

The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

A large literature has examined the factors that influence immigration attitudes. Yet prior tests have considered only a few immigrant attributes at a time, limiting their capacity to test several hypotheses simultaneously. This paper uses conjoint analysis to test the influence of nine randomized immigrant attributes in generating support for admission. Drawing on a two-wave, population-based panel survey, it demonstrates that Americans view educated immigrants in high-status jobs favorably, while they view those who lack plans to work, entered without authorization, come from Iraq, or do not speak English unfavorably. The results are consistent with norms-based and sociotropic explanations of immigration attitudes. Remarkably, Americans' preferences vary little with their education, partisanship, labor market position, ethnocentrism, or other attributes. Beneath partisan divisions over immigration lies a consensus about which immigrants to admit, a fact which points to limits in both theories emphasizing economic threats and those emphasizing cultural threats.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the immigrant population in the U.S. has grown to its current level of 40 million people (United States Census Bureau 2011), scholars have devoted increasing attention to the underpinnings of immigration-related attitudes. One central question focuses whether attitudes on immigration are primarily driven by economic competition, by ethnocentrism, by concerns about norms and national identity, or by other factors (e.g. Citrin et al. 1997; Cain, Citrin and Wong 2000; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Dancygier 2010; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Hopkins 2010; Wong 2010; Malhotra, Margalit and Mo 2011; Schildkraut 2011; Wright 2011). Yet to date, survey experiments on these questions have manipulated only a few immigrant features at a time, such as immigrants' countries of origin, skill levels, skin tones, or English abilities (e.g. Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Adida, Laitin and Valfort 2010; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Ostfeld and Mutz 2011; Valentino and Iyengar 2011; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar 2011). This empirical strategy has enabled scholars to test several likely influences on immigration attitudes in isolation, but it has not allowed for comprehensive tests of the competing hypotheses. For example, isolated tests may tell us whether norms about national identity have any influence on immigration attitudes, but they do not tell us how that influence compares with the influence of other factors.

In this study, we aim to identify the attributes of immigrants that provoke especially positive or negative reactions among Americans. Our experiment puts a population-based sample of U.S. citizens in the position of immigration policymakers and asks them to decide between pairs of immigrants applying for admission to the U.S.. In each case, a respondent sees application information for pairs of immigrants, including notes about the immigrants' skill levels, countries of origin, and several other factors. By using statistical methods for such "choice-based conjoint analysis" (e.g. Green, Krieger and Wind 2001; Raghavarao, Wiley and Chitturi 2011), we are able to identify which immigrant attributes make immigrants more or less likely to be granted admission. Our design enables us to vary many attributes simultaneously, considering both

their marginal effects on attitudes as well as any potential interactions.¹

Our design allows us to compare the explanatory power of the various hypotheses, from those emphasizing labor market threat or fiscal burdens to those emphasizing sociotropic impacts, norm adherence, or prejudice. Those hypotheses emphasizing immigrants' adherence to national norms and their expected economic contributions to the U.S. as a whole receive strong support. For our full sample of respondents, immigrants with bachelors' degrees are 21 percentage points more likely to win admission over those with no education, for example. We find some evidence that immigrants' countries of origin matter, with respondents penalizing Iraqi immigrants by 15 percentage points and with more ethnocentric respondents penalizing immigrants from several African and Asian countries. Yet such effects are relatively small in magnitude and limited in scope. Once we provide information on education, language, and other factors, Mexican immigrants appear to suffer little penalty as compared to German or French immigrants, a finding which distinguishes these results from those of Brader, Valentino and Suhay (2008).

The results are at odds with explanations emphasizing labor market threat, since preferences about high-skilled immigrants and those planning to work do not vary with respondents' skill levels, occupations, or industries. Yet they are also at odds with explanations highlighting several other types of variation across individuals. Indeed, the most striking pattern to emerge is not anticipated by prior scholarship emphasizing either economic or cultural factors. Past theories of immigration attitudes have consistently posited individual-level differences in attitudes toward immigrants, whether they are based on a respondent's labor market position, attitudes toward out-groups, partisanship, or other traits. Yet very consistently, our results show that Americans from different groups use approximately the same criteria in deciding between pairs of prospective immigrants. The core results differ little based on the respondents' education, occupation, industry of employment, income, fiscal exposure, ethnocentrism, race/ethnicity, partisanship, ideology, or other demographic and attitudinal characteristics.

A wealth of recent scholarship reports pronounced differences in attitudes across partisan

¹Upon publication, all data and code will be posted at (URL removed). The Online Appendix is available at that URL as well.

groups, both on preferred immigration policies (e.g. Dyck, Johnson and Wasson 2012; Knoll, Redlawsk and Sanborn 2011) and on a host of other political issues (e.g. Zaller 1992; Bartels 2002; Levendusky 2009). Gerber and Huber (2009) show that partisanship can even influence economic behavior. Given the expansive influence of partisanship, the underlying American consensus on preferred immigrants uncovered here is all the more notable. The strength of this unacknowledged consensus undercuts explanations of immigration attitudes that highlight individual-level differences, such as claims that anti-immigrant attitudes are driven by distributional concerns. It also suggests that contemporary divisions over immigration policy are not masking divisions over the types of immigrants to admit—on that point, there is widespread agreement. Immigrants are being assessed in similar ways by Democrats and Republicans, by high school graduates and college graduates, and by rich and poor. The operative question appears to be not how immigrants affect specific individuals, but how they affect the nation as a whole.

A wide variety of robustness checks provide added confidence that these results are not artifacts of specific choices made during survey administration or statistical analysis. The results are not especially pronounced among those with a tendency to “self-monitor” or among those who saw less typical immigrant profiles. And while these evaluations of individual immigrants provide new leverage to conduct competitive tests of various hypotheses, we also show that they are closely related to respondents’ attitudes on immigration policy. The results are instructive both about the evaluation of individual immigrants and about policy-relevant attitudes. In the conclusion, we outline what this “hidden American immigration consensus” implies for immigration policymaking. The choice-based conjoint analysis employed by this paper has potential value to social scientists working on problems well beyond immigration attitudes, a point we develop in the conclusion as well.

II. HYPOTHESES

Today’s immigrants to the U.S. include people born in virtually every country and circumstance. They entered the country in various ways and with various purposes, from political refugees to H-1B visa holders and unauthorized immigrants. As immigrant populations have

grown in the U.S. and other developed countries, hypotheses about the sources of native-born opinion about immigrants have proliferated as well. In this section, we organize several theoretical approaches based on the hypotheses they generate about two questions: what attributes of immigrants influence native-born attitudes, and which sub-populations within the native-born population are influenced? While prior work has commonly adopted an “economics versus culture” framework, this section identifies several distinct hypotheses that fit under the broad “cultural” heading, from hypotheses emphasizing tolerance and ethnocentrism to others highlighting adherence to norms.² We also distinguish between narrow economic hypotheses that apply to sub-groups of native-born respondents and broader economic hypotheses that focus on immigration’s impacts on the nation as a whole. Reviews of this literature commonly emphasize differences in the various theoretical approaches, but this section points out an important point of agreement: prior theorizing of various types leads us to expect pronounced individual-level variation in attitudes toward immigrants.

A. Economic Self-Interest and Sociotropic Concerns

One set of approaches to immigration attitudes takes economic self-interest as its starting point. In this view, immigrants are perceived by native-born individuals as competitors for scarce jobs (Simon 1989; Kessler 2001; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda 2006; Malhotra, Margalit and Mo 2011; Dancygier and Donnelly 2011), a phenomenon Olzak (1992) documents at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet such perceptions are not uniform across individuals. Native-born Americans are expected to oppose immigrants with skill profiles and occupations similar to their own. Scheve and Slaughter (2001), for example, report that U.S. respondents with lower skill levels are more supportive of restricting immigration, and conclude that prospective voters “form policy opinions in accord with their interests as labor force participants” (133).³

²Our focus is on attitudes within the United States, so we do not emphasize cross-national variation in political institutions, welfare states, or other potential antecedents of immigration attitudes. For research on these questions, see Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) for a review.

³Mayda (2006) extends this finding by examining cross-national interactions. She concludes that concerns about labor market competition play “a key and robust role in preference

Grounded in assumptions of relative factor scarcity, this approach hypothesizes that attitudes toward immigrants will be less favorable as the immigrants' skills grow more similar to those of the native-born residents in question. This hypothesis can be operationalized by considering education levels or occupations.

Another variant of the material self-interest approach hypothesizes that immigrants might influence native-born residents through their impact on tax and expenditure levels (Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter 2007; Facchini and Mayda 2009). Those native-born residents whose level of income and place of residence expose them to higher costs from immigration are expected to be more opposed. For example, a wealthy respondent in a state with many immigrants and a high income tax is likely to be more opposed to immigration than a similar respondent in a state with no income tax. Under this hypothesis, we might also expect that immigrants' intention and ability to work will influence their reception by the native-born, with high-income Americans likely to be wary of immigrants not intending to work. This hypothesis provides a reason for native-born Americans with significant tax concerns to prefer male immigrants to female immigrants, as female immigrants are likely to be more closely associated with child-rearing and concerns about "anchor babies."

Other scholarship has contested the material self-interest hypotheses, either by pointing out that economic perceptions are weak predictors of immigration-related attitudes (e.g. Citrin et al. 1997; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Sides and Citrin 2007), or else by demonstrating that the preference for high-skilled immigrants is evident among various sub-groups of natives: those in almost all segments of the labor force as well as those outside it; those who are economically secure and those who are not; and those living in states with high fiscal exposure to immigrants as well as those elsewhere (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; 2010). To the extent that more educated individuals are more supportive of immigration, such a finding might reflect not the influence of labor market competition but of tolerance. Moreover, Hainmueller, Hiscox and Margalit (2011) show that both stated and quasi-behavioral measures of attitudes towards immigration are very similar among native workers that are employed in U.S. industries that vary in terms of their dependence on immigrant labor, their labor mobility, or the skill mix of formation over immigration policy" (526).

immigrants that they employ (but see Malhotra, Margalit and Mo 2011). These findings are inconsistent with the argument that material concerns about labor market competition play an important role in shaping attitudes towards immigration.

While self-interest hypotheses attribute anti-immigrant sentiment to concerns about labor market competition or fiscal burdens, there are also sociotropic economic explanations that remain viable even in the face of the objections raised to accounts grounded in narrow self-interest. According to a sociotropic account, native-born Americans could respond to immigrants based on perceptions about their economic contribution to the nation as a whole. If so, native-born Americans might prefer well educated, experienced, high-status professionals based on perceptions of their impact on the national economy or their likely tax contribution (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). Sociotropic hypotheses have been well-developed in explaining Americans' perceptions of economic performance (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Kinder, Adams and Gronke 1989; Mutz and Mondak 1997), but could easily extend to their assessments of immigrants as well.

