

**Making American Elections Great Again:
Immigrant Resentment, Elite Rhetoric and
Public Support for Voter Identification Restrictions**

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Abstract

Contentious debates over stricter voter identification policies have occurred in most states, where the policies are usually framed in terms of preventing voter fraud or suppressing turnout. Political rhetoric about these policies frequently links anxiety of immigration to concerns about voter fraud. However, we know relatively little about the sources of public support for restrictive voter identification policies or the public response to elite messages. We report the results of two survey experiments that test the impact of elite messages about voter fraud and immigrant threat on public support for stricter voter identification policies. We find a strong relationship between immigrant resentment and public support for voter identification restrictions. Furthermore, elite messages that make claims about non-citizen voting or raise concerns about immigration boost public support for restrictive voting policies. Thus, election reform proposals dealing with voter identification have become “immigrationalized”.

Word count:

Introduction

Proposals to require more rigorous forms of voter identification have ignited contentious policy debates in the United States. Many states have passed new laws that require people to show photo identification in order to vote (Rocha and Matsubayashi 2013). In addition, four states have passed laws requiring people to provide documents proving their citizenship status when they register to vote, and several additional states are considering similar requirements (NCSL 2015). In state legislatures, support for new voting restrictions tends to divide neatly along partisan lines (Hicks et al. 2015). However, despite the highly partisan nature of these policy debates, public support for restrictive voter identification policies remains strong.

Existing research on the determinants of public support for voter restrictions does not examine the impact of elite rhetoric linking immigration and voter fraud. We suspect that such rhetoric may activate public hostility toward immigrants in the United States, which we offer as an additional explanation to the dominant partisan framework for understanding public support for these policies. Attitudes toward immigrants predict public support for several policies, and our findings indicate that voter identification requirements have also become “immigrationalized” (Garand, Xu, and Davis 2015).

It is important to better understand the sources of public support for restrictive voting policies because public opinion is an important element in legal and legislative debates about these policies. In two recent Supreme Court cases, one focusing on a proof of citizenship requirement (*Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 2006) and one dealing with a photo ID law (*Cranford v. Marion County*, 2008), the majority decisions accepted state arguments that voting restrictions are needed to maintain public confidence in elections. Furthermore, state and federal lawmakers frequently invoke public concerns about voter fraud in defending new

voting restrictions (Minnite 2010; Hasen 2012). Public concerns about voter fraud are fairly widespread, and there is strong public support for proof of citizenship and photo ID requirements, despite a growing body of evidence that voter fraud is extremely rare in the United States (Minnite 2010; Kahn and Carson 2012; Levitt 2014; Christensen and Schultz 2014; Ahlquist, Mayer, and Jackman 2014; Ansolabehere, Luks, and Schaffner 2015). As such, we contend that the popularity of voter restrictions is partly attributed to two factors: (1) strong levels of immigrant resentment among some Americans, which makes them more susceptible to persuasion by (2) elite voter fraud arguments, especially if those messages are about non-citizens registering or voting illegally.

In this study, we use survey experiments in modules from the 2014 and 2015 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) to test whether voter restrictions receive more support from people who are resentful of immigrants. We find a strong relationship, even after controlling for other relevant political dispositions. Our experiments also demonstrate that elite messages emphasizing voter fraud or threats from immigration boost public support for restrictive voter identification policies. Political rhetoric linking immigration and voter fraud thus helps sustain public support for certain election reforms.

Explaining Public Support for Restrictive Voting Policies

An emerging body of research shows that large majorities of Americans support a photo ID requirement (Wilson and Brewer 2016; Gronke et al. 2015; Alvarez et al. 2011) and a proof of citizenship requirement for voters (Udani and Kimball 2015a). However, there is little evidence that state election laws influence public concerns about election integrity. For example, the adoption of a photo ID law does not appear to alleviate public concerns about voter fraud (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Bowler et al. 2015; Stewart, Ansolabehere and Persily 2016).

Thus far, partisanship and racial attitudes are the most reliable predictors of public support for restrictive voting policies. The partisan nature of election reform debates is fueled by a common belief that voting restrictions will reduce voter turnout, thus helping Republican candidates and hurting Democratic candidates (Hasen 2012; Kropf and Kimball 2012). Given this political reality, it is not surprising that Republicans are more likely to support voting restrictions like photo ID and proof of citizenship laws than Democrats (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Atkeson et al. 2014; Gronke et al. 2015; Stewart, Ansolabehere and Persily 2016). Furthermore, Republicans tend to believe that voter fraud is a more serious and frequent problem than Democrats (Wilson and Brewer 2013; Udani and Kimball 2015; Bowler and Donovan 2016).

Elite opinion leadership likely accounts for some of the partisan differences in public support for stricter voter identification policies. Most of the elite rhetoric about voter fraud comes from Republicans and allied groups. Public support for photo ID laws tends to exhibit patterns consistent with elite-driven opinion leadership (Zaller 1992). That is, partisans with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to internalize the messages coming from respective party elites on photo ID policies (Gronke et al. 2015; Stewart, Ansolabehere and Persily 2016). Furthermore, messages from political elites influence public confidence in elections and support for photo ID policies (Vonnahme and Miller 2013; Beaulieu 2014; Wilson and Brewer 2016, 2013).

Finally, public support for restrictive voting policies is “group-centric,” influenced by attitudes toward groups that are targeted or most affected by the policies (Nelson and Kinder 1996, 1055-56; Schneider and Ingram 1993). For example, political debates and campaigns often include symbols and phrases (such as “welfare queens”) that increase the salience of racial attitudes and associated stereotypes and emotions when people form

opinions about welfare policies and other issues (Gilens 2009; Banks and Valentino 2012). When a policy debate becomes racialized, in that people perceive that African Americans are disproportionately targeted by the policy, then attitudes toward African Americans tend to predict public support for the policy (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001; Tesler 2012). Political debates about restrictive voting laws often feature arguments about how those laws will affect people of color, who are less likely to possess a government-issued photo ID or the documents needed to obtain one (Barreto, Nuño and Sanchez 2009; Hershey 2009). As a result, restrictive voting policies have become racialized, in that racial resentment is a predictor of public support for voter identification restrictions (Wilson and Brewer 2013; Wilson, Owens, and Davis 2015; Wilson, Brewer, and Rosenbluth 2014; Gronke et al. 2015).

However, existing research has ignored public attitudes toward immigrants in election reform debates.¹ The findings on racial resentment can be extended to a linkage between attitudes toward immigrants and public support for restrictive voting policies. Like some other policies, public opinion toward election fraud and voter identification policies has become “immigrationalized” (Garand, Xu, and Davis 2015). The recent increase in immigration, combined with elite rhetoric and media coverage that stereotype non-citizens as illegal voters, may prime attitudes toward immigrants when Americans assess certain voting policies.

The United States has experienced a recent surge in immigration. The immigrant share of the United States population has more than doubled since 1980 (Kinder and Kam 2009, 126), with most of the recent wave of immigrants coming from Latin America and

¹ This gap in the literature may apply to other policies. Two recent reviews of political science scholarship on immigration note the relative paucity of research on the impact of attitudes toward immigrants on public support for other policies (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015).

Asia (Hajnal and Lee 2011, 10). In many states, particularly in the South, the foreign-born population more than doubled during a recent twelve-year period (Garand, Xu, and Davis 2015). Overall, the percentage of the foreign-born population in the United States is higher than it has been in almost one hundred years. It is very likely that native-born Americans have noticed these changes.

