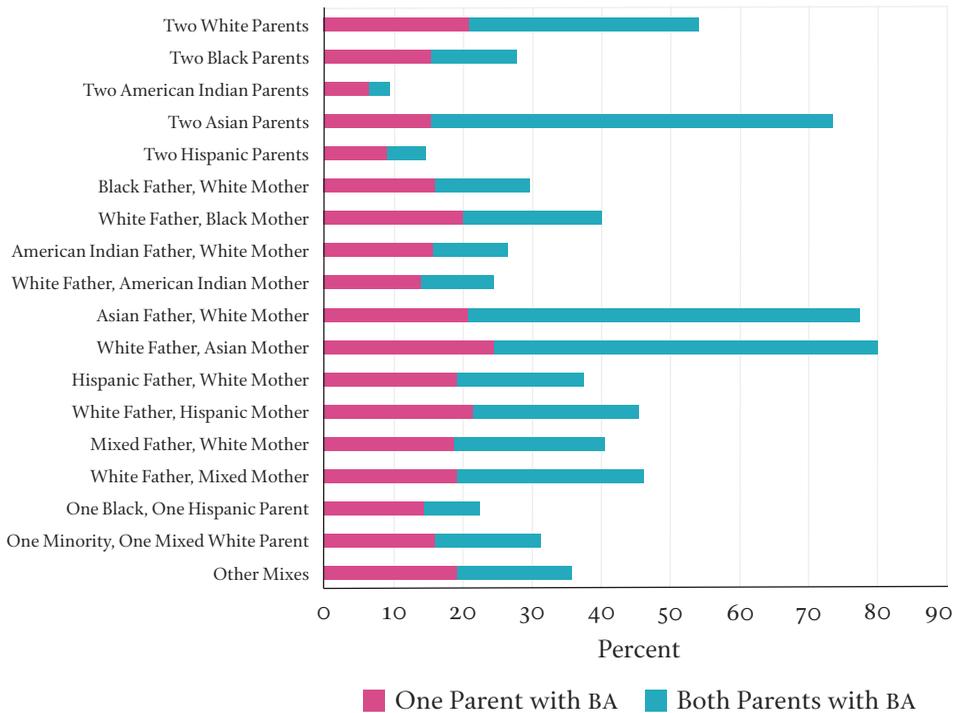
Source: Author calculations from public-use birth-certificate data. (See Joyce A. Martin, Brady E. Hamilton, Michelle J. K. Osterman, et al., "Births: Final Data for 2017," *National Vital Statistics Reports* 67 (8) (2018), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_08-508.pdf.)

have at least one parent who completed college. The children of a White father and a Black mother are better off – about 40 percent have a college-educated parent – though their parents average less than the educational level of two White parents.

Two other major categories of minority-White infants are also positioned more favorably than the average infant with minority parents only. About 40 percent of Hispanic-White infants have at least one parent with a college degree; the figure is higher when the White parent is the father. More than 40 percent of infants with a White parent and a racially mixed one have a college-educated parent, and once again the figure is higher when the father is White.

Another revealing aspect of the situation of infants of mixed parentage is where their families reside. Residential disparities in a highly segregated society like the United States are a primary mechanism of transmitting inequality across

the generations. School quality, to take an obvious instance, is highly variable, in part because of the predominant role of local and state funding, and tends to correspond with the ethnoracial and socioeconomic composition of local areas.[9] To examine the situation of the families of infants included in American Community Survey data, the spatial divisions of the country can be fit into a serviceable, if rough, scheme that takes account of how urban a space is and whether a residence is owned or rented.[10] The combination of these two factors maps out socially very different residential spaces in the United States.

Minorities are more likely than Whites to live in urban and inner-suburban areas (abbreviated as "urban" subsequently) that are dominated by rental housing. For instance, nearly half of the families of Black infants live in rental spaces in cities or inner suburbs, but only one-quarter are in owner-occupied homes in suburban areas. The families of White infants are more likely to live in suburban or city-edge areas (abbreviated subsequently as "suburban") dominated by owner-occupied homes. Nearly half are in homeowner suburban areas, while only 15 percent are urban renters. Another quarter are located in rural areas and small towns, mostly in homes they own.

The families of some categories of mixed minority-White infants are at least as concentrated in homeowner suburban areas as White infants and their families are. This is true, for example, of families in which one parent is White and the other parent is of mixed race. Like Whites, they are also represented in rural areas and small towns. Asian-White families with infants are even more concentrated in homeowner suburban spaces than the families of White infants; however, unlike Whites but like Asian-only families, they are infrequently found outside, or on the edge of, metropolitan regions.

