The Past Is Prologue: African American Opinion toward Undocumented Immigration

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Using data from the 2011 Multi-State Survey on Race and Politics (Parker 2011), I ask if African American[1] opinion toward undocumented immigration mirrors African American opinion toward immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I find evidence that contemporary African American opinion does reflect the manner in which a previous generation of African Americans reacted to immigrant newcomers. More specifically, I find that factors associated with past reactions to new immigration, most notably political and economic competition, egalitarianism, the belief that new immigrants are distancing themselves from African Americans, and the belief that restrictive immigration policies were fueled by racism, continue to predict contemporary African American opinion on undocumented immigration. Taken together, I take my findings as evidence that the past may be prologue in accounting for black opinion toward the newest wave of immigration.

Introduction

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, from 2000 to 2011 the undocumented immigrant population in the United States increased from 8.4 million to 11.1 million persons, a 32 percent increase (Passell and Cohn 2011). Alongside the growth of the undocumented immigrant population has been a corresponding backlash from citizens who increasingly support restrictive immigration policies (Muste 2013; Schildkraut 2011; Schrag 2012). Public opinion scholars have found that Americans' attitudes are driven largely by perceptions of threat, negative racial attitudes, economic self-interest, and a variety of immigrant characteristics (Brader et al. 2008; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Citrin et al. 1997; Fetzer 2000; Hopkins 2010; Scheve and Slaughter 2001).

However, much of what we know about American opinion on immigration is based on data primarily from white Americans, and does not account for minority opinion. Indeed, very little is known about African American attitudes toward immigration (Masuoka and Junn 2013; McClain et al. 2007, 2008; Morris 2000). This lack of attention to black opinion on undocumented immigration is surprising in light of the

1. The authors use the terms "African American" and "black" interchangeably in this article.

history of economic competition between immigrants and African Americans (Borjas et al. 2010; Lieberson 1980; Shankman 1982), the increased contact between African Americans and immigrants in the nation's gateway cities (Marrow 2011), the increase in anti-immigration policies in states with large African American populations (Ramakrishnan 2005; Sanchez et al. 2012), and the use of the issue of undocumented immigration as a wedge issue in national politics (Hillygus and Shields 2009).

Recently, a number of scholars have begun to more closely examine African American opinion on immigration (Brader et al. 2010; Brown 2010; Masuoka and Junn 2013; McClain et al. 2007, 2008; Nteta 2013; Wilkinson and Bingham 2013; Wilkinson et al. 2007). In line with popular perceptions of black opinion, these studies have found that majorities of African Americans do in fact support restrictive immigration policies and express negative views of undocumented immigrants. However, when compared to white opinion, African Americans have been found to express *less* support for restrictive immigration reforms and exhibit *more* positive views of undocumented immigrants (Brader et al. 2010; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nteta 2013). In accounting for African American opinion on immigration, these studies have pointed to factors that include economic self-interest (Nteta 2013; Wilkinson and Bingham 2013), group identity (Brader et al. 2010; McClain et al. 2007), negative views of Asians and Latinos (Wilkinson et al. 2007), religiosity (Brown 2010), and contact with immigrants (Morris 2000).

While this literature has done much to expand our nascent understanding of black opinion on immigration, the existing work on black opinion has not yet examined the contemporary utility of factors that predicted African Americans' reaction to the last great wave of immigration from Southern and Eastern European in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As I detail in the following text, there exist a number of contextual commonalities between these two periods: the size and scope of the waves of immigration, the socioeconomic status of African Americans, and the level of socioeconomic competition between immigrants and blacks that taken together may lead contemporary African Americans to react to the latest wave of immigration in a similar fashion.

In this paper, using original survey data from the 2011 Multi-State Survey on Race and Politics (MSSRP [Parker 2011]), I hypothesize that given the similarities between the past and present waves of immigration that the key factors in explaining African American reactions to the influx of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the early twentieth century also predict African Americans' attitudes today. According to historians of black opinion on immigration, African Americans were less likely than native whites to express support for restrictive immigration policies and were less likely to hold negative attitudes toward immigrants. In explaining African American opinion on immigration this scholarship points to a set of factors that included competition for scarce economic and political resources, support for key American values such as egalitarianism, the belief that new immigrants were differentiating themselves from African Americans, and the belief that restrictive immigration policies were fueled by racism (Diamond 1998; Hellwig 1982; Shankman 1982).

In line with blacks' response to new immigrants in the early twentieth century, my findings suggest that contemporary African Americans are less likely than whites to

express negative views of undocumented immigrants. I also discover that factors that shaped blacks' response to earlier waves of immigration continue to shape black public opinion. Specifically, I find that perceptions of support for the value of egalitarianism, the belief that restrictive immigration policies have a racial intent, the perceptions that new immigrants are engaging in a process of differentiation, and perceptions of competition with immigrants are among the strongest predictors of contemporary black opinion on immigration. However, unlike the past, whites and African Americans express similar levels of support for restrictive immigration policies. Taken together, I take my findings as evidence that the past may indeed be prologue in explaining black opinion toward undocumented immigration.

The paper proceeds in the following manner. First, I review the existing literature on African American opinion on immigration, and speak to the central limitations of this scholarship. Second, I discuss the historical scholarship on the manner in which blacks reacted to immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century, discuss the similarities between past and contemporary waves of immigration, and introduce my hypotheses. Finally, I provide a review of the data and measures that I employ and discuss my findings in light of these hypotheses. I conclude by speaking to the implications of our findings for the scholarship on black opinion concerning immigration reform.