B. Prejudice and Ethnocentrism

As an issue, immigration has parallels with race-related questions such as desegregation or affirmative action. Both are emotionally charged issues that address the rights of people who are predominantly ethnic or racial minorities (e.g. Carmines and Stimson 1980; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Albertson and Gadarian 2010). Those who hold negative stereotypes about immigrants (Burns and Gimpel 2000) or more biased implicit associations (Pérez 2010) are more opposed to immigration. In the U.S. and Europe, there is substantial variation in support based on immigrants' countries of origin (Lee and Fiske 2006; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Hainmueller and Hangartner 2011; but see Sniderman et al. 2002). Given those observations, an alternate set of explanations holds that non-Hispanic white Americans' immigration attitudes—and perhaps those of other groups—are structured similarly to their racial views. These viewpoints begin from the contention that racial and immigration-related attitudes stem from a common underlying factor, whether it is ethnocentrism (e.g. Kinder and Kam 2009), authoritarianism (Hetherington and Weiler 2009), or social dominance orientation (Newman,

Hartman and Taber 2012*b*). Building on the close relationship between immigrants' countries of origin and their ethnic or racial backgrounds, this approach generates two hypotheses: that native-born Americans will be more opposed to immigrants from countries that are more ethnically and culturally distinctive and that those native-born Americans with higher levels of ethnocentrism or prejudice will be especially opposed (Kinder and Kam 2009, pg. 138).

In the narrow variant of hypotheses emphasizing prejudice, immigration-related attitudes are straightforward extensions of racial attitudes. Thus native-born, non-Hispanic white Americans are likely to be more supportive of immigrants of European descent. In this view, sources of inter-group difference that are common to racial ascription, such as skin tone, are likely to shape attitudes on immigration. However, Valentino and Iyengar (2011), Hopkins (2011), and Ostfeld and Mutz (2011) all report no direct influence of skin tone manipulations on immigration-related attitudes.⁴ Such results are in keeping with research emphasizing the uniqueness of racial distinction between native-born whites and blacks within the U.S. (Watters 2001; Marrow 2009).

Maintaining the emphasis on prejudice or ethnocentrism, a second approach allows for the possibility that the content of the anti-immigrant stereotypes might differ from that of anti-black stereotypes. As Dovidio, Gluszek and John (2010) write of one heavily immigrant group, "bias toward Latinos may involve an additional dimension, one of foreignness, compared to bias against Blacks" (63, see also Chavez 2008). Put differently, there are several immigrant attributes that might increase perceptions of social and cultural distance, from some immigrants' difficulty with English (Gluszek and Dovidio 2010; Hopkins 2011; Newman, Hartman and Taber 2012*a*) to their religion or other cultural practices (Adida, Laitin and Valfort 2010; Ostfeld and Mutz 2011). This hypothesis could explain why immigrants who do not speak English or those from outside Europe might be viewed more negatively. Brader, Valentino and Suhay (2008) highlight anxiety as a mechanism explaining why ethnic difference shapes immigration attitudes. With respect to the Middle East, threats about terrorism could exacerbate such differences (Gadarian 2010; Branton et al. 2011; Schildkraut 2011).

⁴Similarly, in examining Italian attitudes, Sniderman et al. (2002) find that African immigrants do not generate more hostility than do Eastern European immigrants.

C. American Identity and Norms

Still another theoretical approach begins from the premise that the native born evaluate immigrants primarily based on their adherence to norms related to American identity (Schildkraut 2011). This viewpoint has a precedent in the study of race and politics, where research demonstrates that white survey respondents favor government help for blacks who act in accordance with traditional values (Sniderman et al. 1991). Such results cannot be explained through racism or ethnocentrism alone, as they show that an out-group can sometimes be viewed positively. With respect to immigration, many Americans identify strongly with their nationality (Theiss-Morse 2009; Wong 2010), and concerns that immigration might change or dilute national identity are widespread (Citrin et al. 1997; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Schildkraut 2011; Wright 2011). Attitudes toward groups of immigrants might thus hinge on whether those groups are seen as upholding American norms (Wright and Citrin 2011).

But what are “American norms?” Prior research offers potential answers. One norm concerns assimilation (Schildkraut 2005; 2011): we should expect those immigrants who demonstrate an interest in America and its culture to win higher levels of support from native-born Americans. Over 90% of Americans indicate that speaking English is an important element of American identity (Theiss-Morse 2009; Wong 2010), so we hypothesize that the extent to which an immigrant speaks English will matter (see also Hopkins 2011; Newman, Hartman and Taber 2012a).

The norm-based approach also produces the expectation that immigrants’ labor market credentials will be influential, albeit for reasons that are not driven by narrow economic self-interest. Given Americans’ strong adherence to work-related norms, immigrants’ profession, job experiences, and employment plans are potential signals of adherence to those norms (see also Sniderman et al. 1991; Gilens 1999). Whereas the hypothesis grounded in self-interest predicts that immigrants’ professions should interact with hosts’ professions, this norm-based account expects a more common influence across host sub-groups. Native-born Americans will approve of an immigrating child care provider, irrespective of whether they are child care providers themselves. Immigrants who want to come to the U.S. to improve their job prospects might be rewarded relative to those seeking asylum or reuniting with family. A

related line of thinking might lead immigrants who are more familiar with the U.S., perhaps having spent prior time in the country, to garner more support. Notice the similarity between the observable implications associated with this norms-based approach and those associated with the sociotropic approach. To the extent that norms about American identity are related to professional success, these two approaches yield overlapping expectations.

Conversely, one of the central norms that many contemporary immigrants are perceived to violate regards authorized entry to the country (Hood and Morris 1998; Chavez 2008). If so, immigrants who have previously been in the U.S. without authorization might well be penalized for that entry despite their increased familiarity with the country. (Alternately, Americans might worry not only about norms but also about laws, and about the increased possibility of future criminal activity from those entering without authorization.) One of the liabilities of the norms-based account is that there is no comprehensive list of norms related to American identity, giving the hypothesis substantial flexibility. Nonetheless, our focus here is on very well-defined norms, such as those around language, work, and unauthorized entry.

This theoretical discussion does not pretend to be exhaustive, as still other theoretical approaches emphasize the role of party politics and political mobilization (e.g. Messina 1989; Money 1999; Knoll, Redlawsk and Sanborn 2011) or the role of the media (e.g. Abrajano and Singh 2009; Dunaway, Branton and Abrajano 2010; Hopkins 2010). One might also imagine an altruism-based theory—an “Emma Lazarus” approach—in which Americans are more likely to support those immigrants most in need, such as asylum seekers. But this discussion organizes prior theorizing into three broad approaches, and it develops observable implications from the various approaches. Most hypotheses lead us to expect different responses among sub-groups of Americans, while a few predict a more common response.

D. Limits of Existing Evidence

Pioneering studies of immigration played a critical role in identifying the correlates of immigration attitudes (e.g. Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990; Citrin et al. 1997; Burns and Gimpel 2000; Scheve and Slaughter 2001), but these early studies typically examined attitudes towards immigration in general (but see Dustmann and Preston 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox

2007). As this research literature has expanded, scholars have increasingly supplemented observational studies with experimental approaches. Such experiments vary one, two, or at most three immigrant attributes at a time, including the immigrant's country of origin, educational background, language use, or skin tone (Sniderman et al. 2002; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Adida, Laitin and Valfort 2010; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Ostfeld and Mutz 2011; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar 2011; Hopkins 2011; Schildkraut 2011; Valentino and Iyengar 2011; Wright and Citrin 2011; Newman, Hartman and Taber 2012a). Yet even this second generation of studies is limited in its ability to test the relative strength of various hypotheses. There is also the possibility of confounding if the experimentally manipulated attributes are correlated with other attributes that could affect respondents' reactions.⁵ Certainly, it is difficult to identify a single manipulation that can definitively capture a hypothesis, and it is difficult to make direct comparisons between estimates obtained from experiments with different designs, manipulations, and dependent variables. Moreover, prior research has focused on only a small subset of the sources of immigrant-native distinction. As a result, it is not positioned to examine interactions across different types of distinction. Given these limitations, the following section proposes a research design that enables us to compare a much wider range of theoretically relevant immigrant attributes on a single scale.

III. DATA AND MEASUREMENT

A. Experimental Design

We employ a choice-based conjoint design to obtain a more comprehensive picture of citizens' opinions on immigration. Conjoint analyses have been widely used in marketing research (e.g.

⁵One exception to this is an observational study by Hainmueller and Hangartner (2011), which draws upon behavioral data from Swiss municipalities that used referenda to decide on immigrants' citizenship applications. They show that voters strongly differentiate between immigrant applicants with different attributes. In particular, country of origin determines naturalization success more than any other applicant characteristic, including integration status or economic credentials.

Green, Krieger and Wind 2001; Raghavarao, Wiley and Chitturi 2011), but such approaches have seen little use in political science. Our experimental design puts respondents in the position of an immigration policymaker, asking them to make binary decisions between pairs of immigrants applying for admission. We require a choice between each pair of immigrants to simplify the decision task given the limits of short-term memory (see also Krosnick 1999; Grimmer and King 2011). Following a short introduction which explains the exercise,⁶ we show respondents a screen with profiles of two immigrants as displayed in Figure 1. The instruction on top of the profiles reads: “Please read the descriptions of the potential immigrants carefully. Then, please indicate which of the two immigrants you would personally prefer to see admitted to the United States.”

Each respondent successively evaluates five such binary comparisons, with each comparison displayed on a new screen. We vary the profiles of the two immigrants on nine different attributes that previous studies have identified as potentially important determinants of immigration attitudes. The attributes include each immigrant’s *gender*, *education level*, *employment plans*, *job experience*, *profession*, *language skills*, *country of origin*, *reasons for the application*, and *prior trips to the U.S.*. These attributes were chosen to approximate the information available to immigration officials, and that rationale explains why other factors such as religion were omitted. For each respondent, we randomly assign the order of the attributes to rule out

⁶The introduction reads: “[t]his study considers immigration and who is permitted to come to the United States to live. For the next few minutes, we are going to ask you to act as if you were an immigration official. We will provide you with several pieces of information about people who might apply to move to the United States. For each pair of people, please indicate which of the two immigrants you would personally prefer to see admitted to the United States. This exercise is purely hypothetical. Please remember that the United States receives many more applications for admission than it can accept. Even if you aren’t entirely sure, please indicate which of the two you prefer.” A separate experiment conducted through Amazon Mechanical Turk with 750 respondents indicates that an introduction without the language about acting “as if you were an immigration official” produces highly similar results.

primacy and recency effects.⁷

Each of the attributes has a set of values. For example, *job experience* has five values ranging from “no job training or prior experience” to “more than five years.” For each profile we randomly assign the values of each attribute such that the two immigrants’ profiles vary both within and across the binary comparisons. Table 1 contains the full list of attributes and attribute values. They cover a wide range—in theory, there are just under 900,000 unique immigrant profiles—to assess the various theoretical dimensions that are potentially important determinants of attitudes towards immigration. While some profiles are more typical than others, the population of potential immigrants to the U.S. is itself both large and diverse, and the attribute values were chosen to be common and heterogeneous. Table D.1 in the Online Appendix reinforces this observation by using seven Current Population Surveys from 2011 and 2012 to estimate the share of immigrants from each of our ten national-origin groups with some college education or with a bachelor’s degree. Within each national origin group, there is substantial variation in educational levels, with 17% of Mexican immigrants having at least some college education and 76% of Indian immigrants having completed a B.A. Mexican immigrants account for about 24% of all immigrants in the surveys, and on account of that fact, there are almost as many Mexican immigrants with BAs (1,619) in the surveys as there are Chinese immigrants with BAs (1,654). Even seemingly atypical profiles generated in our experiment are likely correspond to significant numbers of actual immigrants. Below, we also address the question of typicality by identifying respondents who saw profiles that were more or less typical.