The families of Hispanic-White infants are more likely to reside in homeowner suburban areas than in rental urban ones, but their residential distribution does not favor the former as much as that of White families does. Nevertheless, they are much less located in urban rental spaces than are Black or Hispanic families. In other words, they are closer to White families in terms of residence than they are to the main minority ones. Also in between, but this time closer to a residential distribution like minorities, are Black-White families with infants.

An implication of these patterns is that mixed minority-White children often are located in places that, while they may be diverse, include many White children. Thus, many have White playmates and learn how to relate amicably to Whites, as some Whites do to them. This childhood integration potentially has major implications for adult life, where pathways to socioeconomic success often run through largely White institutions and social worlds. Is the implication corroborated by other data?

We have both qualitative and quantitative evidence to support it. In an analysis of friendship patterns of adolescents, found in the Adolescent Health Sur-

vey (Add Health), a rigorously conducted, nationally representative study, sociologist Grace Kao and her colleagues found that some groups of mixed youth frequently chose White best friends. Asian-White adolescents are an example: about 70 percent chose White best friends, and only 11 percent chose Asian ones. The tendency of mixed Asian-White youth to befriend Whites is partly the result of the racial mix of the high schools they attend, which are majority White on average. Hispanic-Whites also seem to have many White best friends, although an inferential step is required to reach this conclusion. The study examined the friendship of racially White Hispanics, among whom most mixed Hispanic-White youth are likely found. The majority of these youth (57 percent) chose White best friends, and another 13 percent chose Hispanic friends who are described as racially White. In this case, the choice pattern mirrors the compositions of the schools attended.[11]

The pattern looks very different for mixed youth of African descent. Black-White adolescents are much more likely than Asian-White and Hispanic-White youth to choose friends of the same minority origin: about half did so in the Add Health study, though this tendency is markedly lower than that of Black-only adolescents. Only 20 percent chose White best friends. These choices are more concentrated among minority friends than would be expected from the composition of the schools Black-White adolescents attend, which are almost half White.

A qualitative study of young adults by sociologist Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl gives insight into the experiences that lie behind the different friendship patterns of Asian- and Black-Whites.[12] The Asian-White interviewees mostly grew up around Whites, and seem to feel that their childhoods were not unusual. They were exposed to forms of microaggression during childhood – jokes about any distinctiveness in their physical appearance or the food they ate – but were generally able to shrug them off. In Strmic-Pawl's apt characterization, they felt "White enough." For Black-White young adults, the weight of childhood experience was not so benign. Their interviews convey a sense that managing racism and race-inflected encounters is a major theme throughout their life experience. Strmic-Pawl characterizes this theme as "salient Blackness," and presumably its development began during childhood.

The surge of individuals from ethnoracially mixed families is mostly a twenty-first-century phenomenon, and, moreover, mixed backgrounds seem to have attained a new social recognition since 2000. These facts imply that our data about adults with mixed backgrounds are less reliable as guides to the near future than are our data about today's children. Mixed family backgrounds are more unusual among adults, and hence the adults from them may have grown up encouraged by the "one-drop" views of others to think of themselves in terms of a single origin.

There is another problem. In our main demographic data sets, like the American Community Survey, the reporting of mixed ethnoracial origins is *selective*: that is, the reporting is not consistent, even for the same individual over time; many individuals from mixed backgrounds appear at any one moment in unmixed categories. We have very convincing evidence of this.[13] Therefore, in examining the characteristics of those who report mixed backgrounds at any one moment, we are missing many with the same origins who classify themselves in a different ethnoracial category. Moreover, we do not know yet how those we can see in the data differ from those we cannot. A solution to this problem is *ancestry tracing*: that is, gathering data separately about the mother's and father's family origins. However, only a few surveys, especially those by the Pew Research Center, do this, and their samples are not large.

One way of counteracting selectivity in reporting of origins is to expand the range of information we consider. For instance, the American Community Survey has a question about ancestry that is usually not taken into account in ethnoracial classifications. However, it allows us to identify a substantial portion of the otherwise hidden mixed individuals, such as Hispanics who report having ancestry like German or Irish. These are, in other words, persons with mixed Hispanic-White family backgrounds, and the following analysis considers them as such.