Literature Review

As noted previously, the increase in the size of the immigrant population has led to a concomitant spike in studies that seek to uncover the key individual-level determinants of American public opinion on immigration reform. In this literature, one set of scholars has uncovered that Americans who are more likely to compete with new immigrants for jobs or are concerned that new immigrants will suppress their existing wages are more likely to support restrictive immigration policies (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Malhotra et al. 2013; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Other scholars argue that Americans' support for restrictive immigration policies reflects a range of contextual conditions that include the impact of residential proximity to immigrant populations (Ha 2010; Hopkins 2010; Newman 2013) or the role of immigrant attributes that include skin tone, language, or country of origin (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2012; Sniderman et al. 2004). Finally, some scholars argue that American support for restrictive immigration policies is best explained by the prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanics and Asians (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Citrin et al. 1997; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Kinder and Kam 2010).

Although a useful starting point, these studies provide relatively little guidance for understanding black opinion toward immigration given the small sample sizes of African Americans in many of these studies (Morris 2000). In response to this limitation, a number of recent studies that have examined African American opinion on immigration (Brader et al. 2010; Brown 2010; McClain et al. 2008; Nteta 2013; Radostitz 2013; Wilkinson and Bingham 2013; Wilkinson et al. 2007). For example, in his examination of African American opinion on Proposition 187, Morris

(2000) showed that improved personal financial conditions among black respondents predicted support for prohibiting undocumented immigrants from using public education, health care, and other social services in the state of California.[2] Pastor and Marcelli (2003) and Pantoja (2004) find that negative racial stereotypes of Latinos and perceptions of linked fate predict support for the view that immigration is a political and economic threat to the black community (McClain et al. 2007, 2008). Using the data from the 2004 National Politics Survey, Brown (2010) finds that African Americans who reported hearing more political messages from their clergy were more likely to support restrictive immigration policies and express negative views of new immigrants. In one of the most recent articles on the topic, using data from a 2006 Pew Center survey on immigration, Nteta (2013) finds that objective and subjective measures of economic self-interest help to account for African American opinion toward immigration reform (see also Wilkinson et al. 2007).

While useful, these studies offer no insights into how African Americans' experience with past waves of immigration may influence the contemporary dynamics of black opinion on immigration. Indeed, much of the existing scholarship on African American opinion on immigration focuses its attention on examining the utility of traditional predictors of American opinion on immigration reform for African Americans (for exceptions see Brown 2010; McClain et al. 2008; Wilkinson and Bingham 2013). This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature.

How then did African Americans respond to the previous wave of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century, and more importantly, to the restrictive immigration policies that characterized this period? In answering this question, historians of African American opinion toward immigrants and US immigration policy have relied upon a wealth of qualitative data that includes analyses of African American newspapers, public speeches made by black political elites, diary entries, and memoirs of African Americans (Diamond 1998; Fuchs 1990; Hellwig 1974, 1981, 1982; Jackson 1988; Rubin 1978; Shankman 1982).[3] Historians have reached two broad sets of conclusions regarding African American opinion toward immigration reform in the early twentieth century. First, when compared to native whites, African Americans expressed less support for restrictive immigration policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Gentlemen's Agreement, and the 1924 National Origins Act (Diamond 1998; Fuchs 1990; Hellwig 1974; Rubin 1978; Shankman 1982). This point has been best made by historian David Hellwig, who says of the racial divide on opinion toward immigration reform in the 1920s, "As 'strangers in the land,' albeit the land of their birth and that of their parents and grandparents, black Americans reacted differently to immigrants than did white natives—even when much of their rhetoric was almost identical, as was often the case" (Hellwig 1974: 86).

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2. Proposition 187, a California proposition passed in 1994, restricted undocumented immigrants from using health care, public education, and other social services.

3. Reliance on these sources does introduce the possibility that their conclusions regarding the content and key predictors of African American attitudes may reflect a middle class or elite bias. My analysis recognizes this possibility, but given the lack of survey data on black attitudes in this period these sources remain the best record of the content of black views toward immigration policy.

In explaining African Americans' policy preferences toward immigration, historians have focused attention on a specific set of justifications that were employed by African Americans in rationalizing their immigration policy preferences and attitudes toward new immigrants. More specifically, these scholars have noted that African Americans were less likely than native whites to view new immigrants as a threat to the political and cultural status quo, and shunned much of the nativist thinking that characterized white views of immigration (Diamond 1998; Fuchs 1990; Hellwig 1982; Rubin 1978; Shankman 1982). Rather, in explaining African American support for restrictive immigration policies, historians have found that the key factor that explained African American support for restrictive immigration policies were perceptions of the threat posed by new immigrants to the precarious economic position of African Americans (Fuchs 1990; Hellwig 1982; Shankman 1982). The influx of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had a momentous impact on the economic livelihoods of African Americans, particularly for blacks living in Northern cities. These new immigrants, mostly unskilled, often competed with African Americans for jobs as domestics, barbers, blacksmiths, bootblacks, and construction workers. By the 1920s, immigrants had replaced African Americans as the predominant group in many of these industries, and once gaining this foothold fought, violently at times, to restrict the entrance of African Americans into these industries.[4] This point was most strongly made by Shankman who says, "the Afro-American's realization that the immigrant might deprive his children of bread and clothing was probably the single most important reason for his having a negative image of the alien" (Shankman 1982: 156). As a result, for many African Americans the passage of restrictive immigration policies was thought to represent an economic boon to the community resulting in African Americans regaining a foothold in industries in which they have been overtaken by new immigrant groups.