Studies in the United States and Europe find that increased immigration can substantially alter a nation's politics. Some may view an influx of immigrants as a threat to a nation's culture and traditions, thereby reducing feelings of national solidarity needed to support social welfare policies (Garand, Xu, and David 2015; Larsen 2011). Thus, a large wave of immigration may breed resentment toward immigrants among the native-born. One recent study documents a "white backlash" in response to rising immigration levels in the United States (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). Increased immigration tends to fuel ethnocentrism among the native-born, an "us versus them" sensibility (Kinder and Kam 2009). As a result, large segments of the public may be attracted to stricter voter identification policies as a way to control an immigrant "outgroup" that is deemed less worthy of the full participatory benefits of democratic citizenship.

It is worth considering the history of immigrant voting rights in the United States. The Constitution does not bar non-citizens from voting, courts have upheld immigrant voting rights, and during the nation's first century and a half non-citizens enjoyed full voting rights in many states (Raskin 1993). Over a period of roughly two decades, non-citizen voting was banned in all states approximately a century ago, during the previous large wave of immigration to the United States. It may be no surprise that the current binge of restrictive voter identification policies coincides with another significant influx of immigrants

to the United States. In sum, the connection between public support for restrictive voting policies and American attitudes toward immigrants is an important area for research.

Immigration and Public Support for Voting Restrictions

Why should attitudes toward immigrants influence public support for restrictive voter identification policies? One mechanism linking the two sets of attitudes would be empirical evidence of higher rates of voter fraud among immigrants. However, available evidence suggests that non-citizen voting is extremely rare and less common than other types of election violations, such as absentee ballot fraud (Ansolabehere, Luks, and Schaffner 2015; Kahn and Carson 2012).² A second mechanism features an “immigrant threat” narrative that links immigration to several social disorders (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Schildkraut 2011). The threat narrative, which is common in elite political rhetoric and media coverage, is absorbed by many Americans and expressed as resentment toward immigrants. Immigrant resentment takes the form of negative stereotypes about immigrants, fears about cultural and political decline due to immigration, and beliefs that immigrants are not equally deserving of political rights. Thus, the activation of immigrant resentment is associated with increased public support for restrictive laws in several areas (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Kinder and Kam 2009).

Claims of voter fraud by non-citizens likely draw on and reinforce the immigrant threat narrative. The threat narrative claims, for example, that immigration leads to more crime and drains public resources in areas such as health, education, and welfare. This fuels

² One study concludes that approximately 2% to 6% of non-citizens vote illegally in American elections (Richman, Chattha, and Earnest 2014). However, this study has some important flaws. The study is based on a sample survey yet does not report confidence intervals for any estimates of illegal voting. More importantly, large sample surveys are inferior for making inferences about low probability events when there are even small amounts of measurement error in key variables. Thus, another study of the same data concludes that the non-citizen voting rate in the United States is likely 0 (Ansolabehere, Luks, and Schaffner 2015).

stereotypes of immigrants as untrustworthy and undeserving of government assistance (Lee and Fiske 2006; Grand, Xu, and Davis 2015). Below we describe examples of elite rhetoric including assertions that non-citizens are illegally registering and voting in American elections. These claims buttress negative stereotypes about immigrants and thus point to stricter voter identification requirements as policy solutions for the electoral portion of the threat posed by immigrants.

Recent immigration has also brought more racial and ethnic diversity to the United States, fueling a belief that people who are different in terms of language, culture, and appearance enjoy full voting rights. In less diverse nations, additional voting restrictions may be seen as unnecessary. Rather, lowering barriers to voting may be understood as a way to help people who are “like us” but perhaps need a little assistance in registering or casting a ballot. But as a nation becomes more diverse then residents are asked to support voting rights for people who are different than themselves. During a period of growing diversity, and in the context of an immigrant threat narrative, immigrants may be viewed as undeserving of full voting rights. The result will be a link between how people evaluate immigrants and their support for restrictive voting policies. In sum, an *immigrant resentment hypothesis* posits that people with more negative attitudes toward immigrants will more strongly support stricter voter identification policies.

There is circumstantial evidence to support an immigrant resentment hypothesis in the voting rights domain. Public beliefs about election integrity are strongly associated with attitudes toward immigrants in several countries with relatively high rates of immigration (Udani and Kimball 2014; 2015b). Higher growth rates of Mexican immigrants and foreign-born populations are associated with inflated voter fraud perceptions and support for photo ID laws in the United States (Udani 2016; Udani and Kimball 2017). Similarly, racial

minority voters are less likely than white voters to receive information from public officials about the proper forms of identification needed to vote (White, Nathan, and Faller 2015). Finally, restrictive voter identification legislation is more common in states with a more diverse electorate (Hicks et al. 2014; Bentele and O'Brien 2013).

Elite Rhetoric and Public Support for Voting Restrictions

Elite rhetoric also likely influences public support for restrictive voter identification policies. The way photo ID laws are framed (in terms of preventing fraud or ensuring voter access) shapes the way the public evaluates those laws (Atkeson et al. 2014). Arguments emphasizing the harmful effects of such laws on otherwise eligible voters can reduce public support for photo ID requirements (Wilson and Brewer 2013; 2016). An *elite framing hypothesis* holds that messages from political elites emphasizing voter fraud or voter suppression influence public support for proposed voter identification restrictions.

We also hypothesize that elite framing linking immigration with voter fraud shapes public opinion. Claims of voter fraud in the United States are generally made by Republicans and claims of voter suppression are generally made by Democrats (e.g., Hasen 2012; Minnite 2010; Dreier and Martin 2010). More importantly, allegations of fraudulent voting behavior by non-citizens, and appeals for stronger voter identification policies, are made almost exclusively by Republican elites and conservative groups (e.g., Ellis 2014, 907-909; Parker and Barreto 2013, 14). In several cases, a Republican Secretary of State (the top election official in a state) made claims of widespread illegal voting by non-citizens that were dramatically downgraded by subsequent investigation (see supplementary appendix). Allegations of non-citizen voting also receive extensive media coverage (Fogarty et al. 2015). At a congressional hearing in 2015 Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach claimed that the problem of non-citizen voter registration is a “massive one, nationwide” and argued that

President Obama’s executive orders on immigration will offer millions of non-citizens the ability to vote in American elections (Pavlich 2015). Other Republican politicians have voiced similar concerns about non-citizen voting (e.g., Rowland 2015; Grassley 2016). GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump included voter fraud rhetoric in his stump speech, claiming that the “voting system is out of control” (Johnson 2016). It is not a coincidence that two prominent purveyors of the immigrant threat narrative in contemporary politics, Donald Trump and Kris Kobach, also have made exaggerated claims about voter fraud.

Our study focuses on three features of elite rhetoric on voter fraud that remain untested in an emerging literature on public attitudes toward restrictive voter requirements. First, no studies have considered the extent to which elite rhetoric about immigrants and non-citizen voting influence support for restrictive voter identification laws. Since elite rhetoric about voter fraud often alleges illegal activity by immigrants, an *immigrant priming hypothesis* holds that political messages that highlight immigration and actions by non-citizens make attitudes toward immigrants more salient when the public evaluates stricter voter identification policies.

Second, existing research has not tested the impact of source cues on public support for voting policies. Several studies find that people are more likely to accept elite arguments from a trusted source (e.g., Miller and Krosnick 2000; Chong and Druckman 2007). As we note above, several allegations of illegal voting by non-citizens have been made by top state election officials. We expect that state election officials tend to be trusted sources on issues related to voter fraud, and are likely to influence public evaluations of election policies.