For investigating the adult socioeconomic status associated with mixed family backgrounds, the best indicator is educational attainment. That is because, as adults, mixed individuals skew young, and therefore they are concentrated in the early stages of work careers. Educational attainment, especially when it involves college graduation or postbaccalaureate education, is surely predictive of eventual labor-market position.

The key finding is that the educational attainment of the major mixed minority-White groups lies in-between that of Whites, whom we can use as a measure of the mainstream pattern, and that of the minority. But it is, on the whole, closer to the White level than the minority one. This pattern can be seen in Figure 3, which presents the educational attainment of major ethnoracially mixed and unmixed categories for U.S.-born men and women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine.

This conclusion is exemplified by the Anglo-Hispanic group. Unmixed Hispanic men (only the U.S. born are considered) have a relatively low rate of baccalaureate attainment, only 16 percent, well behind that of White, or Anglo, men, 37 percent of whom have the credential. Since 30 percent of Anglo-Hispanic men also have graduated from college, they are notably closer to the White percentage than to the Hispanic one. Anglo-Hispanic women are similarly positioned between the White and Hispanic rates, although all the rates of baccalaureate attainment are higher for women.

Figure 3
Postsecondary Educational Attainment of Mixed and Unmixed Ethnoracial Categories (Expanded), U.S.-Born Men and Women Aged Twenty-Five to Thirty-Nine
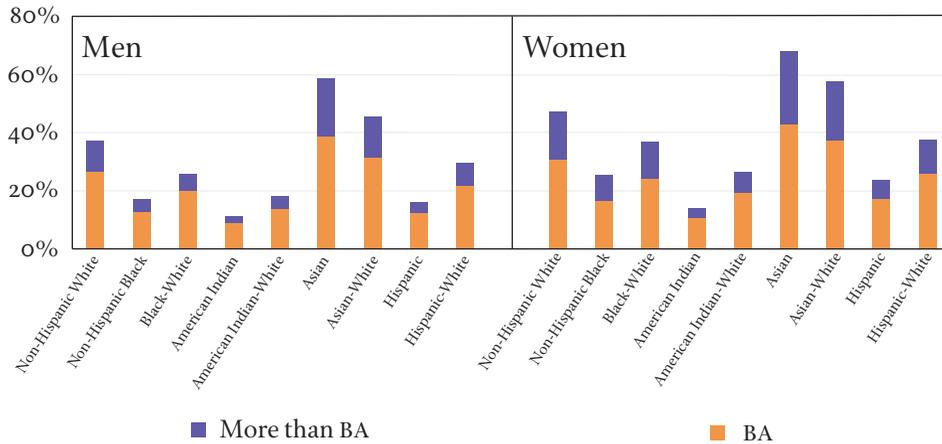
Note : In order to counteract selective reporting of mixed backgrounds on the race and Hispanic-origin census questions, expanded mixed categories take into account ancestry data as well. See text discussion. Source : 2017 American Community Survey, provided by IPUMS. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, et al., IPUMS USA : Version 9.0 [dataset] (Minneapolis : IPUMS, 2019), http://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0.

Individuals who come from Black-White backgrounds occupy a more intermediate position. One-quarter (26 percent) of the men have a college degree, clearly higher than the 17 percent of Black-only men but substantially lower than the 37 percent of White-only men. The educational attainment of Black-White women is similarly situated : 37 percent with baccalaureates or more versus 47 percent for White women and 26 percent for Black women.

Since the expansion of the mixed categories with data from the ancestry question is unlikely to overcome entirely the problem of selectivity, some corroborative evidence would be valuable. It comes from the annual CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) Freshman Survey, conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). In several of the early years of this century (2001 – 2003), this survey of the nation's entering college class asked not only about the ethnoracial backgrounds of the students but also about those of their parents, making it possible to identify students with mixed parentage without ambiguity.[14]

These data demonstrate that, among students with Hispanic ancestry, those with a White parent were more likely to enter a four-year college and much more likely to enter the selective tier of higher education. (A similar pattern, but on a more modest scale, appears for Black students.) The advantage in beginning college becomes apparent when the ratio of Hispanic-only to Anglo-Hispanic students among freshmen at four-year colleges is compared with its equivalent in an appropriate birth cohort. The closest birth cohort is that in the 1980 census, when there were 2.5 Hispanic-only infants for every Anglo-Hispanic infant. Some twenty-plus years later, among first-year college students, there were 1.8 Hispanic-only freshmen for every Anglo-Hispanic freshman – the smaller ratio indicates a disadvantage at that time for Hispanic-only youth in attending college.