Additionally, in accounting for African American support for restrictive policies historians have pointed to a widespread perception among African Americans regarding the manner in which new immigrants positioned themselves in the nation's racial hierarchy. According to accounts of the period, some African Americans were supportive of anti-immigration policies due to the belief that new immigrants engaged in a process of racial differentiation from African Americans. Nteta defines the process of differentiation as "the process by which early European immigrants engaged in and expressed a variety of negative behaviors and attitudes toward African Americans … that demonstrated their antipathy to African Americans as well as their acceptance of the existing racial structure" (Nteta 2006: 196). This process of racial differentiation was used by new immigrant groups to achieve social and political incorporation as both American and white, and thus solidified their racial and political standing in the United States (Jacobson 1998; Nteta 2006; Roediger 2005). The result was a black community that supported restrictive immigration policies and held negative views of

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4. Shankman (1982) maps the ascendance of Italian barbers and bootblacks in the twentieth century, and offers convincing evidence of the shift in the ethnic background of these industries. In New York City in 1870, less than 6 percent of bootblacks were Italian, with the large majority African American. In 1905, only twenty-five years later, nineteen out of twenty were from either Italy or Greece.

new immigrants due in large part to the contentious, and at times violent, relationship between African Americans and new immigrant groups.

By contrast, some African Americans held positive views of immigrants and opposed restrictive immigration policies during this time. These views were fueled by three beliefs. First, some blacks saw that support for anti-immigration policies would adversely affect the fortunes of the black community. According to these accounts, by even tacitly supporting what African Americans saw as racist legislation, blacks believed they would provide their enemies with the justification for race-based policies that may negatively impact the African American community. Second, there was widespread support for the belief that the proponents of restrictive immigration legislation were also the same individuals who supported the continued restriction of African Americans' political, economic, and social rights in the United States (Fuchs 1990; Hellwig 1982; Shankman 1982). In speaking of the black community's opposition to restrictive immigration policies found in the leading black newspapers of the day, Diamond says, "The racial basis of exclusion were attacked as unprincipled and black readers were cautioned that legal discrimination against some people could serve as a precedent to further oppress the African American" (Diamond 1998: 456). Thus, by expressing support for restrictive immigration policies, African Americans would be inadvertently supporting their political enemies as well.

Finally, a wide swath of the black community believed that restrictive immigration policies violated core American values, most notably the key American principles of equality, fairness, respect for human rights, and notions of America being an "immigrant nation." Hellwig, speaking of the ways in which Frederick Douglass reacted to attempts to restrict Chinese immigration, says "arguments against further immigration based on national self-preservation had a 'wise and logical' tone, he admitted, but 'higher principles than those of a cold and selfish expediency' were involved. The mission of the United States was to symbolize the unity and dignity of humanity and as such it had no choice but to accept whomever came to join the existing composite population" (Hellwig 1979: 29).

Thesis

What, if anything, links these two waves of immigration, and how do these connections help to inform our contemporary understandings of African American opinion toward undocumented immigrants? I argue that there has been great continuity in the socioeconomic and political environments facing African Americans in these two periods that contribute to the commonalities in reactions to these two distinct waves of immigration by black Americans. First, as has been widely reported, the United States currently finds itself in the midst of a new wave of immigration that rivals that of the early twentieth century (Daniels 2004). While the current wave of immigration is characterized by a growth in the Asian and Latin American foreign-born population, a decrease in the size of the European foreign-born population, and an explosion in the numbers of undocumented immigrants, there still exist a number of contextual

similarities between the two waves of immigration (Alba and Nee 1997; Grieco et al. 2012). One such similarity is that both waves of immigration have witnessed an explosion in the number of new immigrants that have arrived in the United States over a relatively short period of time. In 1910, new immigrants represented close to 14 percent of the US population, with a then staggering 18 million immigrants coming to the United States in the 30-year period between 1890 and 1920 (Daniels 2004). Today, new immigrants represent 13 percent of the total US population with more than 31 million new arrivals coming between 1970 and 2010 (Grieco et al. 2012). As a result of the explosion in the size and scope of the immigrant population, both periods have also witnessed an increase in nativism among the population resulting in widespread support for restrictive immigration policies that seek to quell the flow of newcomers (Daniels 2004; Huntington 2004; Schildkraut 2011; Schrag 2012).

Additionally, similar to their socioeconomic status during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans today find themselves at the bottom of the nation's socioeconomic hierarchy. This continuity in socioeconomic status may increase the likelihood that contemporary African Americans will view new immigrants from Latin America and Asian in a corresponding fashion to the manner in which blacks in an earlier period viewed immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. While African Americans in the twenty-first century have nominally achieved political equality with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the increase in African American representation at all levels of government, this political ascendance has not led to an equally radical shift in the socioeconomic gap between African Americans and native whites, the group which historically has been the basis of comparison for the black community (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). African American life expectancy has improved over the past 50 years, yet according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) the racial gap in life expectancy is currently six years.[5] In the arena of employment, African Americans are more likely to be unemployed than whites, with the African American unemployment rate more than doubling that of whites in 2010 (14 percent vs. 7 percent). Although income has greatly increased in absolute terms for African Americans, there still exist wide differences in the income levels of blacks and whites. In 2010, the median household income for whites was $55,412, but was $38,624 for African Americans. Examining measures of wealth, there also is a substantial racial gap, as the median household net worth for whites was $110,729, but only $4,955 for African Americans. Finally, looking at poverty rates, 10 percent of whites are classified as living below the poverty line, but almost 28 percent of African Americans in the United States live below the poverty line.