Third, little research has directly examined the impact of partisan cues on public support for stricter voter identification requirements. A *partisan cue hypothesis* anticipates that partisans will be inclined to support voter fraud arguments coming from elites of their own

political party and discount or oppose arguments from elites of the opposite party. Nevertheless, there are limits on the impact of partisan cues. Messages from the opposite party tend to be more polarizing than messages from co-partisan elites (Nicholson 2012). Despite the fact that opposition to restrictive voting policies comes primarily from Democratic elites, Democrats in the mass public provide considerable support for photo ID policies (Wilson and Brewer 2013; Udani 2016). Furthermore, elite cues tend to be more influential when they provide unexpected information (Nicholson 2011). Thus, partisan cues may not uniformly influence public support for additional voting restrictions.

Data and Methods

We test our hypotheses using survey data from two modules of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) gathered in the fall of 2014 and the fall of 2015. Both surveys were conducted online by YouGov and produced national samples of 1,000 respondents. The 2014 module included a pre-election wave, surveyed between October 1 and November 3, and a post-election wave, surveyed between November 5 and December 5. The 2015 module was in the field from November 6 to December 3.

In each module we asked respondents whether they supported or opposed a variety of election reform policies, including two restrictive voter identification items: (1) requiring “all people to show proof of citizenship when they register to vote” and (2) requiring “all people to show government issued photo ID when they vote”. There are four response categories: support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat, and oppose strongly. Several of these questions were previously tested in different waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections (Stewart 2013; Alvarez et al. 2011). As the supplementary materials indicate in more detail, roughly 80 percent of respondents support each of the voter identification proposals in each module, and just over 50 percent strongly

support each policy.³ This is consistent with other national polling on these policy proposals (Alvarez et al. 2011; Stewart et al. 2016).

We measure immigrant resentment, our main predisposition of interest, with a scale based on six survey questions that ask people to respond to statements about cultural beliefs, group conflict, political influence, and rights with respect to immigrants. The wording of each question is listed in the appendix. We culled the survey questions from other studies of public opinion on immigration (Schildkraut 2011; Strauss 2012; Parker and Barreto 2013; Saguaro Seminar 2000). One of the questions is a revised racial resentment measure (Kinder and Sanders 1996), substituting “immigrants” for “Blacks” in the question. The order of these items was randomized and each question asked how much respondents agreed or disagreed with a statement about immigrants. We create an immigrant resentment scale ($\alpha = .84$ in 2014, $\alpha = .87$ in 2015) by averaging the responses to each of the six items. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of immigrant resentment.

Experiment One: Priming Immigrant Resentment

A common argument by proponents of photo ID and proof of citizenship requirements (usually Republicans) is that new voting restrictions are needed to prevent voter fraud, particularly voting by non-citizens. A common argument by opponents (usually Democrats) is that additional restrictions will act as a barrier, preventing eligible voters from casting a ballot. In the 2015 CCES module we test the impact of these arguments on public support for voting reforms, and whether these arguments interact with politically relevant predispositions (immigrant resentment and partisanship).

³ Across the two modules we queried respondents on several other election reforms, including voting by mail, weekend voting, online voter registration, automatic voter registration, Election Day registration, and felon re-enfranchisement. The other reform proposals, except for voting by mail, enjoy majority public support but at markedly lower levels than the two voter identification policies. In each sample, an exploratory factor analysis with promax rotation yields two factors, with the two restrictive policies loading heavily on one factor and the remaining policies loading heavily on a separate factor. This indicates that the public treats voter identification restrictions as distinct from other proposals designed to increase access to the voting franchise.

We embed an experiment in the survey module to test whether two prominent elite messages about voter fraud and voting restrictions influence public opinion. As we note above, legal and policy debates over election reform frequently hinge on a conflict between the values of electoral integrity and voter access. Thus, survey respondents are randomly assigned to one of five groups that are given a different message from a state election official about proposed voting restrictions in the United States. For two conditions, a fraud message emphasizes the need for voting restrictions to prevent undocumented immigrants from illegally voting. The statement presented to respondents is a slightly edited version of a statement made by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach in congressional testimony (Pavlich 2015). In the next two conditions, a suppression message argues that additional voting restrictions may prevent eligible voters from voting. For each message we also randomly vary whether the statement is attributed to a Republican or Democratic state election official. In the control group, participants do not receive a message about voter fraud or voter suppression. The exact text for each treatment group is list in the Appendix.

Immediately after the treatment respondents are asked their opinion about a proof of citizenship proposal. After a screener task, the survey asks respondents about their support for additional election reform proposals, including a photo ID requirement. After the proof of citizenship policy, we randomize the order in which the remaining reform proposals are presented to respondents.

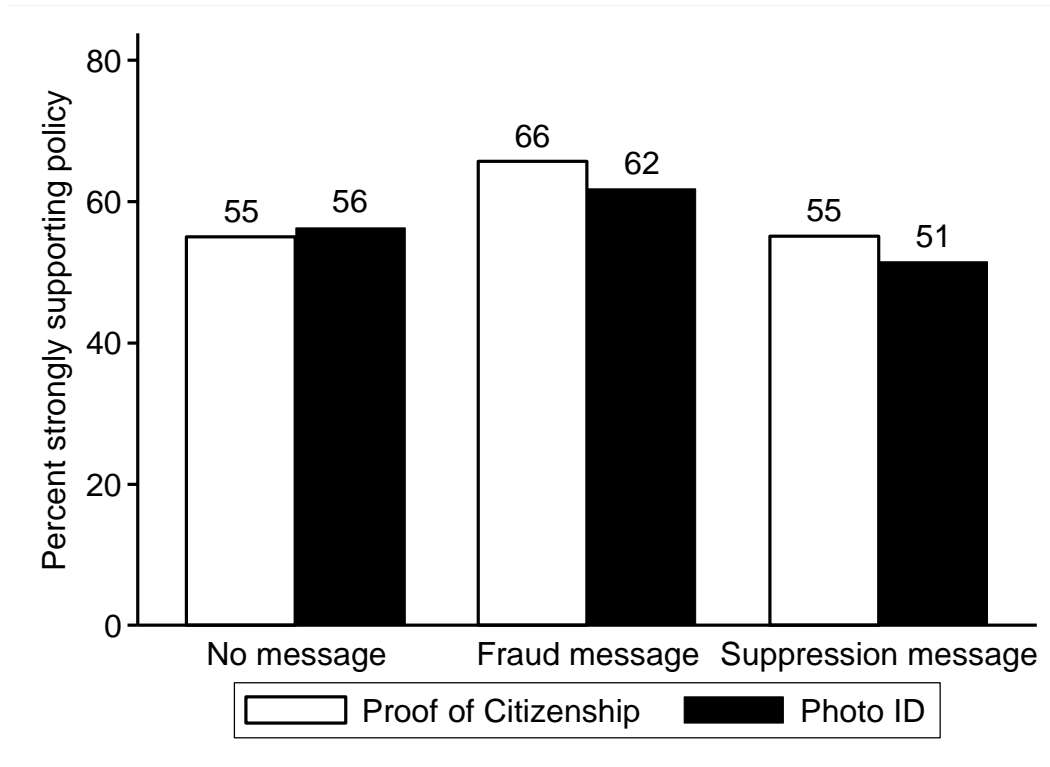
We also control for relevant predispositions that are measured in our pre-election module. A more in-depth description of each measure is provided in the Appendix.