We impose two restrictions on the randomization of the attribute values to rule out highly implausible profiles. First, we restrict immigrants who apply for admission to the U.S. to “escape persecution” to come from either “Iraq,” “Sudan,” or “Somalia.” Second, we restrict the randomization for *profession* such that high-skill occupations “financial analyst,” “research

⁷However, the order of the attributes does not change for each respondent across the five binary comparisons to reduce the task’s complexity. Moreover, we restrict the randomization of the attribute order such that the work-related attributes *profession*, *job experience*, and *employment plans* always appear together in a block in a randomized order.

scientist,” “doctor,” and “computer programmer” are included only if the *education level* is at least two years of college or higher. This allows for profiles with highly educated immigrants that work in low-skilled professions, but it rules out less educated immigrants that work in high-skilled professions. To measure the outcomes we ask respondents two questions that refer to the two immigrant profiles shown on the same webpage. One asks respondents to report a preference for one of the two profiles.⁸ Our analyses use the binary responses as the primary outcome variable *Immigrant Preferred*, with a 1 indicating the selected immigrant profile. This design has the advantage that it forces respondents to make trade-offs, as someone must be admitted and someone else must be rejected. Requiring a decision also neutralizes attitudes about overall levels of immigration, enabling us to focus entirely on the attributes that make immigrants more or less attractive in the eyes of the native-born. As a robustness check, we also use a binary variable, *Support Admission*, which is generated from a seven-point scale assessing each immigrant separately.⁹ This outcome has the advantage that it allows us to investigate how certain attributes affect absolute levels of support for a particular immigrant’s admission.

Our conjoint experimental design has several advantages over prior observational and ex-

⁸The first question reads: “If you had to choose between them, which of these two immigrants should be given priority to come to the United States to live?” The response options are “Immigrant 1” or “Immigrant 2.” The numbering for the immigrant profiles increases for each of the five comparisons such that in the second comparison the profiles are labeled “Immigrant 3” and “Immigrant 4,” for example.

⁹The question reads: “[o]n a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that the United States should absolutely not admit the immigrant and 7 indicates that the United States should definitely admit the immigrant, how would you rate Immigrant 1?” This second outcome variable is coded as 1 for immigrant profiles that the respondent rates as above the midpoint of the seven-point scale, meaning that the respondent supports admission of this immigrant to the U.S. In separate robustness checks, we also use the full seven-point ratings and find substantively similar results.

perimental approaches to understanding immigration attitudes. First, given that the attribute values are randomized, the design allows us to identify the effect of each immigrant attribute on the probability of being preferred for admission (e.g. how much does the probability of admission increase when the immigrant in question has the equivalent of a college degree instead of a high school degree?). Moreover, given that we vary all the attributes and measure their effects on the same scale, the design allows us to examine the attributes' relative importance. For instance, we can compare the effect of a college degree with that of coming from Mexico or France, enabling direct statements about attributes' relative influence.

Second, we can examine possible interactions in the effect of the immigrant attributes (e.g. do skill levels matter more as immigrants are more culturally distinctive?). This allows us to test the conditions under which some attributes matter more or less and the trade-offs that respondents make. Finally, the design allows us to consider interactions between respondent and immigrant characteristics (e.g. do ethnocentric voters care more about cultural characteristics such as an immigrant's country of origin?). These interactions provide opportunities to test additional hypotheses proposed by prior research, such as the argument that attitudes towards immigration are driven by labor market competition. Taken together, our conjoint experimental design allows us to obtain a more comprehensive picture of attitudes towards immigrants than that available in prior research.

IV. SAMPLE

Our data collection is based on a two-wave, population-based panel survey that was administered by the research firm Knowledge Networks (KN) and fielded between December 2011 and January 2012 to U.S. citizens who were randomly drawn from the KN panel. All members of the KN panel have a known probability of selection so the sampling procedure for our survey constitutes a two-stage probability design. The KN panel covers both the online and offline U.S. populations aged 18 years and older, and previous research has shown that it closely approximates national demographic benchmarks (Chang and Krosnick 2009).¹⁰

¹⁰Panel members are randomly selected using one of two techniques. The first is random-digit dialing (RDD) while the second is address-based sampling. Households are provided with

The first wave of our survey contained 1,714 completed interviews. It consisted of a short survey that measured key covariates including general attitudes towards immigration, three questions that measured self monitoring (Berinsky and Lavine 2011), and three questions that measured levels of ethnocentrism (using feeling thermometers for in- and out-groups as in Kinder and Kam (2009)). Appendix A provides a full list of the survey questions used in the analysis. After a three week wash-out period, we re-interviewed respondents in a second survey containing the conjoint experimental design described above. The second wave yielded 1,407 completed interviews, so attrition within the panel was limited to 18% of the original respondents.¹¹ The three-week separation between surveys enables us to measure theoretically important constructs such as baseline immigration attitudes, ethnocentrism, and self monitoring without priming respondents or introducing differential measurement bias. In the second wave we also measure additional covariates such as respondents' employment status, industry, and occupation.¹² Finally, we augment the data with additional covariates obtained from the access to the Internet and hardware if needed. In contrast to opt-in web panels, unselected volunteers are not allowed to join the KN panel. A detailed report about the KN recruitment methodology and the survey administration is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/docs/knowledge-networks-methodology.pdf>.

¹¹The calculation of response rates using online panels is complicated by the fact that panelists are recruited and have the potential to leave the panel at different times. See Callegaro and DiSogra (2008) for an extended description of how to compute response metrics for online panels. Here, we note that of those originally invited to join the KN panel, 9.8% did so and completed a profile survey. 42.2% of these panelists were retained by the KN panel at the time of our survey. 2,499 KN panelists were invited to complete the first wave of our panel, for an initial panel recruitment rate of 68.6%. Of the 1,714 who completed first-wave interviews, 1,407 completed the second wave, yielding a retention rate within our study of 82.1%. The cumulative response rate as defined by AAPOR is 2.8% for the first wave and 2.3% for the second.

¹²Industry and occupation were measured using open-ended questions. All employed re-

KN panel. For the analysis we use post-stratification weights to adjust the final respondent data for common sources of survey error (non-response, coverage error, etc.).¹³

V. RESULTS

A. Results for Full Sample

To evaluate the relative importance of different immigrant attributes in shaping support for admission, we estimate a conditional logit model (McFadden 1974) where the binary outcome variable, *Immigrant Preferred*, is regressed on a set of indicator variables for each immigrant attribute. For each attribute, we omit one value as the reference category. McFadden's conditional logit model is routinely used to analyze conjoint data and accommodates our forced-choice format where respondents decide between two immigrant profiles.¹⁴ The model provides unbiased estimates of the average effect of each attribute value, since the values of all attributes for both profiles are randomly assigned and so orthogonal to one another. Rather than estimating the effect of each unique profile (which would exhaust our degrees of freedom), we exploit the randomization and resulting orthogonality to estimate the effect of each attribute value. When we compare the probability of being preferred for admission across

spondents were asked, “What is your current profession or occupation?” while unemployed respondents were asked about their most recent occupation and students were asked about their intended occupation.

¹³The weights adjust the sample to the demographic and geographic distributions from the March Supplement of the 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS). The interquartile range for the weights from the second wave is from 0.46 to 1.32, with a median of 0.73 and a mean of 1.00. The results are unchanged for both *Immigrant Preferred* and *Support Admission* without using these weights.

¹⁴Notice that in the conditional logit model, each decision is treated as a single case and in our case there are two alternatives (i.e. immigrant profiles) for each decision, one of which has to be chosen. The effects of the immigrant attributes are identified based on the within-case variation. The results are very similar when we use an alternative-specific multinomial probit regression instead.

two different conditions—for example an immigrant with “fluent English” versus an immigrant with “broken English”—the comparison yields an unbiased estimate of the effect of that difference in language skills.¹⁵ The standard errors are clustered by respondent to account for the fact that the choices made by a single respondent may not be independent across the five comparisons. We first summarize the results across the full sample of respondents, and then discuss sub-group effects and robustness checks.

Figure 2 displays the main results from the conjoint experiment. It uses dots to indicate point estimates and lines to illustrate 95% confidence intervals for the marginal effects of each attribute value on the probability that respondents chose a particular applicant for admission. The dots on the zero line without confidence intervals denote the reference category for each attribute. For example, the second line from the top indicates that male immigrants are 2.9 percentage points less likely to win support for admission to the U.S. than the reference category (females), with a 95% confidence interval from -0.5 to -5.4 percentage points.

Confirming prior research (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; 2010), the KN panelists prefer immigrants with higher levels of education, and the effect is roughly monotonic: the more educated the immigrant, the greater the level of support. In fact, immigrants with a B.A. are 21.3 percentage points more likely to be supported for

¹⁵The only exceptions are the attribute pairs *education level* and *profession* as well as *reasons for the application* and *country of origin*, which are linked through our restrictions on the randomization to rule out implausible profiles. When comparing across values of one of these attributes, the values of its linked attribute are not balanced by design. For example, when comparing immigrant profiles with “gardener” versus “research scientist,” the education level is lower on average for “gardener.” However, the values of these linked attributes are still randomly assigned conditional on the values of the other linked attribute. This conditional random assignment allows for unbiased estimation of treatment effects as long as the model controls for the linked attribute. For additional discussion, see Morgan and Winship (2007, Ch. 5). We also computed a series of Wald tests which indicated that the interactions for the values of the linked features are all jointly insignificant ($p=0.76$).

admission than immigrants with no formal education.¹⁶ Differences in the immigrants' ability to use English have similarly sized effects. Compared to an applicant who speaks fluent English, one who uses an interpreter during an admissions interview sees a decline in support of 19.5 percentage points as a result (SE=1.6). There is some penalty for speaking broken English (8.8 percentage points, SE=1.7), but the penalties for being unable to use English are much larger. Language is commonly considered a cultural indicator, but in this context, it might be considered an economic skill to some degree as well.

A variety of other cultural differences are correlated with immigrants' countries of origin, from their religions and manners of dress to phenotypical differences such as skin tone. Conditional on detailed information about immigrants' education, skills, and language, it seems reasonable to consider country of origin as an imprecise indicator of cultural differences. Yet despite the emphasis past research places on cultural differences, the effects for the immigrants' countries of origin are typically small and statistically insignificant, with only four countries (China, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia) reducing the probability of admission at all as compared to the baseline Indian immigrant. With the exception of China, the difference between coming from these three countries and Germany—the most preferred country of origin—is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-sided). Iraqi immigrants are viewed more negatively than others, as being from Iraq reduces the probability of admission by 15.5 percentage points (SE=2.7) from the baseline. Given the two wars between the U.S. and Iraq since 1991, and given the salience of terrorism in the post-9/11 period, it is quite plausible that Iraqi immigrants are viewed as threats to security.¹⁷ Intriguingly, despite contemporary media frames focusing on low-skilled, unauthorized immigration from Mexico (e.g. Chavez 2008; Branton et al. 2011), there is little evidence of a penalty specific to Mexican immigrants. Mexican immigrants are treated in a manner indistinguishable from Polish or German immigrants, and earn more support than the baseline Indian immigrant by 2.1 percentage points (SE=2.7). This estimate

¹⁶The 95% confidence interval runs from 17.2 to 25.4 percentage points.