Because African Americans are located at the bottom of the American socioeconomic hierarchy, they are engaged in economic competition with immigrant newcomers. This level of competition is remarkably similar to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when African Americans and Southern and Eastern European immigrant groups were in competition for low-skilled employment and for

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5. All of the following statistics come from the 2010 US Census.

residence in good neighborhoods (Jacobson 1998; Lieberson 1980; Roediger 1991; Shankman 1982). Today, we see competition between new immigrants from Asia and Latin America and African Americans over scarce economic resources in the United States, most prominently in the fight for low-skill employment. Economists in studying the impact of immigration on the economic well-being of African Americans have discovered that new immigrants have had a deleterious effect on the employment opportunities of African Americans, as their increasing presence has led to a decrease in black wages, an increase in unemployment, and an increase in incarceration rates (Borjas et al. 2010; Lim 2001; Shulman 2004). The impact is felt most strongly in employment arenas that require minimal skills and educational attainment, thus making the African American community acutely susceptible to the negative economic consequences of further immigration. Sociologists conducting ethnographic studies of the labor market also point to the negative impact of immigrants on the employment opportunities and wages of African Americans, arguing that employer preferences for immigrants over African American workers coupled with immigrant employment networks have led to the prevalence of immigrant-controlled niches in urban America (Lim 2001; Waldinger 1996).[6]

Hypotheses

In this paper, I hypothesize that given similarities in: (1) the size and scope of new immigration, (2) the socioeconomic status of African Americans, and (3) competition between African Americans and new immigrants across the two most recent waves of immigration that the manner in which blacks responded to new immigration in the early twentieth century still holds resonance in explaining black opinion today. More concisely, I argue that in the realm of black opinion toward undocumented immigration that the past is prologue. This argument, based in large part on historical work on the history of black opinion toward immigration in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries yields the following six hypotheses:

> *H1: African Americans, relative to whites, will express less support for restrictive immigration policies and exhibit less virulent views of undocumented immigrants.*
>
> *H2: Perceptions of competition with new immigrant groups will lead African Americans to support restrictive immigration policies and express negative views of undocumented immigrants.*
>
> *H3: The belief that new immigrants are differentiating themselves from African Americans will lead African Americans to support restrictive immigration policies and express negative views of undocumented immigrants.*

6. These studies are by no means uncontested, as a number of sociologists and economists have found little evidence that the job prospects of African Americans are under attack by new immigrants (Hamermash and Bean 1998), what is important to note is that the perception that immigrants have had this impact on the African American community is a widely held view among African Americans today.

H4: Support for the value of egalitarianism will lead African Americans to oppose restrictive immigration policies and express positive views of undocumented immigrants.

H5: Support for the belief that restrictive immigration policies have a racial intent will lead African Americans to oppose restrictive immigration policies and express more positive views of undocumented immigrants.

H6: Perceptions of competition with immigrants will be the strongest predictor of African American opinion toward restrictive immigration policies and their attitudes toward undocumented immigrants.

While I argue that the contextual similarities in these two periods have influenced the nature of black opinion toward undocumented immigrants, there exist a number of differences between these periods that may undermine this argument. First, unlike the previous period of interaction with new immigrants, today there is more extensive class heterogeneity in the African American community (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Pattillo 1999; Robinson 2010; Wilson 1980). These class differences may lead to a similar schism in African American opinion toward immigration with working-class African Americans, more so than middle-class African Americans, more strongly supporting anti-immigration policies and expressing more antipathy toward undocumented immigrants. If this is accurate, then class-based differences, such as income and education, may be more important than the factors associated with the immigration opinions of previous generations of African Americans. Second, unlike the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of African Americans today do not reside in rural regions of the South, but are located in metropolitan areas in the South, Northeast, and Midwest (Rastogi et al. 2011). As a result, African Americans today are more likely than blacks in previous centuries to be in contact with new immigrants, and this increased contact may breed animosity toward undocumented immigration among blacks (Gay 2004, 2006). If this supposition is accurate then measures of contact with new immigrants, perceptions of linked fate, and residential proximity to new immigrants are likely to be the strongest predictors of attitudes toward immigration reform and undocumented immigrants.

Data and Methods

In testing these hypotheses, I employ data from the 2011 MSSRP. The 2011 MSSRP is a telephone survey of 1,504 Americans who live in the nation's thirteen most racially diverse states.[7] The survey was intended to uncover the relationship between race and a number of political controversies that included feelings toward President Obama and his policies, the rights of minority groups, and the nature of contemporary political participation. In addition to these topics, the survey included a number of original items

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7. The survey was conducted from January 24 to March 12, 2011 with Americans from California, Georgia, Arizona Colorado, Florida, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, South Carolina, North Carolina, Nevada, Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri.

that tap a respondent's perceptions of competition with immigrants, racial differentiation, egalitarianism, and political self-interest making the 2011 MSSRP an ideal survey to test my hypotheses. Given the focus of my analysis, I include only respondents who self-identified as non-Hispanic African Americans and non-Hispanic whites. These restrictions yield a final sample size of 899 whites and 379 African Americans.