Results from Experiment One

We start by examining the bivariate relationship between the framing conditions and public support for restrictive voting policies. Since there is strong majority support for proof

of citizenship and photo ID policies, we compare the share of respondents who strongly support each policy under each of the broad framing conditions, for now ignoring the party affiliation of the state election official providing the message (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Support for Voting Restrictions by General Framing Condition



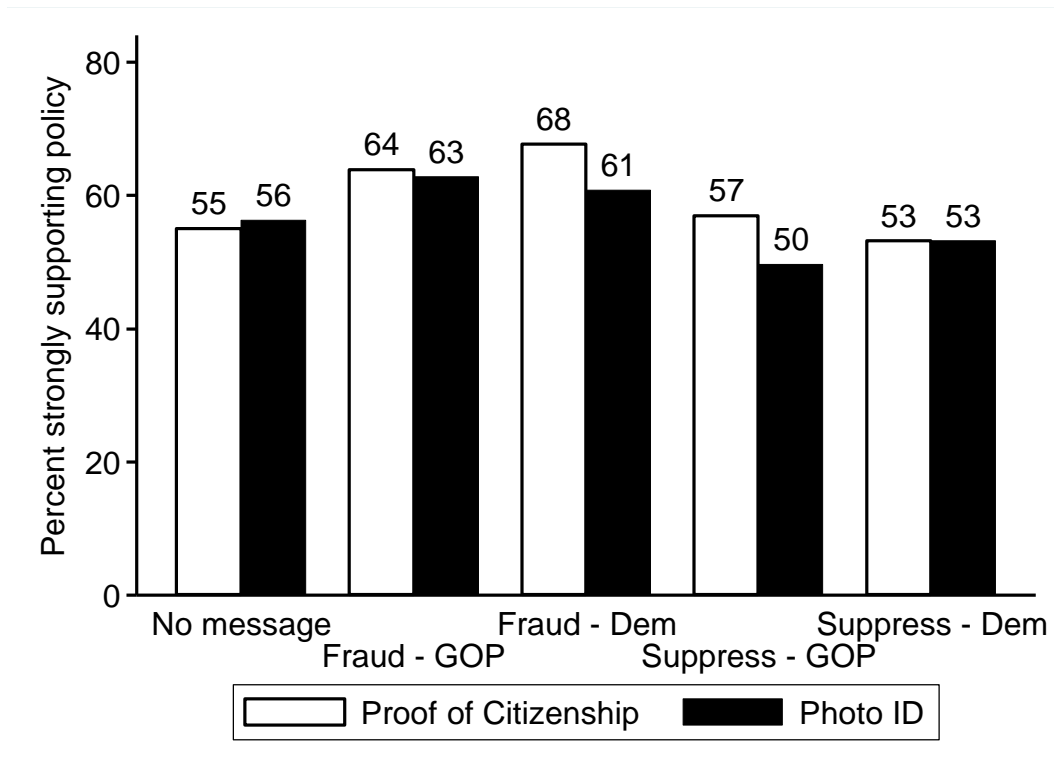
The fraud message boosts strong support for a proof of citizenship law by roughly 10 points when compared to the control group or the group receiving the voter suppression frame ($p=.02$).⁴ However, the voter suppression frame does not reduce support for a proof of citizenship policy when compared to the control group. Meanwhile, the fraud message increases strong support for a photo ID law by 6 points over the control group ($p=.10$) and by 11 points over the voter suppression frame ($p=.03$). As others have found (Wilson and Brewer 2013, 2016), the voter suppression frame appears to reduce strong support for photo ID laws by 5 points compared to the control group, although this effect falls short of

⁴ All reported p values are two-tailed.

statistical significance. Nevertheless, we find that support for each policy restriction is significantly higher in response to the fraud message than the suppression message. Since both messages are common arguments in voter fraud debates they likely have some impact on public opinion.

When we also control for the partisan source of the election message, overall support for both restrictive voting policies does not change much. Shown in Figure 2, the fraud message boosts support for proof of citizenship and photo ID policies whether that message is attributed to a Republican or Democratic state election official. Similarly, the suppression message tends to reduce public support for photo ID laws regardless of the partisan source of the message. The fraud message, when presented by a Democrat, tends to increase support for a proof of citizenship policy more than for a photo ID policy. The suppression message, when attributed to a Republican, tends to generate a larger reduction in support for photo ID than for a proof of citizenship requirement.

Figure 2. Support for Voting Restrictions by Partisan Framing Condition



Next we use ordinal logit regression to conduct additional tests of the broad message effects on support for a proof of citizenship requirement when controlling for other predispositions, particularly immigrant and racial resentment, partisanship, and voter fraud beliefs.⁵ The dependent variable is an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 4 with higher values indicating stronger support for the policy. We apply CCES survey weights and estimate robust standard errors. To assess the relative magnitude of proposed predictors on support for voter identification policies, we recode each independent variable on a zero to one scale.

⁵ An exploratory factor analysis with promax rotation yields two factors. The four questions that clearly involve fraud by individual voters load on the first factor. The item dealing with officials (“preventing eligible voters from casting a ballot”) loads on the second factor. The remaining question (“stealing or tampering with ballots”) is vague as to the type of perpetrator (voter or official), and loads equally on the first and second factors. In a prior panel survey with two the waves separated by at least one month and a midterm election we find strong over-time stability in voter fraud beliefs. The correlation between wave 1 and wave 2 voter fraud scale scores is a robust .73. By comparison, the over-time correlation for support of a proof of citizenship policy is .56.

Additional control variables are racial resentment, party identification, and race. We provide the model estimates in Table 1 of the supplemental materials.

The estimates in the first model (Model 1) are a simple additive model. As in the bivariate results, the fraud message significantly increases support for a proof of citizenship policy when compared to the control group receiving no message. The suppression message reduced support for the policy, but the impact of the suppression message versus the control group falls short of conventional levels of statistical significance. When comparing the two message conditions, the fraud message increases strong support for a proof of citizenship law by 13 percentage points over the suppression message ($p < .001$). The coefficients for the covariates indicate that immigrant resentment, racial resentment, and Republican partisanship are positively associated with support for a proof of citizenship policy.

However, the relationship is much stronger for immigrant resentment. Moving from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile on immigrant resentment yields a 70 percentage point increase in strong support for a proof of citizenship policy. Comparable changes in racial resentment and partisanship increase strong support for the policy by 12 points and 18 points, respectively.

We examine the presence of conditional framing effects by including a fraud treatment x immigrant resentment interaction in Model 2 of Table 1. The estimates reveal a significant interaction, which suggests that the impact of the fraud message may be limited to respondents with relatively high levels of immigrant resentment. For respondents with low levels of immigrant resentment, the fraud message does not significantly increase support for a proof of citizenship policy when compared against the control group or the suppression message ($b = .07$, $p = .82$, and $b = .46$, $p = .12$, respectively). However, for respondents with the median level of immigrant resentment, the fraud message produces higher levels of support

for a proof of citizenship requirement than the control ($b=.67$, $p<.05$) or suppression messages ($b=1.05$, $p<.001$).⁶ Furthermore, for respondents at the 90th percentile of immigrant resentment, the fraud message produces higher levels of support for a proof of citizenship requirement than the control ($b=1.10$, $p<.05$) or suppression messages ($b=1.48$, $p<.001$). In sum, the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a proof of citizenship law is stronger for respondents who receive a fraud message that emphasizes non-citizen voting.