¹⁷One of the few significant interactions between immigrant attributes indicates that male Iraqi immigrants are viewed especially negatively, reinforcing the security-oriented interpretation.

is conditional on information about the immigrant's prior trips to the U.S., suggesting that Mexican immigrants might be viewed negatively in other contexts because of their association with unauthorized immigration.

In Figure 2, we see evidence that the prospective immigrant's profession matters, with construction workers (6.4, SE=2.4), nurses (10.2, SE=2.4), doctors (20.2, SE=3.3), and research scientists (14.9, SE=3.6) enjoying a pronounced bonus over the baseline category of janitors. Generally, those in high-skill professions are more likely to win support, although it seems plausible that respondents' perceptions about labor market demand or expectations about immigrants' social contributions also matter. Computer programmers and financial analysts are in high-skill professions, but not ones that advantage would-be immigrants as decisively. The increased probabilities of admission are 9.2 (SE=3.9) and 5.6 (SE=4.1) percentage points, respectively. We also see that job experience makes an immigrant more desirable. In a sense, our survey respondents appear to act like employers, screening for those who will contribute to the U.S. economy. But they also apply some non-economic criteria about different professions' relative contributions, as they prefer doctors and researchers to financial analysts and computer programmers. This pattern is very much in keeping with the sociotropic hypothesis.

Our design enables us to consider each applicant's job plans as well. Here, we observe that immigrants who have a contract with an employer earn significantly more support than those who have conducted interviews or who will look for work after arriving. This observation lends credence to the idea that labor market demand is influential, with Americans more interested in immigrants if U.S.-based employers signal their need. At the same time, immigrants who have no plans to work are penalized more than immigrants with any other single attribute value. Immigrants who indicate that they do not plan to work are 19.2 percentage points less likely to be supported for admission (SE=1.7) than an immigrant who will look for work after arriving, and 33.1 percentage points less likely than an immigrant with a contract.¹⁸

¹⁸There is no significant interaction between the hypothetical immigrants' reason for applying and his or her plans with respect to work. That is, immigrants who indicate that they are applying to improve their job prospects are not penalized more severely for having no plans to work ($t=0.77$).

This observation is compatible with explanations based on immigrants' expected tax burden or based on their compliance with American norms. By contrast, immigrants' reason for applying for admission has little overall influence on their support for admission, with only a hint that those immigrants who seek a better job are viewed more negatively than others (-3.8 percentage points). Those immigrants who seek to escape from religious or political persecution are viewed just a bit more favorably (5.3 percentage points).

Our final immigrant attribute summarizes the applicant's prior trips to the U.S. Immigrants who have spent considerable time in the U.S. are likely to be perceived as having a stronger connection to the country and more interest in it. And in fact, as compared to those who have never been to the U.S., immigrants who have been to the U.S. once, those who have been many times, and those who spent six months with family in the U.S. are all between 7.7 and 10.4 percentage points more likely to win admission. Yet the most striking result is the 14.3 percentage point penalty for coming previously as an unauthorized immigrant (SE=1.9). Whatever familiarity with the U.S. an unauthorized immigrant might gain is outweighed by the violation of norm and of law inherent in entering without authorization. Whether this penalty comes from concerns about the illegal entry itself, about future law-breaking, or from other factors is a productive question for future research.

It is important to notice the substantive size of the “unauthorized entry” effect. Social desirability concerns should be muted with respect to unauthorized immigrants, as our respondents have a clear, non-racial rationale for treating them differently. In this light, the fact that a shift from German origin to Iraqi origin (-19.4 percentage points) has a more negative impact than a shift from never having visited the U.S. to having come once without authorization (-14.3 percentage points) is informative. It suggests that the responses to immigrants' countries of origin vary in meaningful and substantively important ways, even with social desirability potentially at work.

B. Support for Admission

For the main analyses reported above, we analyze forced choices made in response to each immigrant pairing. Yet one concern relates to “person-positivity bias” (Sears 1983), which

refers to the more favorable evaluations that individuals receive as compared to groups. Perhaps if respondents were evaluating immigration policy rather than individual immigrants, their response patterns would differ meaningfully. To address that possibility, we now analyze a separate question measuring the absolute level of support for each hypothetical immigrant profile, irrespective of whether that profile was chosen or not. Whereas the forced choice format (or “choice-based conjoint analysis”) holds constant respondents’ immigration attitudes, since one immigrant has to be admitted from each pairing, these indications of overall support or opposition to a given immigrant (or “conjoint analysis”) do not. When indicating absolute levels of support, respondents are free to indicate that neither or both of the immigrants should be admitted, and thus to act in keeping with their preferences about levels of immigration. These indications of support are closely related to the respondents’ attitudes on immigration policy: the Pearson’s correlation between the mean absolute level of support expressed across the ten immigrant profiles and respondents’ prior opinions about desirable levels of immigration is .33. Analyzing levels of overall support thus allows us to examine a dependent variable that is closely connected to policy-relevant evaluations.

Figure 3 reports a logit model in which the outcome is *Support Admission*, a binary indicator of whether that specific immigrant profile received a rating that was greater than the midpoint of the scale (the baseline probability of support is .42). As the Figure illustrates, the core conclusions differ little from those above when respondents report absolute levels of support or opposition to each immigrant profile. We separately confirmed that they also differ little when we estimate a linear regression model with the 1-7 rating of each profile as the dependent variable.

To better understand the substantive meaning of these results, we next vary six of the nine immigrant attributes to identify the profiles of immigrants corresponding to the 1st, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 99th percentiles of overall support. Figure 4 presents the results. The first percentile is occupied by an Iraqi janitor with a fourth grade education, no job experience, no plans to work, and a prior unauthorized trip. Under the model, such an immigrant would win support 11.2% of the time (SE=1.5). On the other extreme is a German research scientist with a graduate degree, 3-5 years of job experience, and a job contract who had previously spent

time with family in the U.S. This research scientist wins support in 70.7% of pairings (SE=3.4). There is some noise in respondents' choices, but not much: overall, the response patterns are strikingly predictable even without accounting for any respondent characteristics. Despite the fact that many previous studies only asked respondents about their attitudes towards immigration in general, these results suggest that the Americans' views about immigration vary dramatically depending on the attributes of the immigrants. This general pattern is consistent with Hainmueller and Hangartner (2011) who find considerable variation in Swiss voters' discrimination against different types of immigrants.

VI. INTERACTIONS WITH RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

These baseline results are useful in assessing the various theoretical approaches to immigration attitudes. Immigrants who are positioned to be more successful in the U.S. labor market or to make contributions to the country's well-being are viewed more positively, while those who do not speak English, do not plan to work, or have entered without authorization are viewed negatively. Yet several of the hypotheses developed above posit interactions between immigrants' attributes and respondents' characteristics. For example, the evidence above that well-educated immigrants are favored is compatible with hypotheses about labor market threat if such responses are concentrated among those in less competition with high-skilled immigrants. Here and in the Online Appendix, we consider a variety of potential moderators of the effects detailed above, including the KN panelists' education, profession, exposure to immigration in their industry, household income, fiscal exposure to immigration, ethnocentrism, race/ethnicity, neighborhood diversity, partisanship, political ideology, prior immigration attitude, gender, and age.

A. *Economic Self-Interest*

If attitudes toward immigrants are shaped by concerns about labor market competition, for instance, we might expect that native-born Americans with skills or professions similar to a particular immigrant will be more likely to oppose that immigrant. We first consider skill levels, imperfectly approximated by grouping respondents based on whether or not they have

any college education. Figure 5 presents the estimated marginal effects when replicating the benchmark model for these subsamples. We see little evidence of an interaction between respondents' education and that of their preferred immigrants, with both Americans who attended college and those who did not preferring well-educated immigrants. If anything, it is the college-educated Americans who are more favorable toward research scientists and financial analysts. Hypotheses based on relative skill levels do little to make sense of these results, although hypotheses based on immigrants' sociotropic impacts are consistent with this pattern. Examining other attributes, we see that the response patterns are quite similar irrespective of the respondents' educational levels. Whether college educated or not, Americans agree that immigrants are more desirable when they speak English, have a job contract, and have no history of unauthorized entry.

Another test of whether labor market competition is at work considers whether respondents are more likely to oppose an immigrant who shares their profession. In particular, we expand our basic models to include an indicator variable that is coded as one if the immigrants' listed profession matched that of the respondent and zero otherwise.¹⁹ The results are shown in Table D.2 in the Online Appendix. In model 1, the dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether this immigrant profile was chosen. There, an immigrant whose profession matches the rater is 3 percentage points more likely to be chosen, with a standard error of 5 percentage points. The second and third models use absolute measures of support as their dependent variables, and reinforce that the respondents are not less likely to support an immigrant who shares their profession. Similarly, Figure B.1 in the Online Appendix illustrates that respondents in industries with significant concentrations of immigrants are not much different in their response patterns from other respondents.²⁰ In none of these tests do we uncover evidence consistent

¹⁹We coded each self-reported occupation using the O-Net 2010 Occupational Listings (available online at: <http://www.onetcenter.org/taxonomy/2010/list.html> [accessed June 6, 2012]), identifying 0 gardeners, 4 doctors, 5 waiters, 7 janitors, 9 research scientists, 12 financial analysts, 13 child care providers, 26 computer programmers, 27 nurses, and 48 teachers in our survey's first wave.

²⁰Following Hainmueller, Hiscox and Margalit (2011), we used the March 2010 Supplement

with labor market threat.

Other hypotheses based on material interests lead us to expect individual-level differences as well. For example, if voters are concerned that immigrants will increase public spending, such concerns might be especially pronounced among those whose income or state of residence expose them disproportionately to the potential tax increases. In the Online Appendix B.2. and B.3, we present the results separately based on respondents' household income and fiscal exposure to immigration.²¹ We code 30% of the respondents as having high fiscal exposure based on the ratio of immigrant households receiving cash forms of public assistance to the total number of native households in their state.²² If the penalty for immigrants who have no plans to work is driven by material concerns about immigration-induced tax hikes, we would expect the penalty to be larger among high-income respondents or respondents living in states with significant fiscal exposure. Instead, we find no meaningful change in the penalty for such immigrants across these subsets. It is 18.8 (SE=2.0) for respondents in states with lower exposure and 21.3 (SE=3.0) in states with higher exposure. These results run counter to the logic of Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter (2007) that wealthier and more exposed respondents should be more concerned about the potential tax effects of non-working immigrants. Notice as well that there is no penalty for female immigrants among either the well-to-do or those in fiscally exposed states, despite public rhetoric that associates female immigrants (and their children) with increased health and education costs. In fact, female immigrants are preferred in fiscally exposed states, as male immigrants are associated with a significant -8.0 percentage

to the Current Population Survey to estimate the share of foreign-born workers by industry using 3-digit NAICS codes.

²¹High-income respondents are those whose households earn more than \$50,000.