My first dependent variable explores a respondent's support for the Dream Act, the policy that would allow undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as young children to gain citizenship if they attend college or serve in the US military. The item is scaled such that higher scores indicate opposition to this policy while lower scores indicate support for the passage of the Dream Act. My second dependent variable is an item that taps a respondent's affect for undocumented immigrants. Respondents were asked in the MSSRP to indicate their affect for undocumented immigrants using a feeling thermometer, and the item is scaled such that a higher score represents an unfavorable view of the group while a lower score corresponds to more positive views of undocumented immigrants.

In addition to standard socioeconomic variables (age, sex, income, and education), my model also controls for a respondent's partisan identification, ideological attachments, and race. In line with previous scholarship on immigration and public opinion, my model also incorporates a measure of economic self-interest that asks a respondent how anxious she is about her own economic situation, an item that asks about a respondent's religious attendance, a measure of linked fate, an item that asks respondents if they have contact with new immigrants, an index of support for authoritarian beliefs, and a measure of residential proximity to new immigrants based on the percent of immigrants living in a respondent's zip code.[8]

My first explanatory variable of interest is an index of two items that measure a respondent's perception of competition with new immigrant groups. The first item asks a respondent if she agrees with the statement, "More good jobs for immigrants mean fewer good jobs for people like me." The second item asks a respondent if she believes that "the more influence that immigrants have in politics the less influence people like me will have in politics."[9] My second explanatory variable of interest examines a respondent's belief that new immigrants are engaging in a process of differentiation by asking if a respondent agrees with the statement that "new immigrants do not interact with African Americans because they want to be more accepted by whites." A respondent's belief in political self-interest as it pertains to restrictive immigration policies is measured with the question, "do you believe that restrictive immigration policies are based in part on racism?" Finally, support for the value of egalitarianism is measured with an index of two items that ask a respondent if she believes that "group equality should be our ideal" and "we should increase social equality."[10]

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8. This continuous measure is scaled from 0 to 1, where 1 represents a zip code in which 100 percent of the residents are foreign born and 0 is a zip code in which there are no foreign-born residents. Data on residential proximity come from the 2007–2011 American Community Survey Census (US Census Bureau 2007–2011).

9. The alpha reliability of this index is .69.

10. The alpha reliability of this index is .72.

TABLE 1. *Percent oppose Dream Act and percent strongly dislike illegal immigrants by race, 2011 MSSRP*

	Oppose Dream Act	*Unfavorable View of Illegal Immigrants*
Whites	38%	43%
	(317)	(359)
African Americans	20%	32%
	(71)	(111)
Chi Squared	44.88**	26.56*

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents who expressed opinion on measure.
Sample size in parentheses.
* p < .01, ** p < .001.

Results

Historians of the early twentieth century have found evidence that while African Americans expressed support for restrictive immigration policies and exhibited negative views of new immigrants, they did so at lower levels than native-born whites. Table 1 finds this same pattern exists today. While 38 percent of the sample of white Americans expressed opposition to the Dream Act only 20 percent of African Americans shared this sentiment. Chi-square tests of independence indicate that these differences are statistically significant. Is there a similar divide when examining the level of affect that blacks and whites hold for undocumented immigrants? Indeed, I find this to be the case. Table 1 also details the percent of white and black respondents who hold unfavorable views of undocumented immigrants in 2011. Unsurprisingly, a sizeable proportion of both whites and blacks express negative views of undocumented immigrants, but whites are more likely (43 percent) to hold unfavorable views of undocumented immigrants when compared to African Americans (32 percent). A chi-square test of independence once again finds that the gap between these two groups concerning their views of undocumented immigrants is statistically significant.

A more detailed analysis that controls for key factors that shape public opinion produces distinct results as it pertains to the racial divide in public opinion toward immigration reform. Model 1 in table 2 presents an ordered logistic regression model that examines opposition to the Dream Act among both whites and African Americans and includes controls for a number of political, demographic, and contextual factors traditionally important in predicting public opinion on immigration alongside factors important in predicting black opinion in the early twentieth century. As seen in model 1 of table 2, I find little support for the hypothesis that African Americans express less opposition to the passage of the Dream Act when compared with whites. While

TABLE 2. *Ordered logistic regression for opposition to Dream Act, 2011 MSSRP*

	Model 1 All Respondents	Model 2 African Americans
African American	− .15	
	(.20)	
Male	.07	.05
	(.16)	(.27)
Education (1 = Graduate Degree)	− .07	− .36
	(.17)	(.30)
Party Identification (Democrat = 1)	**− .36****	− .11
	(.11)	(.24)
Ideology (Liberal = 1)	− .16**	.01
	(.06)	(.10)
Age	− .00	− .29
	(.09)	(.17)
Income (1= High Income)	.03	.02
	(.05)	(.09)
Anxious about Own Economic Situation	**.17***	− .01
	(.07)	(.12)
Contact with Immigrants	− .12	− .34
	(.16)	(.28)
Illegal Immigrant Thermometer	.01	.02
	(.02)	(.04)
Linked Fate	.00	**− .23***
	(.07)	**(.11)**
Religious Attendance	− .05	− .02
	(.05)	(.10)
Competition Index	**.12****	**.15***
	(.03)	**(.06)**
Restrictive Policies Are Racist	**− .60****	**− .52+**
	(.17)	**(.31)**
Egalitarianism	**− .08****	**− .10***
	(.02)	**(.04)**
Differentiation	.08	**.17***
	(.06)	**(.09)**
Chi Square	187.20	44.61
Significance	.000	.000
Pseudo R^2	.10	.07
N	651	231

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. Bold coefficients signify a significant
relationship between the independent and dependent variables.
+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

the coefficient for the item that taps a respondent's race is negative, suggesting that African Americans express less opposition to the Dream Act, this item does not achieve standard levels of statistical significance ($p = .531$).