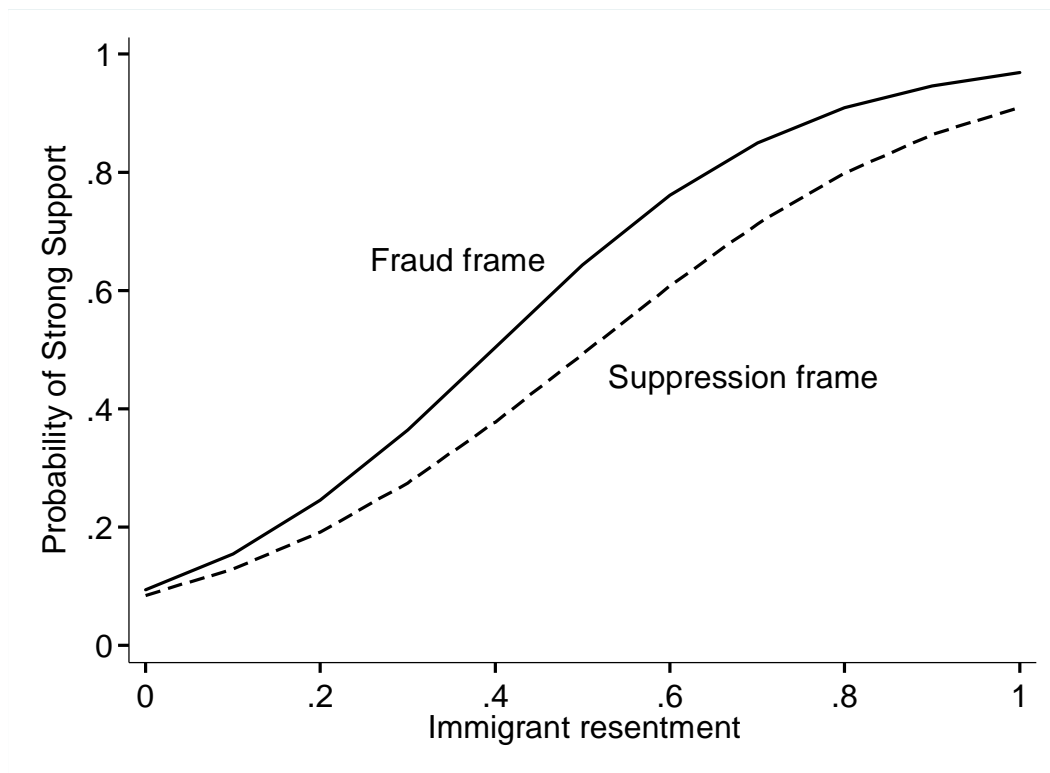
The final model in Table 1 includes the voter fraud index described above (also coded on a 0 to 1 scale) as an additional control variable (Model 3). As expected, the ordinal logit coefficient for the voter fraud measure is large, positive, and statistically significant. Respondents who believe that voter fraud occurs frequently are more likely to support a proof of citizenship policy than people who think voter fraud is a rare event. In addition, there is evidence that the measure of voter fraud beliefs acts as a mediating variable. The coefficients for immigrant resentment and, to a lesser degree, racial resentment and partisanship, are smaller after controlling for voter fraud beliefs. This suggests that beliefs about voter fraud explain part of the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for proof of citizenship policies.

The interaction between immigrant resentment and the fraud message remains after controlling for voter fraud beliefs. The fraud message, which emphasizes illegal non-citizen voting, seems to activate immigrant resentment in mobilizing public support for voter identification restrictions. Figure 3 illustrates the interaction from Model 3 by plotting the predicted probability of strongly supporting a proof of citizenship law as immigrant resentment increases, for respondents who received the fraud message and for respondents

⁶ We define “low” immigrant resentment as the 10th percentile on the index and “high” immigrant resentment as the 90th percentile.

who received the voter suppression message.⁷ For people with low levels of immigrant resentment there is weak support for a proof of citizenship policy, and the framing condition has very little impact on public support (note that the two curves almost overlap in the left side of the figure). However, for respondents with medium to high levels of immigrant resentment the fraud message generates support probabilities that are almost 20 points higher than the suppression frame. On the proof of citizenship policy, high levels of immigrant resentment make people more susceptible to persuasion by elite voter fraud arguments.

Figure 3. Predicted Support for Proof of Citizenship by Framing Condition



⁷ The predicted probabilities reported throughout the paper are “as observed” – calculated while holding other independent variables at observed values and then averaging over all cases in the sample (see Hanmer and Kalkan 2013).

We estimate a similar ordinal logit regression model to examine public support for a photo ID requirement (see Table 2 of supplemental materials). The dependent variable is again scored so that higher values indicating stronger support for the policy. We use the same covariates as in Table 1. In this case, the impact of the fraud and suppression frames are not statistically different from the control condition. However, when comparing the two message conditions, the fraud message increases strong support for a photo ID law by 11 percentage points over the suppression message ($p < .01$). The coefficients for the covariates indicate that immigrant resentment is strongly associated with support for a photo ID requirement for voters, although the relationship is not as strong as for a proof of citizenship requirement. Moving from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile on immigrant resentment yields a 47 percentage point increase in strong support for a photo ID policy. Comparable changes in racial resentment and partisanship increase strong support for the policy by 25 points and 16 points, respectively. The relationship between immigrant resentment and support for photo ID is again stronger than for racial resentment and partisanship.

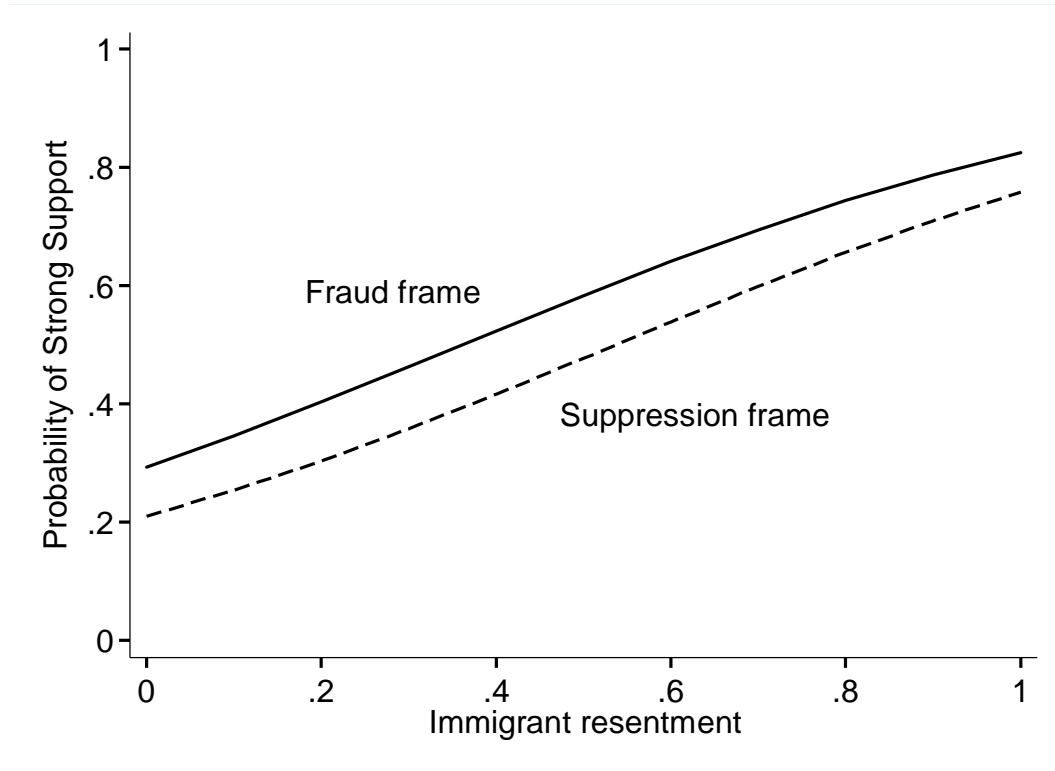
Models 2 and 3 in Table 2 indicate that we do not observe the same interaction between immigrant resentment and the fraud message when support for photo ID is the dependent variable. The fraud message significantly increases support for a photo ID law when compared against the suppression message for respondents with low levels of immigrant resentment ($b = .73$, $p < .05$), median levels ($b = .71$, $p < .01$), and high levels of immigrant resentment ($b = .69$, $p < .05$). The fraud message boosts support for photo ID requirements but does so without priming immigrant resentment.