More strikingly, students from mixed Hispanic-White families were distributed across the tiers of the four-year college universe similarly to White students. In the early 2000s, more than half (54 percent) of students with two White parents attended colleges that HERI views as more selective, compared with one-quarter (27 percent) of students with two Black parents and one-third (31 percent) of students with two Hispanic parents. However, for students with one White and one Hispanic parent, the fraction in the more selective tier was, at 53 percent, no different from that of Whites. It made no difference whether the Hispanic parent was the father or the mother. Moreover, a White parent was a huge advantage for a student with Hispanic ancestry in gaining access to elite schools, the public and private universities classified by HERI as very selective. About 9 percent of the White-only freshmen attended elite schools in the early 2000s, compared with 5 percent of Black-only students and 6 percent of Hispanic-only students. However, 11 percent of mixed White-Hispanic students attended elite schools. Having a White parent was also an asset in this respect for students with a Black parent.

To understand the social location of mixed Americans, we also need to know about the social milieus with which they typically affiliate: the kinds of friends they have, the neighborhoods where they reside, and the families they form. The Pew Surveys of Multiracial Americans and on Hispanic Identity, which avoid the selectivity problem by ancestry tracing, are informative in this respect.[15]

One indicator is feeling accepted by Whites, the dominant majority. Sixty-two percent of Asian-Whites feel "very" accepted by Whites, compared with 47 percent who say they feel very accepted by Asians; and 72 percent of Anglo-Hispanics feel very accepted by the White majority, compared with 49 percent by Hispanics. The perceptions of Black-White adults are very different. Only one-quarter of them feel very accepted by Whites, but nearly 60 percent feel very accepted by Blacks.[16]

Most individuals from mixed minority-White backgrounds, with the prominent exception of those of Black-White parentage, appear to be involved in social milieus that, while varying in their diversity, contain numerous Whites. Nearly

half of Asian-Whites say that most or all of their friends are Whites, compared with just 7 percent who say this about Asians. Near two-thirds say that all or most of their neighbors are Whites. The social milieus of Anglo-Hispanics also tilt White, but not as much: half say that all or most of their friends are Whites, while one-quarter say this of Hispanics; and the figures are very similar concerning their neighbors. Individuals who are White and Black are located in quite different social spaces. Half of them say that all or most of their friends are Black. However, just one-third claim to live in mostly Black neighborhoods; this group is outnumbered by the more than 40 percent who live in mostly White neighborhoods.[17]

Most tellingly, individuals from mixed minority and White family backgrounds appear mostly to marry Whites, on the one hand supporting the notion that Whites make up disproportionate shares of their social milieus and, on the other, ensuring that the next generation, their children, will grow up in heavily White, if still mixed, family contexts. Romantic partners typically are chosen from the people encountered in everyday social environments, such as school or work. High probabilities of marrying Whites indicate that these milieus are preponderantly White, although we cannot discount the possibility that some mixed individuals seek out a White partner because of Whites' status at the top of the ethnoracial hierarchy.

Based on the expanded definitions of mixed minority-White categories, tabulations from the 2017 American Community Survey, restricted to individuals under the age of forty to capture recent marriage patterns, reveal the tendency to choose White partners. More than 70 percent of Asian-White women are married to White men, and few, only 10 percent, chose Asian-only or Asian-White men. The figures are a bit different for Asian-White men, but not greatly so: 64 percent of them have White partners and less than 20 percent have partners with some Asian parentage. The tendency to marry Whites is not as strong for Anglo-Hispanics, but the majority have White spouses: 60 percent of women and 57 percent of men. About 30 percent in each case are married to someone of whole or part Hispanic heritage.

For those of Black and White parentage, marriage to Whites is – unsurprisingly – less common. But it is much more frequent than is true for individuals from Black-only backgrounds. More than 40 percent of Black-White men have White partners; this figure is higher than the percentage with spouses who are Black only or Black-White. Somewhat more than one-third of Black-White women are married to Whites, a percentage about equal to the fraction with Black-only partners. The expansion of the category through the ancestry data substantially lowers the intermarriage percentage because it brings in many individuals who classify themselves as only Black on the race question. These are individuals who, it appears, are in heavily African American social milieus.

In addition to socioeconomic advancement, as reflected in improved educational life chances, and frequent integration into social milieus containing many

Whites, as indicated by high rates of marriage to Whites, one other characteristic of Americans from mixed minority-White backgrounds stands out: the fluidity of their ethnoracial identities. This fluidity, which entails presenting oneself sometimes as mixed and at other times in terms of a single part of one's background, may also imply contingency: that is, identifying oneself in a way that fits the situation of the moment. But we do not have sufficient evidence at this point to confirm this.