²²See Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter (2007) and Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) for details of this measure, which is called Fiscal Exposure II. It codes the following states as high fiscal exposure: MA, RI, NY, NJ, FL, WA, CA, and HI. We also replicated the analysis using an alternative measure called Fiscal Exposure I, which identifies states that have both high levels of welfare spending and high immigrant populations. The results using this second measure are similar.

point decline ($SE=2.1$) in the probability of being chosen. Taken together, these results suggest that fiscal concerns stemming from material self-interest are far from paramount.

B. Ethnocentrism, Race, and Ethnicity

Today’s immigrants to the U.S. come predominantly from Asia and Latin America, making them distinctive from the country’s current non-Hispanic white majority. Variants of the hypotheses emphasizing these ethnic and racial differences lead us to expect some respondents to make extensive use of immigrants’ countries of origin in judging their fitness for admission. Here, we examine three such moderators: respondents’ ethnocentrism, their own ethnic/racial identification, and the demographic composition of their ZIP code.

Following Kinder and Kam (2009) we assess ethnocentrism through respondents’ sentiment toward various ethnic/racial groups, which we measure using feeling thermometers that we included in the first wave of our panel survey (see the Online Appendix for the question wording). The level of ethnocentrism is computed as the feeling thermometer score for the respondent’s in-group (i.e. blacks for black respondents) minus the average feeling thermometer score across the out-groups relevant to immigration (i.e. immigrants, Latinos/Hispanics, and Asian Americans).²³²⁴ For this estimation, we break the ethnocentrism measure into two equally sized bins, splitting the sample on the median ethnocentrism value.²⁵ As shown by

²³This measure is very highly correlated with a separate measure that considers only the difference between in-group affect and affect toward Hispanics, with a Pearson’s correlation of .92.

²⁴For this analysis alone, we exclude respondents with Hispanic ethnicity since Hispanics are a heavily immigrant group likely to think about immigrant in distinctive ways. KN does not ask about Asian American ethnicity, but we exclude those who indicate “other” for similar reasons.

²⁵The median value in the low ethnocentrism group is 0, indicating that these respondents rated the out-groups just favorably as their own group. The median value in the high ethnocentrism group is 32, indicating that these respondents rated the out-groups much less favorably than their own group.

Kinder and Kam (2009), this measure taps directly into ethnocentrism conceptualized as an attitude that divides the world into “friends” and “foes” or “prejudice, broadly conceived.”²⁶

To investigate the interaction between the effects of the immigrant attributes and ethnocentrism, we re-estimate the benchmark model separately for samples of respondents with low and high levels of ethnocentrism. Figure 6 presents the estimated marginal effects. The patterns are quite similar for those respondents with low and high ethnocentrism. In both cases, education, speaking English, some high-status professions, job experience, and prior trips are valued. Also, the two groups take decidedly negative views of those who do not plan to work and those who enter without authorization. Yet there are some differences, especially with respect to the prospective immigrant’s country of origin. For those low in ethnocentrism, only Iraqis are clearly penalized relative to a German immigrant, with an average difference of 15.0 percentage points. For this group, the Mexican immigrant is 8.3 percentage points more likely to win admission ($SE=4.0$), and the Filipino immigrant is similarly advantaged (8.1 percentage points). For those high in ethnocentrism, however, six countries generate responses that are significantly more negative than the German: Mexico (14.1 percentage points), the Philippines (12.5 percentage points), China (13.3 percentage points), Iraq (24.2 percentage points), Sudan (13.2 percentage points), and Somalia (17.1 percentage points). In short, more ethnocentric respondents impose more of a penalty for immigrants from non-European countries. This negativity is pronounced for immigrants from countries with significant Muslim populations, but it extends to Mexico, China, and the Philippines as well. These results are consistent with ethnocentrism playing a role in immigration attitudes.

Another way to examine the role of race and ethnicity in immigration attitudes is to consider the results for the 1,044 non-Hispanic whites separately from the 333 respondents who identify as Black, Hispanic, or “Other,” a group that is likely to be primarily Asian American. Even when aggregating multiple non-white groups with very different relationships to immigration, the 95% confidence intervals for non-whites are wide, as shown in Figure 7. Nonetheless, the

²⁶Notice that Kinder and Kam (2009) also use a another measure of ethnocentrism based on social stereotypes which requires more survey items, but their analysis suggests that the two measures perform comparably.

patterns remain quite consistent across groups, with non-whites also penalizing immigrants with no plans to look for work (-18.2, SE=3.2), those who need an interpreter (-13.3, SE=3.5), and those from Iraq (-14.1, SE=6.0). Whereas respondents do differ in their use of national origins based on their ethnocentrism, there is little evidence that non-Hispanic whites and other ethnic/racial groups differ. In the Online Appendix, we consider differences in responses based on the demographics of respondents' ZIP codes. Those living in ZIP codes with few immigrants, those living in ZIP codes with many Mexican immigrants, and those living in ZIP codes with many immigrants from other countries all show highly similar preferences about immigrant attributes.

C. Party Identification and Ideology

Since partisanship is a central source of structure for contemporary Americans' political attitudes (e.g. Levendusky 2009), we now examine whether Republicans and Democrats emphasize different immigrant attributes. In Figure 8, we present the estimated marginal effects when we replicate the benchmark model for the subsamples of respondents who identify with the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively.²⁷

The findings are in contrast with a significant body of literature finding that Republicans and Democrats respond differently to cues, whether on immigration (e.g. Knoll, Redlawsk and Sanborn 2011) or on other issues (Zaller 1992; Berinsky 2009; Gerber and Huber 2009). For a significant majority of the attribute values, the responses by Democrats and Republicans are highly similar. Republicans are much less supportive of immigrants who have no plans to work, or those who entered the U.S. without authorization—but so are Democrats. Irrespective of partisanship, Americans prefer well-educated immigrants in certain high-skill professions. The penalty for coming from Iraq is almost identical, at -15.2 for Republicans and -16.1 for Democrats. Overall, Democrats and Republicans evaluate immigrant attributes in surprisingly similar ways. The same holds true for self-reported liberals and conservatives, as shown in Figure B.5 of the Online Appendix. The results are also stable when comparing respondents based on their prior immigration attitudes (Figure B.6), gender (Figure B.7), and age (Figure B.8).

²⁷We include those who “lean” towards a party as identifiers.

Partisanship, ideology, race/ethnicity, gender, and age structure a wide range of Americans' political attitudes. But in understanding choices between immigrants, these characteristics give us little leverage. Strikingly, the American consensus on what constitutes a desirable immigrant encompasses even the most common correlates of differences in mass opinion.

VII. ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

One indication of these results' robustness comes from the fact that they appear for the full set of respondents as well as for several theoretically relevant sub-groups. Here, we summarize a more technical robustness check that examines the extent to which our respondents are likely to self-monitor. In the Online Appendix, we also report additional robustness checks which show that the results do not differ for longtime members of the KN panel (Figure C.1) and are consistent across the five pairings evaluated by each respondent (Figure C.2). These results add to the external validity of our findings, as respondents do not change their response patterns as they become familiar either with survey-taking in general or with our survey specifically.

In addition, the Online Appendix details two other robustness checks. One considers the possibility that respondents react differently to atypical profiles. We identified combinations of attribute values that are likely to be considered atypical, such as profiles from poor countries (such as Somalia) with high-status jobs (such as financial analysts). We then subdivided our respondents into those who saw 0-3 atypical profiles (26%), those who saw 4-5 (46%), and those who saw 7-10 (28%). The core results differ little across these subsets of respondents, suggesting that they are not driven by reactions to less common profiles.

The Online Appendix also describes a June 2012 follow-up study using Mechanical Turk in which we asked respondents to both perform the conjoint task described above and to explain their choice among each hypothetical pairing in their own words. The clusters of words that the respondents use to explain their decisions match the findings that come from the conjoint analysis closely, further validating the method.

A. *Self-monitoring*

Questions of ethnicity and immigration are socially sensitive, and they could easily evoke insincere responses that are perceived as more socially desirable. Online survey administration is known to reduce respondents' tendency to report socially desirable answers (Chang and Krosnick 2009). Moreover, each immigrant profile includes nine attribute values, giving respondents several plausible, color-blind reasons for rejecting a given applicant. Still, given the topic of our survey, it is important to assess the extent to which responses are shaped by social desirability. Following Terkildsen (1993), Berinsky (2004), and Berinsky and Lavine (2011), we do so using three wave-one questions to measure self-monitoring, one aspect of self-presentation that is closely connected to social desirability.²⁸ Respondents high in self-monitoring are likely to exert more effort to present themselves in an appealing way (Berinsky 2004).

Separating out our respondents into those who are low or high in self-monitoring,²⁹ we then re-estimate the marginal effects for each level of each attribute. The results are presented in Figure C.3 in the Online Appendix. The differences are generally minor. High self monitors seem somewhat less opposed to immigrants that entered once without authorization. Both those who do not engage in much self-monitoring and those who do are more negative toward Iraqi immigrants, and perhaps toward Somali immigrants as well. The weak effect of Mexico, for example, does not appear to be driven by those high in self-monitoring. While the similarity of these patterns does not rule out the influence of social desirability, our substantive conclusions would be similar even when restricting our attention to a subset of respondents least likely to give socially desirable answers.

²⁸One question asks about putting on a show for others, a second asks about liking to be the center of attention, and a third asks about the respondent's acting ability.

²⁹Specifically, we divide the sample at the median of the self-monitoring scale, which is an additive index of the three self-monitoring questions, each of which has five response options. Given the standard deviation of 0.73, the median score of 2.33 is little different than the mean score of 2.24. The Cronbach's alpha for the three items is .69.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

By identifying specific immigrant attributes that do or do not shape immigration opinions, scholarship using survey experiments has advanced our understanding in critical ways. In separate experiments, prior research has manipulated factors including immigrants' skill levels, countries of origin, skin tones, and languages. But as survey experiments proliferate, the task of comparing the explanatory power of the many immigrant attributes on a single scale becomes increasingly important. This manuscript uses conjoint analysis to vary nine theoretically relevant attributes of hypothetical immigrants, and it enables us to make explicit comparisons between the explanatory strength of various hypotheses. By asking more than 1,400 American citizens to choose among five pairs of immigrants, we can learn a great deal about which sources of immigrant-native distinction shape Americans' attitudes.

Two types of explanations—sociotropic explanations and norms-based explanations—receive strong support. Our respondents express a pronounced preference for immigrants who are well educated, in high-skilled professions, and have plans to work upon arrival. They prefer immigrants with no unauthorized prior trips and who speak English. We do find that country of origin matters, with Iraqis penalized and with more ethnocentric respondents relying more heavily on country of origin in making decisions. But this attribute's explanatory power is limited as compared to several other attributes. Conditional on information about prior trips to the U.S., there is no penalty for immigrants from Mexico, which is the single largest sender of immigrants to the contemporary U.S.

In recent decades, immigration has been a divisive issue at the federal, state, and local levels of U.S. politics (Knoll, Redlawsk and Sanborn 2011; Dyck, Johnson and Wasson 2012). Yet those divisions mask a strong consensus about what constitutes a more desirable immigrant. Strikingly, our core results prove similar for Democrats and Republicans, for those who support increased immigration and those who oppose it, for those with high school degrees and those with college degrees. People who live in American states with significant social spending on immigrants differ little from living those elsewhere. It is not simply that hypotheses based on labor market threat or disparate fiscal impact find little support. More generally, we find little evidence of individual-level differences in attitudes about what makes an immigrant de-

sirable. Underlying partisan divisions about specific immigration policies is a broad American consensus about who should be admitted to the country.