Model 3 in Table 2 indicates that voter fraud beliefs are strongly associated with public support for a photo ID requirement. Respondents who believe that voter fraud

occurs frequently are more likely to support a photo ID policy than people who think voter fraud is a rare event. In addition, the coefficient for immigrant resentment is substantially smaller after controlling for voter fraud beliefs, which suggests that beliefs about voter fraud explain part of the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a photo ID law.

Figure 4 uses the estimates from Model 3 to plot the predicted probability of strongly supporting a photo ID policy as immigrant resentment increases, for respondents who received the fraud message and for respondents who received the voter suppression message. The two curves are roughly parallel, indicating the absence of an interaction between immigrant resentment and the framing condition. However, the graph again shows that the fraud message increases support for a photo ID requirement over a voter suppression message, for all levels of immigrant resentment. Finally, the figure indicates a strong relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a photo ID law, but not as strong as the one seen in Figure 3 with a proof of citizenship requirement.

Figure 4. Predicted Support for Photo ID Requirement by Framing Condition



Our final set of analyses examines the impact of a partisan valence on the fraud and suppression message treatments. We estimate the same ordinal logit function as the final model in Tables 1 and 2 but now we include separate dummy variables for each of the partisan sources for the framing conditions. This generates four treatment variables: two fraud message treatments (one from a Democratic election official and one from a GOP election official) and two suppression treatments (one from an official of each party). As above, we interact the fraud treatments with immigrant resentment to test whether the non-citizen voter fraud message strengthens the impact of immigrant resentment on policy evaluations. We also split the sample into Democratic and Republican sub-samples to test whether partisans respond differently to messages from party elites.

Table 3 presents the estimates for a model of support for a proof of citizenship policy. When examining all respondents, the message treatments have a bigger impact on

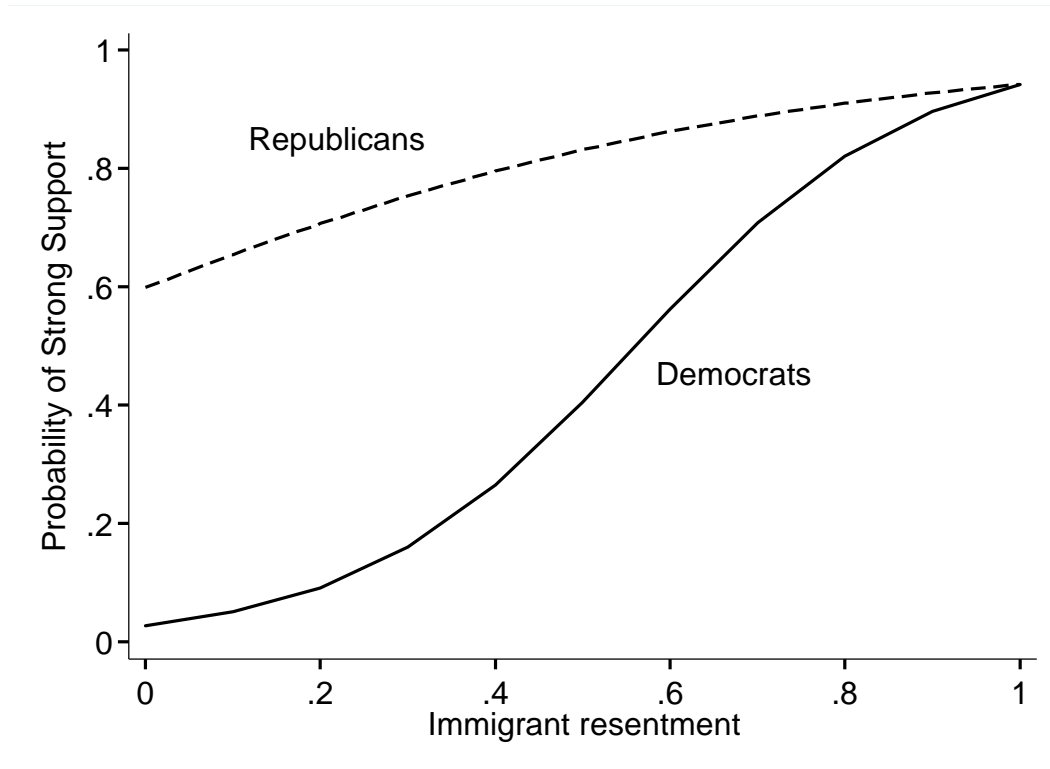
public opinion when they come from Democratic state officials rather than Republicans. In addition, the interaction between immigrant resentment and the fraud message is stronger when the message comes from a Democratic state official. We still find that the message treatment influences support for a proof of citizenship policy when immigrant resentment levels are above average, whether the fraud message comes from a Democrat or a Republican.

The second column provides model estimates for Democratic respondents only, while the third column provides estimates for Republicans. We consider Independent leaners as partisans in this formulation. The results for Democratic respondents are quite similar to those reported in Table 1. Among Democrats, immigrant resentment is strongly associated with support for a proof of citizenship law and the interaction with the elite message treatment is in the expected direction for both partisan sources. The impact of the fraud message on support for a proof of citizenship law gets larger as immigrant resentment increases, regardless of the party affiliation of the official providing the fraud message. When computing the predicted probability of strongly supporting a proof of citizenship requirement averaged over the entire sample, the fraud message from a Democratic official increases that probability over the suppression message from a Democrat by 23 percentage points. A similar message comparison from a Republican official boosts support for a proof of citizenship policy by 22 percentage points. For Democratic respondents, the party affiliation of the elite messenger does not seem to matter.

Meanwhile, among Republicans the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a proof of citizenship requirement is weaker. We plot the relationship between immigrant resentment and the predicted probability of strongly supporting proof of citizenship separately for Democrats and Republicans in Figure 5. Republicans have

consistently high support for a proof of citizenship law, regardless of their levels of immigrant resentment. Thus, immigrant resentment is weakly associated with support for proof of citizenship among Republicans. For Democrats, however, there is a strong relationship between immigrant resentment and a proof of citizenship policy.

Figure 5. Predicted Support for Proof of Citizenship by Respondent Party



Furthermore, for Republicans the message treatment has little statistical impact on public opinion when coming from a Republican source. Part of this may be due to lower power because of a smaller sample of Republicans in the CCES module. Nevertheless, the impact of the message treatment gets stronger as immigrant resentment rises when the message is attributed to a Democratic source. The average as observed impact of the fraud message versus the suppression message is to raise strong support for proof of citizenship by 24 percentage points when the message source is a Democrat. The average impact when the

message treatments come from a Republican official is only 7 points. Thus, Republicans seem to respond more to voting integrity messages from Democratic officials. This may be due to the fact that a strong warning about voter fraud coming from a Democratic elite is rare and counter to party stereotypes.

Similar estimates for a model of public support for a photo ID law are presented in Table 4 of the supplemental materials. Once again, we find a stronger relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a photo ID policy among Democrats than Republicans. At best, we observe a weak relationship between immigrant resentment and support for photo ID among Republicans. The impact of a voter fraud message boosts support for photo ID when compared against a voter suppression message, but the effects are less precise due to a smaller sample size. Among Democrats, the impact of the message treatments is stronger when the messages come from a Democratic official, which is more consistent with an elite-driven theory of public opinion.