The evidence we have of fluidity is compelling and shows that mixed individuals do not present consistently in terms of the broad ethnoracial categories of the census. One study, based on a match of individuals between the 2000 and 2010 censuses, provides a powerful demonstration.[18] Overall, 6 percent of individuals presented inconsistent ethnoracial reports, but for those who indicated mixed origins on one or both censuses, the rate was much higher. Of those who are Asian and White by race on one of the censuses, for instance, barely more than one-third (34.5 percent) are consistent on the other. Of the nearly two-thirds who are inconsistent, the great majority report as single-race Asian or White on the other census, with White responses outnumbering Asian ones by 60 percent. The inconsistency pattern among individuals who are Black and White on one census is rather similar, except that Black-only responses outnumber White-only ones on the other census by a two-to-one margin.

Another study that makes use of matched census data (over three time points) reveals fluidity in the identities of individuals who are part Hispanic and part something else.[19] This analysis found that 14 percent of individuals with discernable Hispanic ancestry did not report consistently as Hispanic. This figure is deceptively low because the base for the percentage includes the large population of Latin American immigrants, for whom the rate of inconsistency is very low. Among those who appear consistently as Hispanic, the percentage having some non-Hispanic ancestry is small, about 5 percent. Among those who are inconsistent, the percentage is roughly ten times higher.

For Hispanics, we have additional evidence that mixed family backgrounds are connected to a weakening of Hispanic identity. Confirmation comes from the Pew Survey of Hispanic Identity, which found that 11 percent of individuals with Hispanic ancestry did not identify as Hispanic; almost all of them came from mixed family backgrounds. Among those from mixed backgrounds who did identify as Hispanic, more than 40 percent said that they most often described themselves as "American," a figure that was more than three times higher than that for unmixed Hispanics.[20]

A widely believed narrative about the American future, anchored in demographic data and projections, holds that, within a few decades, Whites will become a minority of the American population, outnumbered by the aggregate of minority groups. This narrative has been dubbed the "majority-

minority society," and it is generally presumed that this future demographic shift will have profound consequences for the distribution of cultural, economic, and political power among the nation's ethnoracial groups.

But the surge of young Americans from mixed minority-White backgrounds complicates this narrative, if it does not overturn it. One reason is that the publicly disseminated demographic data, which serve to justify the majority-minority narrative, inadequately reflect mixed backgrounds. This inadequacy has to do with problems in conventional ethnoracial classifications. For one thing, in publicly presented data, the Census Bureau usually classifies all individuals who report themselves as mixed on the race question in a separate "mixed race" category. The members of this category are treated as non-Whites in interpretations of the data, although the great majority of them have a White parent. For another, the measurement of ethnoracial origins in the current two-question format – one for race, the other for Hispanic origin – leads to the classification of anyone who indicates a Hispanic identity as non-White (because "Hispanics may be of any race," according to the standard demographic formulation). However, we can now be sure that a substantial minority of Hispanics comes from mixed Anglo-Hispanic families; these individuals are lost from view in conventional demographic ethnoracial categories.

The problems with the majority-minority narrative are not just a matter of data – they are also conceptual. The narrative envisions American society as fractured into two separate, competing ethnoracial blocs, one of which is declining while the other is ascending. These blocs are presumed to be distinct in numerous ways having to do with the average social locations of their members, their typical experiences, their views, and above all their sense of relative status. It is widely believed that the ascent of the minority bloc to majority status, which is supposedly driven by inevitable demographic processes, will overturn an established social order in which Whites represent the dominant social group.

The rise of mixing in families between Whites and minorities and the surge of young Americans from mixed minority-White backgrounds calls for new ways of thinking about the social changes taking place as a result of increasing societal diversity. This mixing is not at all acknowledged in the majority-minority narrative, a sign of the problematic conceptualization it entails. At the most fundamental level, mixing is reducing the separateness of the ethnoracial blocs: the share of the White bloc with a sense of membership in the minority bloc, along with deep connections to minority individuals, will continue to grow in the near future; and the same will be true for the shares of minority groups with a degree of membership in and close relationships to individuals in the White bloc. For many, what is viewed today as a bright divide in the majority-minority narrative will increasingly blur.