The fact of this hidden American immigration consensus does not mean that American immigration policymaking is or will soon be harmonious. Indeed, in recent decades, American politics has been characterized by contentious debates about various immigration policies from the 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act to failed federal immigration reforms in 2006 and 2007. Yet the consensus on who is a desirable immigrant is nonetheless relevant for policy-making. It suggests that Americans would be likely to support a Canadian-style immigration system emphasizing immigrants' skill levels—and unlikely to back the strict immigration quotas for many non-European countries that were in place before 1965. The hidden American immigration consensus also indicates that today's salient disagreements about immigration policies are not proxy battles for the types of immigrants to admit, as on that question, Americans are largely in agreement. Those seeking to explain contemporary political divisions will need to consider other explanations, from those based on perceptions of deservingness to those based on partisanship. Contemporary disagreements are more about policies than about people.

Beyond providing evidence about several specific hypotheses, these results also indicate the types of explanations that are well-suited to explain contemporary American attitudes toward immigrants: explanations that posit similar responses across diverse sub-groups of American citizens. With the exception of ethnocentrism, explanations that emphasize individual-level differences in responses to immigrants face important limitations. This pattern makes the task of researching immigration attitudes more challenging, as individual-level differences have been to date an important source of leverage with which to test competing hypotheses. Future research might also devote attention to designing critical tests that allow scholars to differentiate between the overlapping predictions of the norm-based and sociotropic hypotheses. Some norms about what constitutes a good American are related to one's economic contribution while others are not. Immigrants' support for sports teams should have little bearing on their economic prospects, for instance, so a positive reception for an immigrant who roots for the L.A. Dodgers would be evidence for norms-based approaches. Alternate tests might leverage immigrant attributes including age and religion.

Political scientists commonly aim to test multiple hypotheses against one another (e.g. Imai and Tingley 2012), while experiments are typically designed to recover the causal effects of a small number of manipulated treatments. For that reason, they face inherent limitations in testing competing theoretical explanations. Choice-based conjoint analysis helps reduce the tension between the discipline’s theoretical goals and its methodological tools, as conjoint analysis enables researchers to experimentally evaluate a broad range of hypotheses on a single scale. It also encourages scholars to think not in binary terms about hypotheses that are falsified but about relative levels of support for different claims. Here, we have focused on perceptions about immigrants, but the technique’s applicability is likely to be substantially wider. It could shed light on questions central to the study of voting and political behavior, such as the relative weight that voters place on various candidate attributes in their decision-making. Conjoint analysis could also illuminate the study of elite decision-making, as it might be applied to questions as far-ranging as decisions about when to intervene militarily and about how to design a policy or select a candidate.

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TABLES

Table 1: Attributes and Values for Immigrant Profiles in Conjoint Experiment

| <i>Attributes</i> | <i>Values</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Education Level | No formal education Equivalent to completing fourth grade in the U.S. Equivalent to completing eighth grade in the U.S. Equivalent to completing high school in the U.S. Equivalent to completing two years at college in the U.S. Equivalent to completing a college degree in the U.S. Equivalent to completing a graduate degree in the U.S. |
| Gender | Female Male |
| Country of Origin | Mexico India Poland Germany France Philippines China Iraq Sudan Somalia |
| Language | During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English During admission interview, this applicant spoke broken English During admission interview, this applicant tried to speak English but was unable During admission interview, this applicant spoke through an interpreter |
| Reason for Application | Reunite with family members already in U.S. Seek better job in U.S. Escape political/religious persecution |
| Profession | Gardener Waiter Nurse Teacher Child care provider Janitor Construction worker Financial analyst Research scientist Doctor Computer programmer |
| Job Experience | No job training or prior experience One to two years Three to five years More than five years |
| Employment Plans | Has a contract with a U.S. employer Does not have a contract with a U.S. employer, but has done job interviews Will look for work after arriving in the U.S. Has no plans to look for work at this time |
| Prior Trips to the U.S. | Never been to the U.S. Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa Entered the U.S. once before without legal authorization Has visited the U.S. many times before on tourist visas Spent six months with family members in the U.S. |

Note: Table shows attributes and attribute values that are used to generate the immigrant profiles for the conjoint experiment.

FIGURES

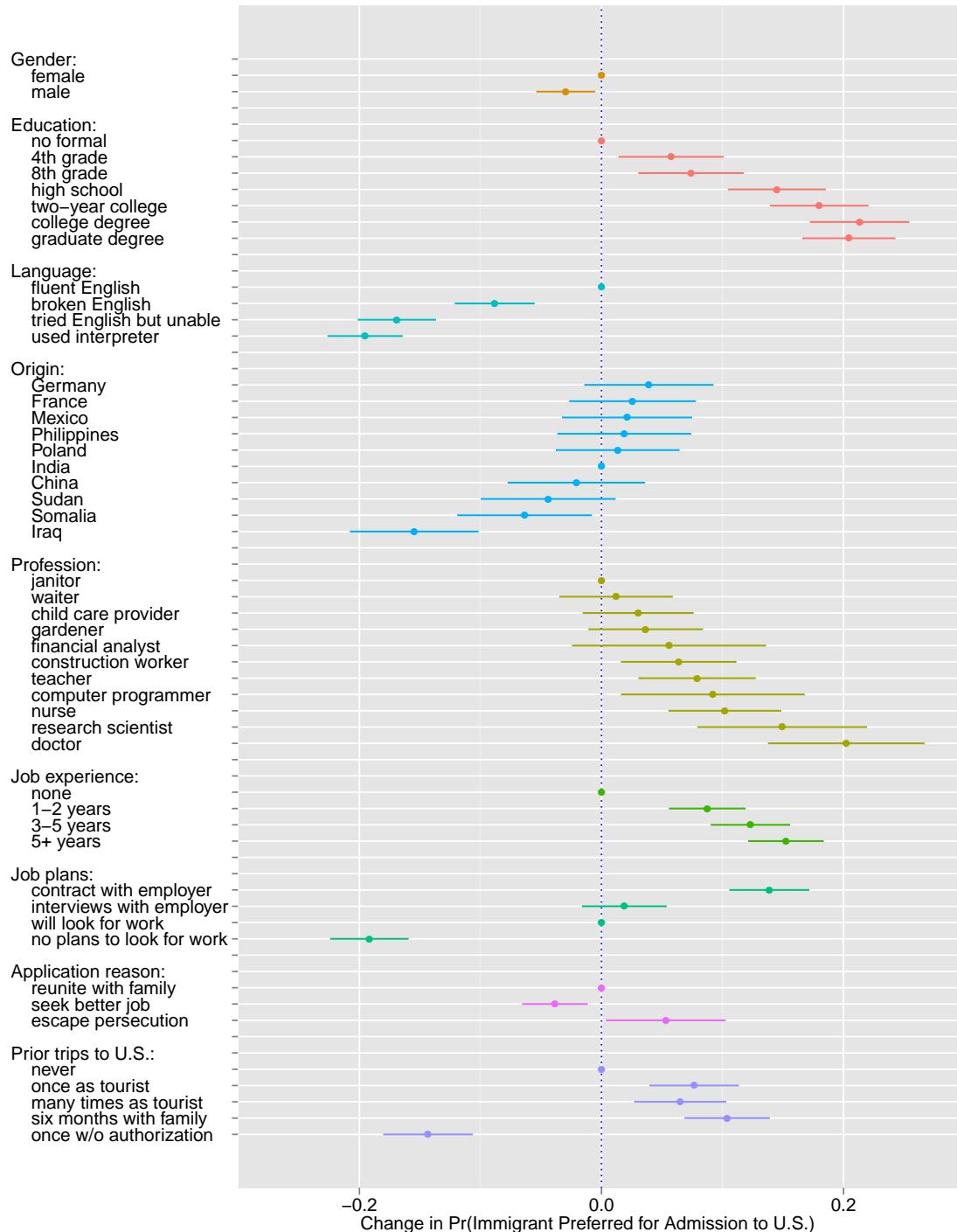
Figure 1: Experimental Design

Please read the descriptions of the potential immigrants carefully. Then, please indicate which of the two immigrants you would personally prefer to see admitted to the United States.

| | Immigrant 1 | Immigrant 2 |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Prior Trips to the U.S. | Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa | Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa |
| Reason for Application | Reunite with family members already in U.S. | Reunite with family members already in U.S. |
| Country of Origin | Mexico | Iraq |
| Language Skills | During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English | During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English |
| Profession | Child care provider | Teacher |
| Job Experience | One to two years of job training and experience | Three to five years of job training and experience |
| Employment Plans | Does not have a contract with a U.S. employer but has done job interviews | Will look for work after arriving in the U.S. |
| Education Level | Equivalent to completing two years of college in the U.S. | Equivalent to completing a college degree in the U.S. |
| Gender | Female | Male |

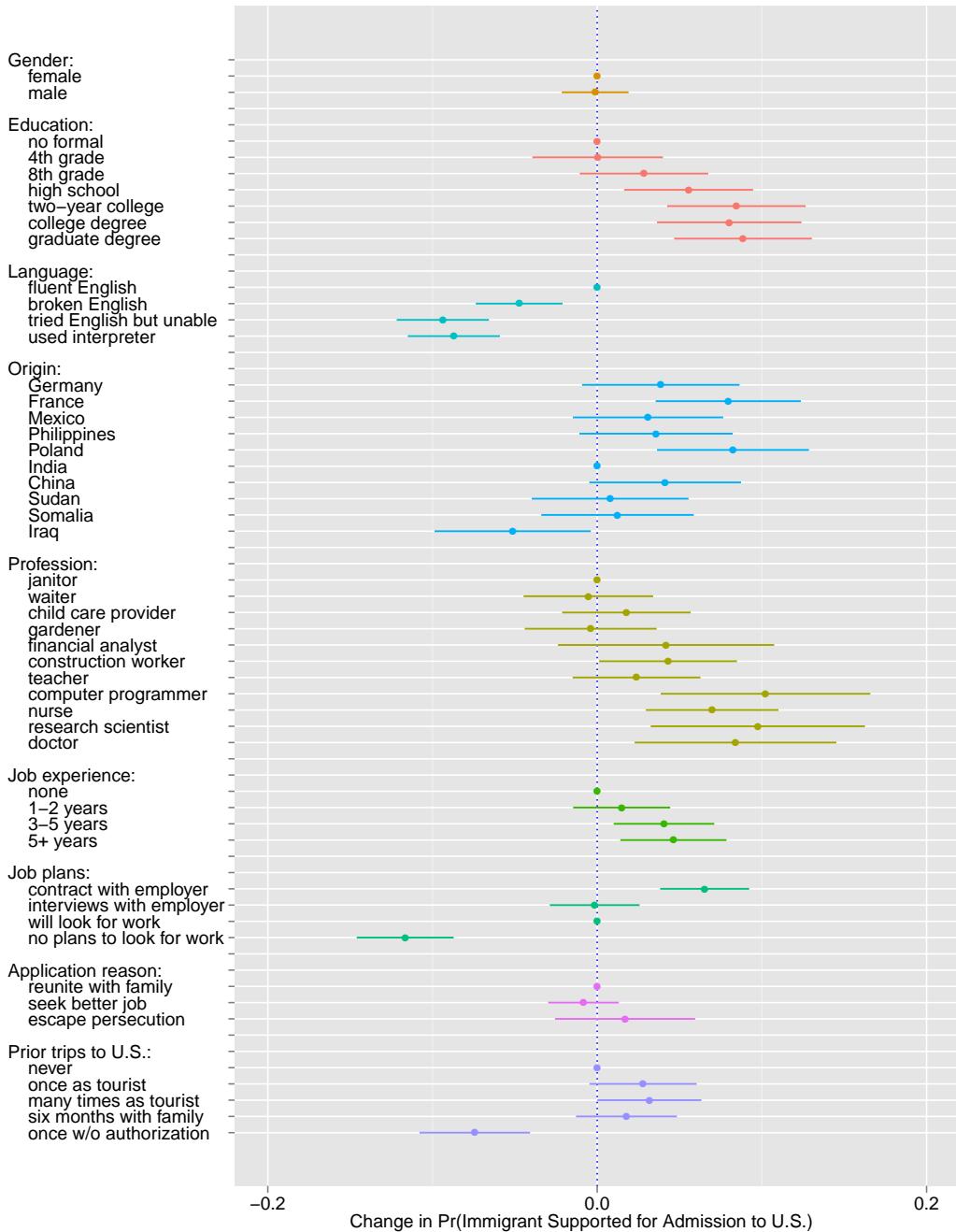
Note: Figure illustrates experimental design for the conjoint analysis.