Overall, we find that elite messages have some impact on public support for certain voting restrictions, particularly for proof of citizenship proposals. In addition, elite messages about voter fraud that emphasize an immigrant threat narrative helps push some Democrats to support voter identification restrictions even when many of their party leaders oppose those restrictions.

Experiment Two: Assurance of Status Quo Political Arrangements

The results of our first study suggest that support for stricter voter identification requirements is partly a response to an immigrant threat narrative in the United States. Yet, no study to date has shown whether demographic changes that diminish status quo political arrangements would boost support for voter restrictions. Further, no study has shown that

people are also less likely to support voter restrictions when they are told that their political power will be retained, regardless of how much demographic change occurs. We conduct a survey experiment in a module of the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) to test both of these contentions. We measure predispositions, immigrant resentment, racial resentment, and partisanship, in the pre-election wave of the survey, using the same measures as described in our first experiment. In the post-election wave, we seek to determine whether a short news item about the growing diversity of the American population increases public support for restrictive voting policies. Participants are randomly assigned to one of three groups that are given a different story about population change (see Appendix).

The stories are slightly modified versions of experimental conditions created by Craig and Richeson (2014a, 2014b). In the control group (News Report 3), participants read a story about increasing residential mobility, with no mention of immigration or racial minorities. The two other stories are similar in their emphasis on how racial minorities might outnumber whites in the United States in roughly thirty years. In these two versions, we provide participants the same demographic data that highlights the declining population growth of non-Hispanic whites. The treatment conditions also mention that the main reasons for the accelerating change are rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities. Both conditions are intended to bring concerns about immigration to the top of the mind for respondents. We manipulate each story, however, by discussing different consequences of racial population growth. News Report 1 includes information about the increasing diversity of the American electorate. News Report 2 casts doubt on the political impact of population change by concluding that White Americans are likely to remain the majority in powerful corporate and political

positions. Thus, News Report 2 is intended to allay anxieties about immigration in comparison to News Report 1. Note that none of the news items in this experiment mention voter fraud.

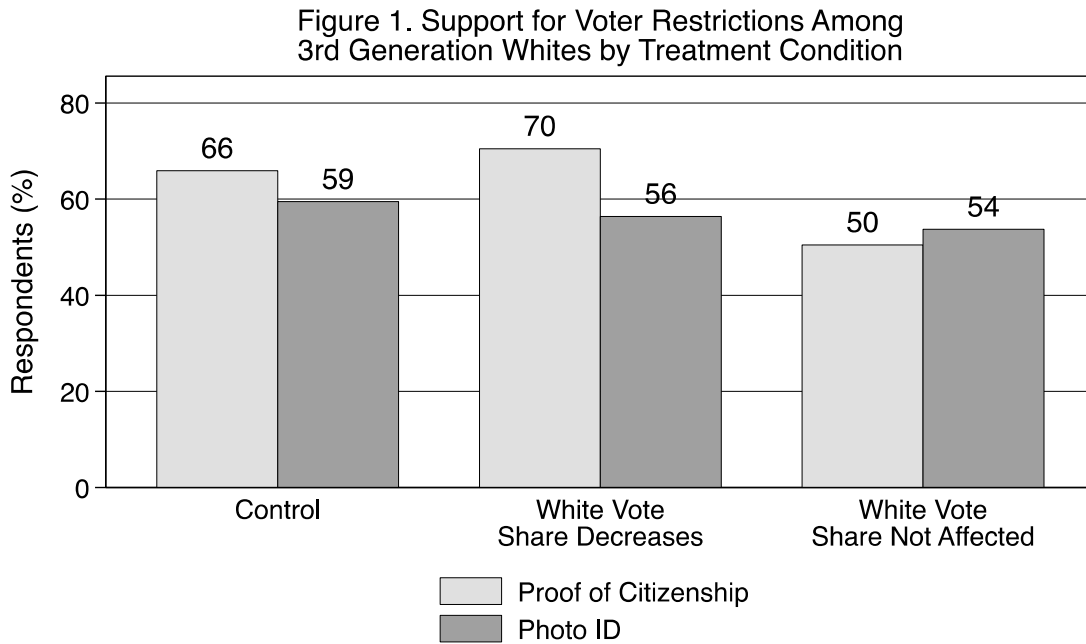
Immediately after participants read the news story, we ask a question to test their comprehension of the news report. We limit our analyses below to respondents who correctly answered that question (approximately 80 percent of the sample). After the experimental treatment, respondents answered questions pertaining to voter fraud and election reform proposals. As in the first experiment we randomize the order in which the election reform proposals are presented to respondents, with the same four response categories: support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat, and oppose strongly.

Results from Experiment Two

In models of support for voter restrictions among 3rd generation respondents, immigrant resentment is a strong predictor only for proof of citizenship (see Table 5 of supplemental materials). Further, the threat of white vote share decreasing due to immigration has a larger effect on third generation respondents with median or higher levels of immigrant resentment. In contrast, the reassurance that immigration will not affect white vote share does not significantly affect support for photo ID across immigrant resentment levels.

When exposed to a story about white vote share decreases due to immigration, support for proof of citizenship increases. In contrast, when exposed to a story about white vote share unaffected by immigration, support decreases. Support for photo ID decreases in both treatment conditions (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Support for Voting Restrictions by Treatment Condition

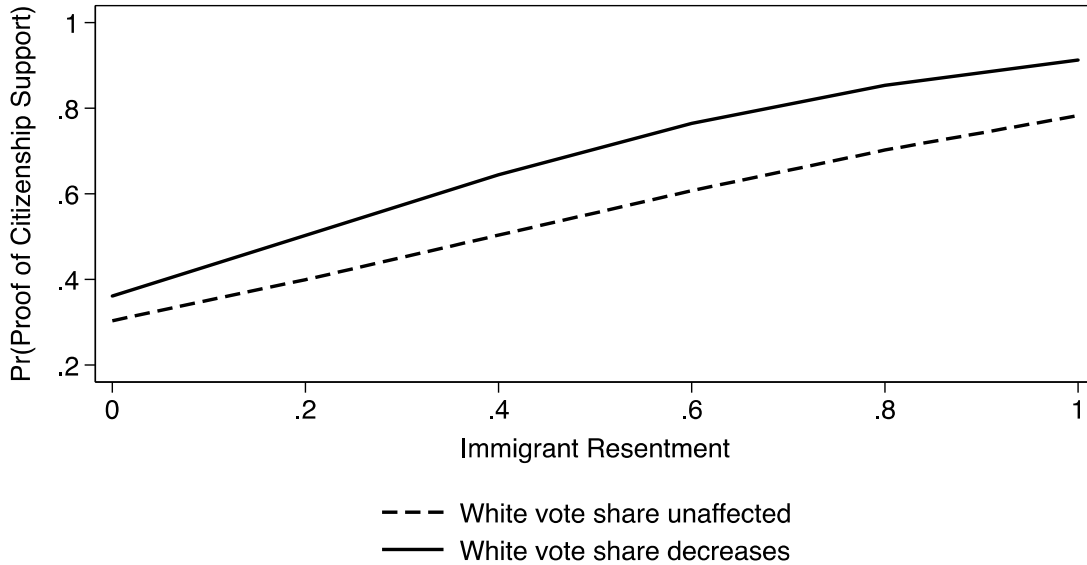


Source: 2014 CCES. Note: Third generation is defined as respondent, parents, and grandparents born in the U.S.