The evidence presented in the preceding text suggests that there is not a meaningful gap between African American and white opinion on immigration reform as there has been in the past. But is the structure of contemporary black opinion similar to that of black opinion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? In other words, do perceptions of competition, racial differentiation, political self-interest, and support for egalitarianism still help to explain the content of black opinion toward immigration reform today? Model 2 of table 2 presents an ordered logistic regression model that
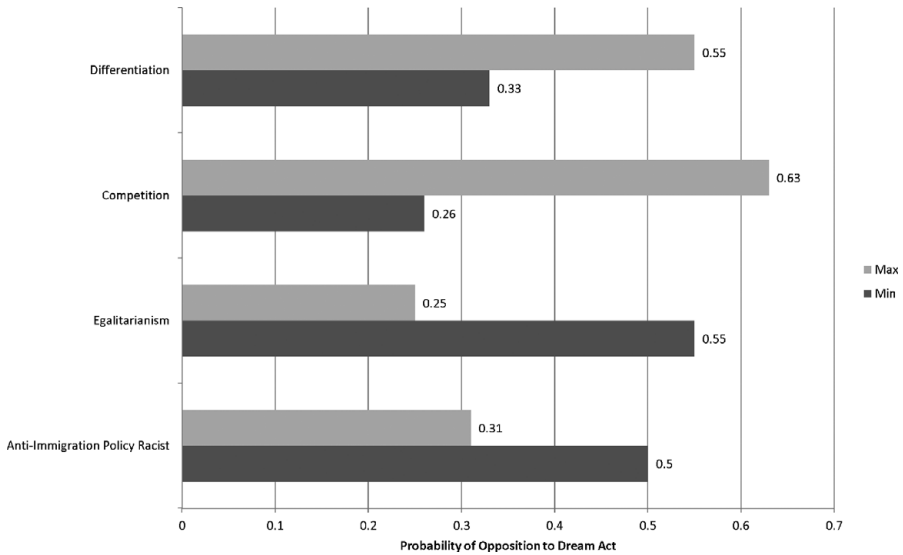
FIGURE 1. *Predicted probability of opposition to Dream Act by selected predictors among African Americans, 2011 MSSRP*

controls for factors important in predicting public opinion toward immigration reform as well as the determinants associated with African Americans' reaction to an earlier wave of immigration. As seen in model 2, among the traditional determinants of black opinion, only perceptions of linked fate and residential proximity to new immigrants are significant predictors of support for the Dream Act. However, I find that factors associated with African Americans' reaction to an earlier wave of immigration play an important role in predicting black opinion toward the Dream Act. More specifically, African Americans who perceive immigrants as competition for economic and political resources as well as African Americans who believe that new immigrants are shunning the black community in order to be closer to whites are both more likely to oppose the passage of the Dream Act. Model 2 also shows that factors that led African Americans to support liberal immigration policies also assist in accounting for contemporary black opinion. Here, I find that the belief that restrictive immigration policies have a racist intent and support for the value of egalitarianism lead African Americans to support the passage of the Dream Act in 2011.

To illustrate the substantive impact of these factors, I calculate a series of predicted probabilities in figure 1. As seen in figure 1, when holding all other variables at the mean value, an African American who strongly believes that immigrants are engaging in differentiation is 22 percentage points more likely to oppose the Dream Act than an African American who does not believe that immigrants engage in racial differentiation. Similarly, when holding all other factors constant, an African American who strongly believes that new immigrants and blacks are in competition is 37 points more

likely to oppose the Dream Act when compared to an individual who expresses the least amount of support for the belief that immigrants and blacks are in competition. In line with expectations movement from weak support for egalitarianism and the belief that restrictive immigration policies have a racial intent to the strongest level of support for these factors leads to a decrease in the probability of opposition to the Dream Act. For instance, an African American who expresses the strongest support for egalitarianism is 30 percentage points less likely to oppose the Dream Act when compared to an African American individual who expresses the least amount of support for egalitarianism.

These results make it clear that attitudes toward immigration policy fit with the expectations of the historical scholarship on black opinion. Yet, it remains unclear if these same factors predict how African Americans view undocumented immigrants. To investigate this, I test whether perceptions of competition, differentiation, political self-interest, and egalitarianism also predict African Americans attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. In addition, I test whether there is a racial divide in attitudes toward undocumented immigrants such that African Americans express more positive views of this group when compared to whites. Table 3 presents an OLS regression model of attitudes toward undocumented immigrants as measured by a respondent's score on a feeling thermometer.[11] Once again, I control for a range of factors thought to be important in accounting for opinion toward undocumented groups and test these measures alongside determinants associated with the manner in which blacks responded to an earlier wave of immigration.[12] Model 1 of table 3 tests the hypothesis that African Americans express less virulent attitudes toward undocumented immigrants controlling for all other relevant theoretical factors. As model 1 demonstrates, in line with previous trends regarding the racial divide on immigration, racial membership does exert a significant influence on a respondent's perception of undocumented immigrants. Indeed, as model 1 makes clear, African Americans, relative to whites, are less likely to express negative views of undocumented immigrants in 2011 as movement from being white to African American elicits a 6 percentage point decrease in negative attitudes directed at undocumented immigrants.