Figure 2: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Probability of Being Preferred for Admission



Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attribute values on the probability of being preferred for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a conditional logit model with clustered standard errors; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.

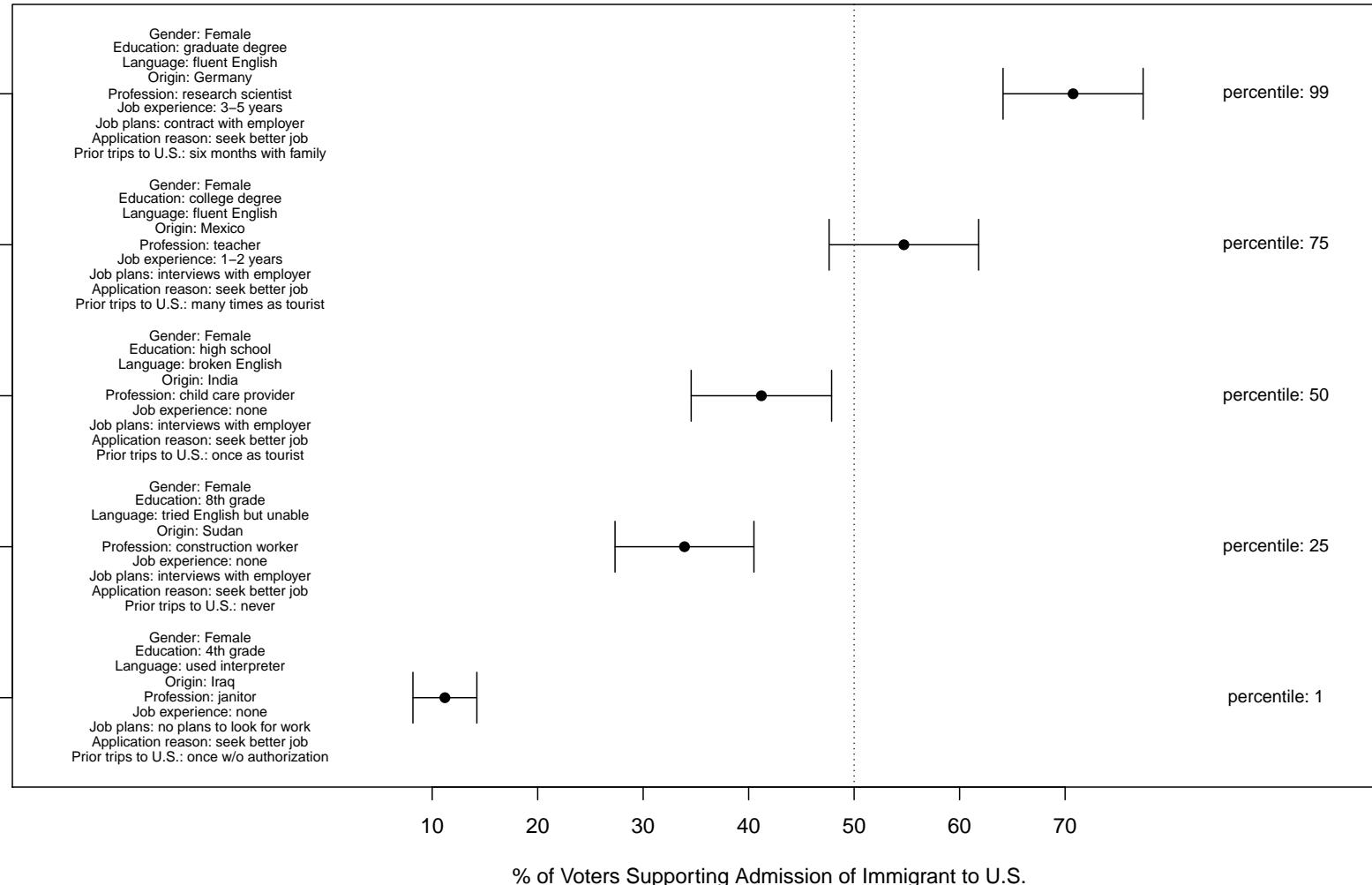
Figure 3: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Support for Admission



Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being supported for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a logit model with clustered standard errors; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute. The baseline probability of being supported for admission is .42.

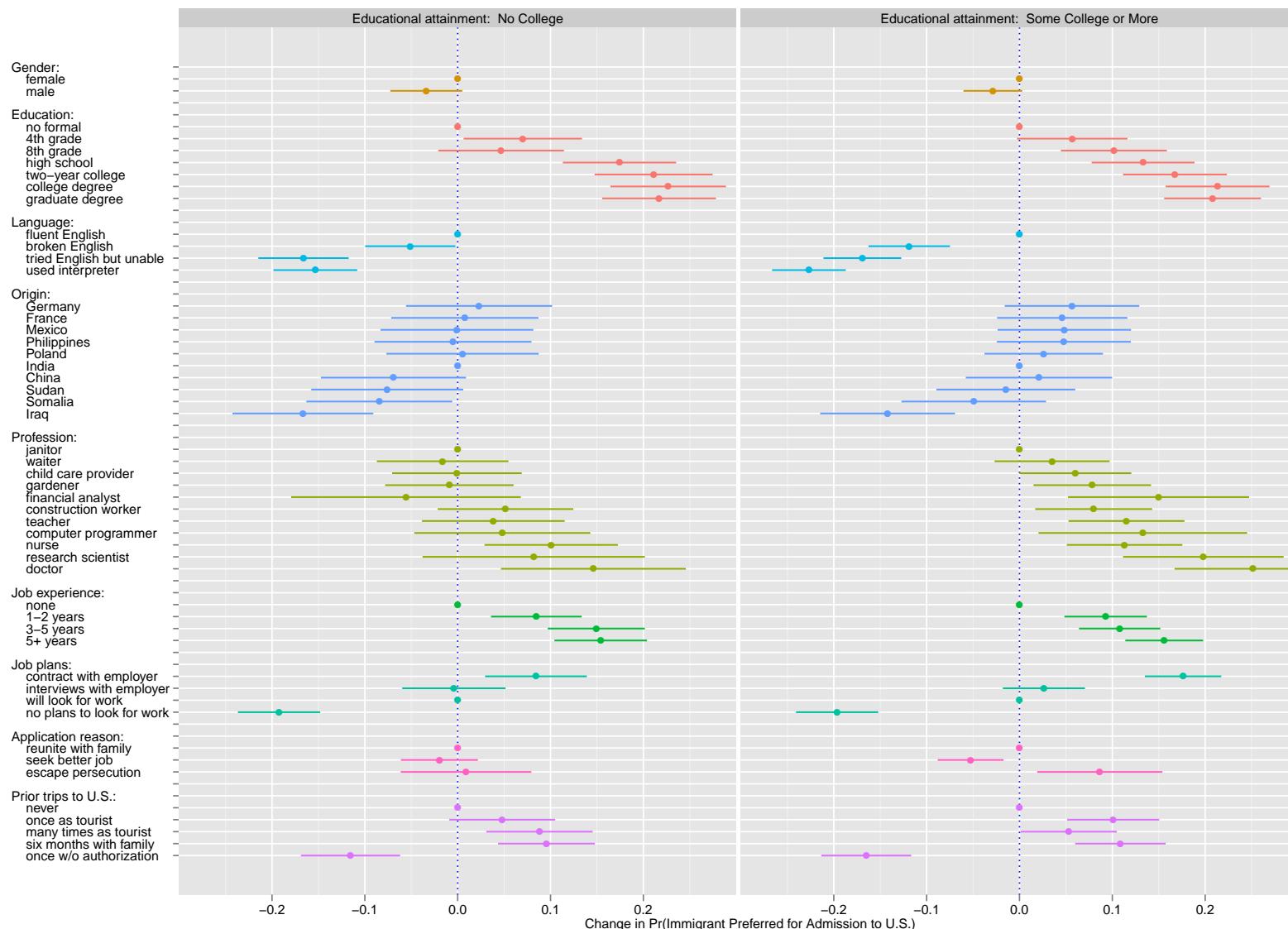
Figure 4: Estimated Support for Admission for Selected Immigrant Profiles