Figure 7 illustrates the predicted probability of strongly supporting proof of citizenship across immigrant resentment. At low levels of resentment, support does not differ much between treatment conditions. As immigrant resentment increases, the white vote share decreases treatment produces 16 percentage points higher than the white vote share unaffected treatment (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Predicted Support for Proof of Citizenship by Treatment Condition

Figure 2. Predicted Strong Support for Proof of Citizenship Among 3rd Generation by Treatment Condition



Source: 2014 CCES. Note: Third generation defined as respondent, parents, and grandparents born in the U.S.

Conclusion

In this study we examine the relationship between public attitudes toward immigrants and support for stricter voter identification policies. Other researchers have examined the impact of racial attitudes on support for photo ID laws. Using data from two national surveys, we find that public support for stricter voter identification policies has become “immigrationalized” (Garand, Xu, and Davis 2015). Immigrant resentment is the strongest predictor, by a substantial margin, of public support for voter identification restrictions. This finding holds for photo ID laws and, especially, for policies requiring people to show proof of citizenship when registering to vote. The impact of attitudes toward immigrants is stronger than racial attitudes and other predispositions such as partisanship.

Moreover, the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for strict voter identification requirements is stronger for Democrats than for Republicans. Republican support for restrictive voting policies tends to be high regardless of other predispositions, so there is a ceiling on how much farther that support can rise. A voter fraud message may be an effective political weapon for Republicans because it tends to have a stronger impact on Democratic voters. However, we do not test how long these effects last. A drumbeat of voter fraud messages may be needed to sustain bipartisan support for stricter voter identification policies.

We also find strong support for an *elite framing hypothesis*. A message that alleges voter fraud by non-citizens boosts support for photo ID and proof of citizenship requirements over a message that emphasizes that such policies might prevent eligible citizens from voting. Our study also builds upon other findings on the limits of partisan cues (Nicholson 2011), showing that the public reacts differently when elite partisans make arguments that counter party stereotypes. When a Democrat delivers a fraud message, support for a proof of citizenship policy increases among Republicans. The suppression message, when attributed to a Republican, generated a larger reduction in support for photo ID among Democrats.

We also find support for an *immigrant priming hypothesis* in the case of a proof of citizenship policy but not in the photo ID case. A fraud message focusing on illegal activity by non-citizens strengthens the relationship between immigrant resentment and support for a proof of citizenship requirement. In addition, the impact of a noncitizen voting claim cuts across traditional party lines. The fraud message boosts support for proof of citizenship and photo ID policies whether that message is attributed to a Republican or Democratic state election official. Of course, in order to be persuaded by elite voter fraud arguments, a person

must first hold high levels of immigrant resentment. The message treatment influences Democrats to support a proof of citizenship policy when immigrant resentment levels are above average, whether the fraud message comes from a Democrat or a Republican. For Republicans, though, the message treatment has minimal impact on policy support when coming from a Republican source. The impact of the message treatment still gets stronger as immigrant resentment rises when the message is attributed to a Democratic source.

Our study also raises some new areas of research on voter fraud beliefs and support for voting restrictions. While our results echo studies showing that racial animus structures voter fraud beliefs (Wilson and Brewer 2013), they also suggest that debates over voter restrictions extend beyond a black/white dichotomy to another involving citizens and noncitizens. We argue that these findings are largely attributed to the immigrant resentment scale capturing various attitudes on whether immigrants increase crime, disrupt social and political norms, are undeserving American members, and decrease the political influence of white Americans. These attitudes are not measured in the black resentment scale, but are likely called to mind when respondents are asked about how often people commit voter fraud.

Second, our findings point to different determinants of support for photo ID and proof of citizenship. Given our fraud message was about illegal noncitizen voting, we are not surprised that immigrant resentment has a lesser effect on photo ID support among treatment groups. However, the fraud message still boosts support for photo ID requirements but does so without priming immigrant resentment. This may suggest that more common political elite allegations of illegal noncitizen voting is sufficient to garner more general support for voter restrictions, at least those that do not explicitly raise distinctions between citizens and noncitizens.

Political leaders frequently cite public concerns about voter fraud as justification for stricter voter identification policies, but politicians can stoke those public concerns with rhetoric linking immigration and voter fraud.

Overall, the role of animosity toward immigrants is underappreciated in scholarship on public opinion about election fraud and voting reforms. Much of the existing literature emphasizes partisan divisions among the electorate on photo ID laws, for example, largely reflecting clear partisan divisions among elites on these issues. The partisan differences are real, but photo ID and proof of citizenship requirements enjoy majority support among people of all political stripes in the United States. Widespread support for these policies, and heightened concerns about voter fraud, appear to be nourished by elite rhetoric and a reservoir of hostility toward racial and ethnic minorities.

Appendix

Conditions to Test Impact of Elite Message on Support for Voting Restrictions in Survey Experiment One

Condition	1 (Fraud message)	2 (Fraud message)	3 (Suppression message)	4 (Suppression message)	5 (Control)
Message	Recently, a state election official from the _____ Party argued that “without stricter voting requirements illegal aliens will register to vote throughout the country, in violation of state and federal law.”		Recently, a state election official from the _____ Party argued that “stricter voting requirements can prevent people who are eligible to vote from voting.”		None
Source	Republican	Democrat	Republican	Democrat	None

Conditions to Test Impact of Status Quo Political Arrangements on Support for Voting Restrictions

Condition	News Report 1	News Report 2	News Report 3 (Control)
Subject:	Racial minorities might outnumber whites in the United States in roughly thirty years		Residential mobility in the U.S.
Cause:	Rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities		Does not draw attention to immigration or population growth among racial minorities
Effect:	White American vote share decreasing	White Americans are likely to remain the majority in powerful corporate and political positions	

News Report Text for Survey Experiment Two

News Report 1

In a Generation, Racial Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority

Washington, DC (AP) - New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that America will become a “majority-minority” nation much faster than once predicted. The data show a declining number of White adults and growing under-18 populations of Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities. Demographers calculate that by 2042, Americans who identify themselves as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander will together outnumber non-Hispanic Whites. The main reasons for the accelerating change are rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities. For example, there are now roughly 9 births for every 1 death among Hispanics, compared to a roughly one-to-one ratio for Whites. The numerical shift can already be seen in voting figures. The non-White share of American voters has increased from 13 percent in 1992 to 28 percent in 2012. The latest figures are based on current and historical trends, which can be altered by changes in public policy.

News Report 2

In a Generation, Racial Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority

Washington, DC (AP) - New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that America will become a “majority-minority” nation much faster than once predicted. The data show a declining number of White adults and growing under-18 populations of Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities. Demographers calculate that by 2042, Americans who identify themselves as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander will together outnumber non-Hispanic Whites. The main reasons for the accelerating change are rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities. For example, there are now roughly 9 births for every 1 death among Hispanics, compared to a roughly one-to-one ratio for Whites. Despite the numerical shift, racial groups' relative positions in society are likely to remain the same as they are now. Largely due to continuing differences in educational attainment, White Americans are likely to remain the majority in powerful corporate and political positions. The latest figures are based on current and historical trends, which can be altered by changes in public policy.

News Report 3

U.S. Census Bureau Reports Residents Now Move at a Higher Rate

Washington, DC (AP) - New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that the rate of geographical mobility, or the number of individuals who have moved within the past year, is increasing. The national mover rate increased from 11.9 percent in 2012 to 12.5 percent in 2013. According to the new data, 37.1 million people changed residences in the U.S. within the past year. The estimates also reveal that many of the nation’s fastest-growing areas are suburbs. Specifically, principal cities within metropolitan areas experienced a net loss of 2.1 million movers, while the suburbs had a net gain of 2.4 million movers. For those who moved to a different county or state, the reasons for moving varied considerably by the length of their move. The latest figures are based on current and historical trends, which can be altered by changes in public policy.

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