Model 2 of table 3 explores the contemporary utility of the factors associated with blacks' reaction to an earlier wave of immigration, testing the hypothesis that these factors still predict African American attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. As seen in model 2, black opinion concerning undocumented immigrants flows from a number of sources. Surprisingly, both highly educated African Americans and blacks who identify as Democrats express negative views of undocumented immigrants. In line with existing scholarship, contact with immigrants leads African Americans to hold more positive views of undocumented immigrants. More germane to my

11. Scores on the feeling thermometer are scaled 0 to 1, with 1 representing the most unfavorable view of undocumented immigrants and 0 denoting the most favorable view of the group.
12. In this model all variables are coded 0 to 1, with 1 representing the support for the variable in question. To the previous model I add a measure of a respondent's support for authoritarianism (alpha = .66). Authoritarianism has been shown to be predictive of American opinion toward immigrants (Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

TABLE 3. *OLS regression for affect for illegal immigrants, 2011 MSSRP*

	Model 1 *All Respondents*	Model 2 *African Americans*
African American	**− .06*** **(.03)**	
Male	− .01 **(.02)**	.04 **(.04)**
Education	**.10*** (.05)	**.21*** (.09)
Party Identification (Democrat=1)	.00 (.03)	.12+ (.07)
Ideology (Liberal = 1)	**− .12**** **(.05)**	− .00 (.08)
Age	− .01 (.04)	− .05 (.07)
Income (1= High Income)	− .01 (.04)	.03 (.08)
Contact with Immigrants	− .03 (.02)	**− .09*** **(.04)**
% Foreign Born (Zip Code)	.09 (.10)	.23 (.17)
Linked Fate	.01 (.03)	.02 (.05)
Authoritarian Index	**.09**** **(.04)**	.09 (.06)
Competition	**.22***** **(.03)**	**.31***** **(.06)**
Restrictive Policies Are Racist	**− .10***** **(.03)**	**− .09+** **(.06)**
Egalitarianism	**− .13** (.04)	**− .14*** **(.06)**
Differentiation	.02 (.03)	− .05 (.05)
Constant	**.61***** **(.06)**	**.31**** **(.12)**
Standard Error	.25	.26
R-Square	.23	.22
Adjusted R-Square	.21	.17
N	648	231

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. Bold coefficients signify a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables.
+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

interests, I uncover that a number of factors important in predicting black opinion toward immigrants in the early twentieth century still account for black attitudes today. Support for egalitarianism as well as the strong belief that restrictive immigration policies are racist lead African Americans to express more positive views of undocumented immigrants in line with how these factors operated in the past. Additionally, the strongest predictor of black opinion concerning undocumented immigrants is once again a respondent's perception of the level of political and economic competition with new immigrants indicating that perceptions of competition provide the primary motivation for not only how blacks respond to restrictive immigration reforms but to undocumented immigrants as well.

Discussion

In this paper I ask two questions. First, are the factors associated with predicting African Americans' reactions to immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still relevant in understanding contemporary black opinion toward undocumented immigration? Second, does the racial divide on immigration seen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still exist today? I find clear and consistent evidence that contemporary African Americans react to undocumented immigration in a similar fashion to a previous generation of blacks who experienced a comparable wave of immigration to the United States. Using an original survey of American opinion toward immigration I discover that factors that help to account for black opinion toward immigration in the early twentieth century, factors that include perceptions of differentiation, political self-interest, support for egalitarianism, and most importantly perceptions of competition with new immigrants all predict black opinion toward both the Dream Act and undocumented immigrants in 2011. However, I find mixed evidence of the continued relevance of the racial divide in opinion on immigration. While significant differences between African Americans and whites in their immigration policy preferences do not exist, when examining affect toward undocumented immigrants African Americans are less likely to express antipathy toward undocumented immigrants when compared to white Americans. These findings suggest that in many ways the past is prologue when it comes to understanding the dynamics of contemporary African American opinion toward undocumented immigration.

What then explains the continuity in African American opinion toward immigration to the United States? I argue that while there have been a number of dramatic changes in the political incorporation of African Americans as well as significant changes in the racial, ethnic, and legal composition of the immigrant population there exist a number of contextual similarities between these two periods that propel a linearity in African American public opinion. The commonalities in the size and scope of the two waves of immigration, the continuing placement of African Americans at the bottom of the nation's socioeconomic hierarchy, and the continued competition between immigrants and African Americans for scarce economic and political resources have led contemporary African Americans to view continued immigration to the United States through a similar lens as their forbearers. While the evidence presented in the preceding text provides preliminary validation to my argument, future work on black opinion on immigration should employ a more variegated set of evidence to test my theory, evidence that includes analyses of African American newspapers, public speeches made by black political elites, diary entries, and interviews and focus groups of African Americans. The use of a multimethod approach to understanding black opinion will provide a more engrossing picture of black opinion toward immigration and will better connect with the work of historians of black opinion in the twentieth century.