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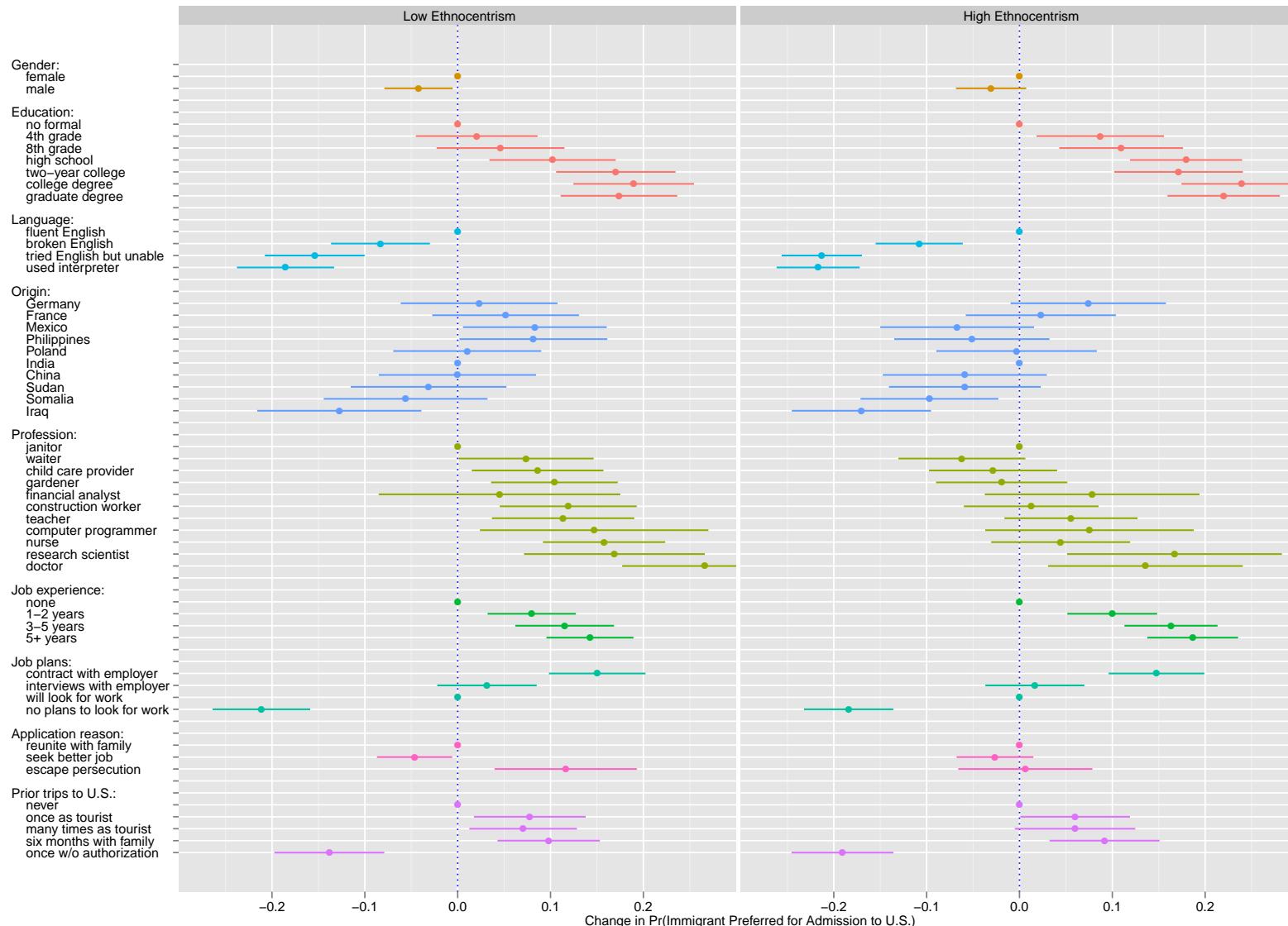
Note: This plot shows the estimated fraction of respondents who support the admission of an immigrant to the U.S. The estimates are shown for selected immigrant profiles that refer to the 1st, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 99th percentile of the distribution of support. Estimates are based on a logit model with clustered standard errors; bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 5: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Probability of Being Preferred for Admission by Education of Respondent



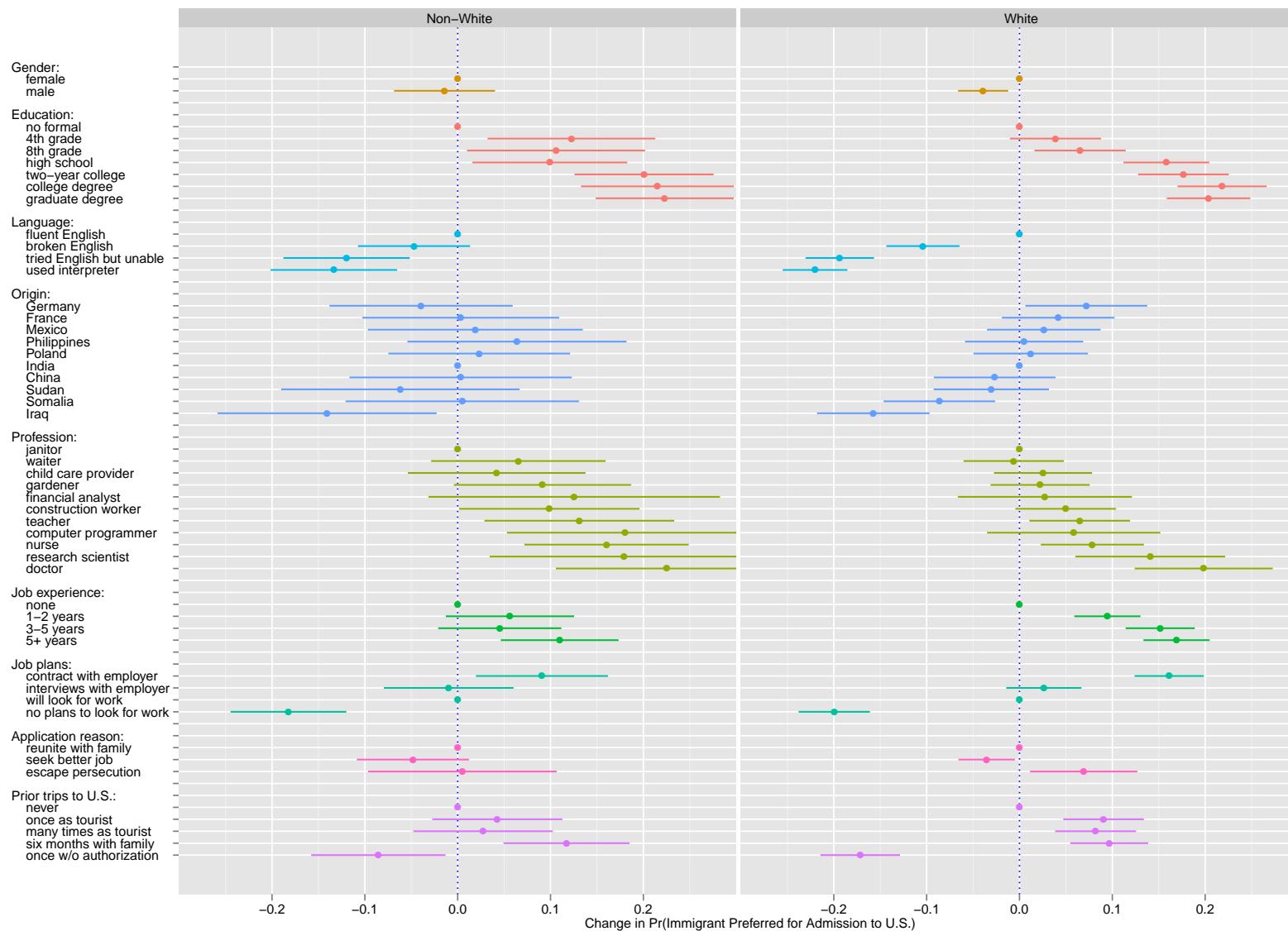
Note: These plots show estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being preferred for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a conditional logit with clustered standard errors estimated for the group of respondents without and with some college education, respectively; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.

Figure 6: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Probability of Being Preferred for Admission by Ethnocentrism of Respondent



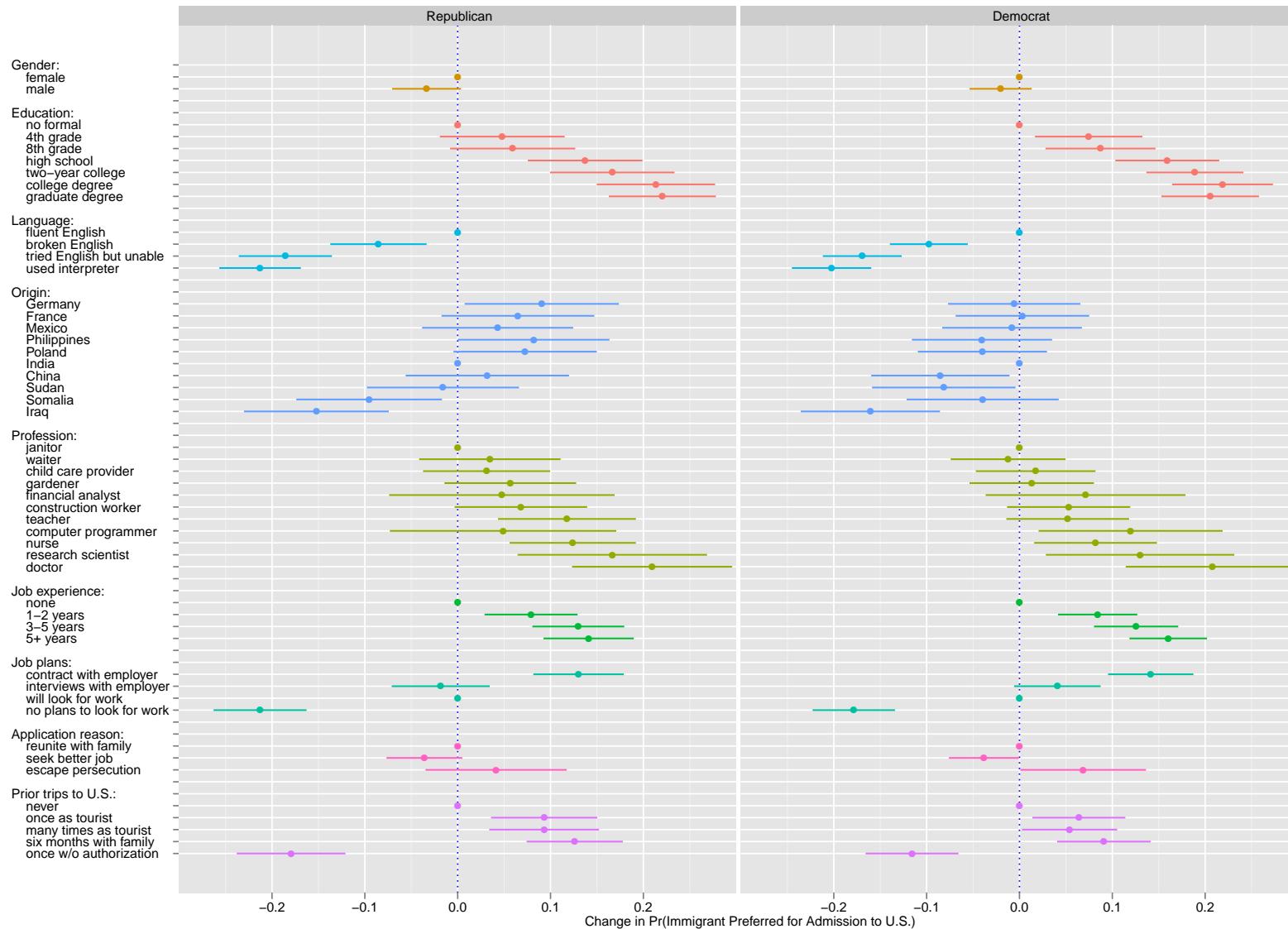
Note: These plots show estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being preferred for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a conditional logit with clustered standard errors estimated for the group of respondents with low and high levels of ethnocentrism, respectively; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.

Figure 7: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Probability of Being Preferred for Admission by Ethnicity of Respondent



Note: These plots show estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being preferred for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a conditional logit with clustered standard errors estimated for the group of non-white ($n=339$) and white respondents ($n=1,044$), respectively; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.

Figure 8: Effects of Immigrant Attributes on Probability of Being Preferred for Admission by Party Identification of Respondent



Note: These plots show estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being preferred for admission to the U.S. Estimates are based on a conditional logit with clustered standard errors estimated for the group of respondents who identify with or lean toward the Democratic or Republican parties, respectively; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.