The limitations of the majority-minority narrative betray problems in social-science theorizing about American society. In recent decades, thinking about race

and ethnicity has been dominated by critical race theory, at whose core is a vision of society as organized in terms of a rigid ethnoracial hierarchy, which is maintained for the benefit of the dominant group, Whites. Critical race theory has, without question, generated many important insights into ethnoracial inequalities. But the surge of young Americans with mixed family backgrounds, many of whom appear to be integrating into the mainstream, where most Whites are also located, demonstrates that current developments in the United States cannot be understood solely on the basis of critical race theory.

We need another kind of idea, one that has been salient at various points in American history and at whose core is the notion of assimilation. Assimilation theorizing, like critical race theory, envisions society in terms of an ethnoracial hierarchy, but with more fluidity. Its most important insights are focused on the ways that individuals and even groups can improve their position in this hierarchy, even reaching parity and integrating with the dominant group. We have undeniable evidence that assimilation was the paramount process among the descendants of early-twentieth-century immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The evidence about twenty-first-century mixing across the majority-minority divide indicates that it is relevant to at least some descendants of post-1965 immigrants. It is time for assimilation thinking to make a comeback.


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Alba, a Fellow of the American Academy since 2017, is Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York. His publications include *The Great Demographic Illusion: Majority, Minority, and the Expanding American Mainstream* (2020), *The Next Generation: Immigrant Youth in a Comparative Perspective* (co-edited with Mary Waters, 2011), *Blurring the Color Line: The New Chance for a More Integrated America* (2009), and *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (with Victor Nee, 2003).

ENDNOTES

[1] Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[2] Carolyn Liebler, "Counting America's First Peoples," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 677 (1) (2018): 180–190.

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5 Gretchen Livingston and Anna Brown, *Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years after Loving v. Virginia* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

6 The Pew study does not include same-sex marriages.

7 Because of the brevity of this essay, I do not discuss or present all of the official ethno-racial categories. Figure 1 does not include the very small Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander group. In the text, I do not discuss American Indians, but concentrate on the major minority populations: Blacks and Hispanics.

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14 The analysis reported here is mine. I am grateful to Nathaniel Kang of UCLA's HERI for sharing the parental data, not available in the online survey file, with me.

15 Pew Research Center, *Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse and Growing in Numbers* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015); and Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Gustavo López, *Latino Identity Fades across Generations as Immigrant Connections Fall Away* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

16 Pew Research Center, *Multiracial in America*, 14. The Anglo-Hispanic figures are my calculations from the database used for the report.

17 Ibid., chap. 5.

18 Liebler et al., "America's Churning Races."

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20 Lopez et al., *Latino Identity Fades across Generations*. I am grateful to Mark Hugo Lopez for additional data in this paragraph.

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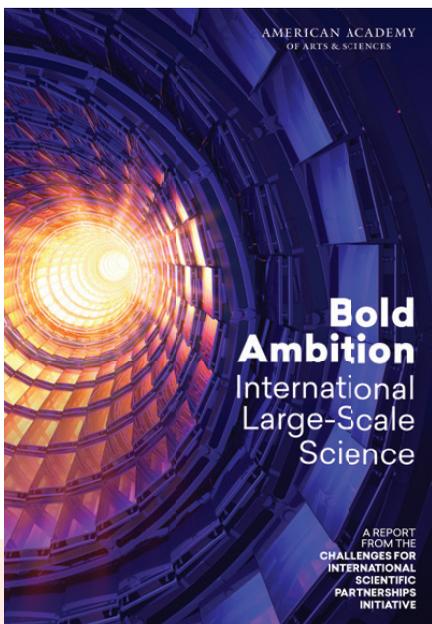
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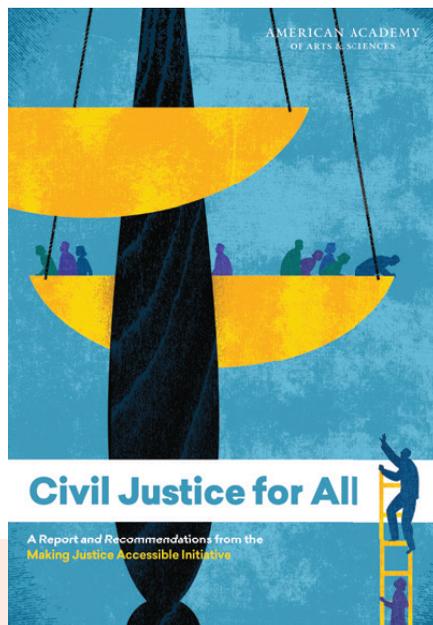
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