Why do perceptions of competition remain the strongest predictor of black opinion in the twenty-first century? My results provide strong evidence that African American

opinion on immigration reform is fueled by concerns regarding the economic conse-quences of immigration for the black community. In this respect, our findings support the conclusion that black opinion toward immigration is best explained by using group position theory. Group position theory argues that opposition to immigration policies is indicative of the continued salience of institutionalized group conflict over scarce resources (power, status, economic goods, and services), the racial hierarchy, and the continued protection of group hegemony. More specifically, group position theory predicts that African Americans will view liberal immigration policies as a threat to their relatively dominant position in the racial hierarchy (over new immigrants), and consequently express widespread opposition to the enactment of this and any policy that will adversely affect their position and the rights, status, and resources that ac-company this position (Bobo and Tuan 2006). In order to achieve firmer conclusions about the value of group position theory, future research should assess whether other predictions derived from the theory—such as the claim that African Americans will perceive new immigrants as distinct and alien, will view their own group as superior to immigrants, and will explicitly endorse the belief that blacks have a proprietary claim over scarce socioeconomic and political resources—find empirical support in studying black opinion.

While the findings presented in this study further illuminate the content and deter-minants of black opinion, there remain a number of unexplored avenues for future research. First, while these results fit with the expectations of the historical schol-arship on black opinion, an implicit argument in historical studies of black opinion toward immigration reform concerns the unique impact that factors such as differenti-ation, competition, political self-interest, and egalitarianism had on African American opinion. Put simply, these studies posit that these factors were important in predicting and explaining African American opinion, but had little to no impact when examining white opinion on immigration reform. Future research should examine if these factors fail to predict white opinion toward immigration reform as well as attitudes toward new immigrants. Second, my study treats African Americans as a monolithic group and thus does not inquire as to how characteristics such as class membership, generational status, nativity, or skin color may affect the impact of the factors examined. Future work should look to see if these various schisms within the black community have a substantive impact on the content and determinants of black opinion on immigration. Finally, future scholarship should look to examine a broader range of immigration policies and measures of attitudes toward immigrants in order to assess whether these findings "travel" in predicting black opinion.

Conclusion

The passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act and the subsequent 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act coupled with the economic opportunity afforded to immigrant newcomers in the United States has led to a new wave of immigration unseen since the early twentieth century. Alongside this new wave of immigration,

we have seen an increase in the level of opposition to continued immigration. A wealth of social scientific research has attempted to explain public opinion regarding this newest wave of immigration. Unfortunately, these studies focused their attention primarily on the attitudes of whites, leaving the content and core determinants of African American opinion toward immigration reform unclear.

In attempting to fill this lacuna, this study argues that given a range of contextual commonalities between the two most recent waves of immigration to the United States, the factors important in predicting black opinion to immigration in the early twentieth century also predict the manner in which contemporary black Americans react to undocumented immigration. I find confirmatory evidence of this hypothesis pointing to the conclusion that the past is indeed prologue in explaining African American opinion regarding immigration reform.

Appendix A—Question Wording from 2011 MSSRP

Anxiety About Own Economic Situation

Now, thinking about your own economic situation. Some people are very anxious about their own economic situation while other people are not anxious at all. How anxious are you about your own economic situation?

Authoritarian Index

On a related issue, I'd like to ask you a few questions about child rearing. There a number of qualities that people feel children should have, but every person thinks that some are more important than others. Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have.

Which one do you think is more important for a child to have: (rotate) independence or respect for elders?

Which one do you think is more important for a child to have: (rotate) curiosity or good manners?

Which one do you think is more important for a child to have: (rotate) obedience or self-reliance?

Which one do you think is more important for a child to be: (rotate) considerate or well behaved?

Egalitarianism Index

Now I'm going to read a series of short statements with which you may either agree or disagree. For each statement, please tell me how you feel, on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means you strongly agree, 7 means you strongly disagree, and 4 is the midpoint.
Group equality should be our ideal.

We should increase social equality.

Contact with Immigrants. Do you have any close friends, relatives, or colleagues who are immigrants?

Political Self-Interest.   Do you believe that restrictive immigration politics are based in part on racism?

Differentiation.   Okay, and now the last four questions about immigration. Again, tell me if you (rotate) strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement

New immigrants do not interact with African Americans because they want to be more accepted by whites.

Competition.   Okay, and now the last four questions about immigration. Again, tell me if you (rotate) strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement

More good jobs for immigrants mean fewer good jobs for people like me.

The more influence that immigrants have in politics the less influence people like me will have in politics.

Religious Attendance.   Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? Would you say never, less often than a few times a year, a few times a year, once or twice a month, once a week, or more than once a week?

Linked Fate.   Do you think that what happens generally to [RACIAL GROUP OF RESPONDENT] will have something to do with what happens in your life?

Illegal Immigrant Feeling Thermometer.   I'd like to get your feelings toward different groups of people who are in the news these days. I'd like you to rate people using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 5 degrees and 10 degrees mean that you feel favorable toward the person and ratings between 0 degrees and 4 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward them. If we come to a group whose name you don't recognize, just say so, and we'll move on to the next one.

Dream Act.   Okay, how about the Dream Act? The Dream Act would allow illegal immigrants who came to the United States as very young children to eventually gain legal status if they attend college, or serve in the US military. Do you (rotate) support or oppose the Dream Act?

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